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Nothin' But a Good Time: Hair Metal, Conservatism, and the End of the Cold War in the 1980s

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by

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Abstract

This dissertation offers a cultural history of the 1980s through an examination of one of the decade's most memorable cultural forms – hair metal. The notion that hair metal musicians, and subsequently their fans, wanted "nothin' but a good time," shaped popular perceptions of the genre as shallow, hedonistic, and apolitical. Set against the backdrop of Reagan's election and the rise of conservatism throughout the decade, hair metal's transgressive nature embodied in the performers' apparent obsession with partying and their absolute refusal to adopt the traditional values and trappings of "yuppies" or middle-class Americans, certainly appeared to be a strong reaction against conservatism; however, a closer examination of hair metal as a cultural form reveals a conservative subtext looming beneath the genre's transgressive façade. In its embrace of traditional gender roles, free market capitalism, and American exceptionalism, hair metal upheld and worked to re-inscribe the key tenants of conservative ideology. Historians have only recently turned an analytical eye toward the 1980s and by and large their analyses have focused on the political and economic changes wrought by the Reagan Revolution that competed America's conservative turn over the course of the decade. This study adds to historical understandings of the decade's political history by telling us how non-political actors – musicians, producers, critics, and fans – shaped and were shaped by the currents of formal politics. Though heavy metal music and the rise of conservatism seem to share little common ground, by putting these two seemingly disparate historiographies into conversation with one another, we gain a clearer picture of the breadth and depth of conservatism's reach in the 1980s.

Chapter One

Introduction:

Welcome to the Jungle

"What's your philosophy on life?" a young woman jokingly implored a group of her teenage friends who had gathered to tailgate before the Judas Priest concert that evening. At only sixteen-years-old David Wine seemed to have life figured out. "It sucks shit! Heavy Metal rules!" Wine exclaimed with a notable slur to his speech. Amidst affirming hoots and hollers from his drunken peers, Wine, clad from head to toe in zebra-print spandex, steadied himself against the side of a beat up car and continued to philosophize: "All that punk shit sucks. It doesn't belong in this world. It belongs on fuckin' Mars, man…Heavy metal definitely rues! Twisted Sister, Judas Priest, Dokken, Ozzy, Scorpions, they all rule!" Wine and his friends were hardly unique amongst the crowd that gathered outside the Capitol Centre arena on May 31st, 1986. Hundreds of adolescent heavy metal fans – self proclaimed "metal heads" – had descended upon the site in the early afternoon, transforming the parking lot into a veritable teenage wasteland of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Across the parking lot a group of intoxicated teenaged boys chanted "JU-DAS-PRIEST! JU-DAS-PRIEST!" growing louder and louder as they whipped each other into a frenzy before chugging an entire bottle of beer. After wiping spilled beer from his face, one young man announced they had left their girlfriends at home because "they're stupid…they don't like Priest!" Another guy chimed in, "Yeah, they're PUSSIES!" At an adjacent party site a twenty-year-old young man and his thirteen-year-old girlfriend leaned against the side of a car making out with beer bottles still in hand. As one of

their friends proudly explained, "They're gonna show how young people fuck up today!" This scene outside the Judas Priest concert in May of 1986 –captured in the documentary *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* – typified popular perceptions about eighties metal music and it's fans.[1]

On the eve of his election in 1980, Ronald Reagan offered a new "Vision for America," that emphasized the value of hard work, family, and "spiritual commitment." After almost a decade of stagflation, Reagan revived popular belief in the American Dream by promising to create an unencumbered free market where hard work and the spirit of entrepreneurialism would be rewarded. By "removing the roadblocks that have slowed our economy and reduced productivity," Reagan promised the American people, that the government would "provide opportunity, not stifle it."[2] As the Reagan Administration declared war on a series of social ills plaguing the nation, American citizens carried the battle flag into their neighborhoods and homes, hoping to help create the prosperous, morally upright, and fiercely patriotic country that their President envisioned.[3] Reagan's fervent sense of American exceptionalism extended into foreign policy as well. He frequently evoked an image of the United States as a "shining city on a hill," that sharply contrasted the "aggressive impulses of an evil empire" like the Soviet Union.[4] Ultimately, Reagan assured the American people that their values would triumph, because "no arsenal or weapon in the world is so formidable as the will and moral courage of

[1] *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*, directed by John Heyn and Jeff Krulik, VHS, 1986.
[2] Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1981.
[3] Ronald Reagan, "Election Eve Address 'A Vision for America,'" November 3, 1980.
[4] Ronald Reagan, "Final Radio Address to the Nation," January 14, 1989; Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida," March 8, 1983.

free men and women."[5] He reminded people that it was "America's traditional values and philosophy of government," that made "the most distinctive mark of all…to a tired and disillusioned world."[6]

On the surface, hair metal, a sub-genre of heavy metal that saw its rise and fall in the 1980s, seemed to stand in opposition to Reagan's conservative vision for America. In his memoir, *Shut up and Give me the Mic,* Twisted Sister front man Dee Snider recalled "Never was there a form of music more steeped in wretched excess, over-the-top behavior, and hedonism than what became known as hair metal."[7] The teased hairstyles, make-up, flamboyant clothing, and shredding guitar solos marked hair metal as one of the most memorable cultural expressions of eighties decadence. From the musicians' unbridled displays of hedonism that glorified alcohol and drug abuse and promoted sexual promiscuity to their rowdy and often obscene onstage performances, hair metal certainly seemed antithetical to America's new conservative direction. While many conservatively minded Americans watched in horror, adolescent metal fans – self-proclaimed metal heads – emulated the look, attitude, and lifestyle of their rock and roll idols.

Reflecting on mainstream perceptions of hair metal music in the 1980s Snider noted that the genre was "the visual and musical embodiment of what the kids wanted and everything conservative America feared – in-your-face, outrageous, rebellious behavior. We were a threat to every value they stood for."[8] Set against the backdrop of Reagan's election and the rise of conservatism in the 1980s, hair metal's transgressive nature embodied in the performers'

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[5] Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1981.
[6] Reagan, "Final Radio Address to the Nation."
[7] Dee Snider, *Shut Up and Give Me the Mic: A Twisted Memoir*, (New York: Gallery Books, 2012), 302.
[8] Snider, *Shut Up and Give Me the Mic*, 302.

apparent obsession with partying and their absolute refusal to adopt the traditional values and trappings of "yuppies" or middle-class Americans, certainly appears to be a strong reaction against conservatism, as Snider suggests. However, a closer examination of hair metal bands, their music and videos, and their fan base, reveals a conservative subtext looming beneath the genre's transgressive façade. In its embrace of traditional gender roles, free market capitalism, and American Exceptionalism, hair metal upheld and worked to re-inscribe the key tenants of conservative ideology.

As the seventies drew to a close the American people were faced with what President Jimmy Carter described as a "crisis of confidence…a growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation."[9] Much of what unfolded over the course of the eighties might be read as a reaction to this erstwhile crisis – a decade long effort to demonstrate American confidence that reshaped the political and cultural fabric of American life. Many forms of popular culture in the eighties overtly reinforced Reagan's conservative ideals. Family sitcoms, for example, became increasingly popular helping to emphasize the centrality of marriage and child rearing and reaffirm the nuclear family as the centerpiece of American life by modeling ways families might adapt to economic and social challenges. *Growing Pains* offered an example of how to maintain a nuclear family with two working parents. *Family Ties* directly confronted the generation gap between hippie baby boomer parents and their conservative children. *Alf,* which was undoubtedly the decade's strangest family sitcom, offered a weekly lesson in proper family values as the Tanner family taught their extraterrestrial houseguest about what it meant to be an American family. The splendors of free market capitalism were also a

[9] Jimmy Carter, "Crisis of Confidence," July 15, 1979, http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3402 (accessed January 14, 2015).

popular topic in film and television. In the 1987 film *Wall Street*, ultra-successful financier Gordon Gekko triumphantly proclaimed "greed is good!" While prime time dramas like *Dynasty, Dallas,* and *Knots Landing* put opulence and wealth on display.[10] In short, many aspects of popular culture seemed to reinforce Barbara Ehrenreich's assertion that the eighties were an irreverent "decade of greed."[11]

The eighties are often remembered as the decade where sixties liberalism was finally repudiated and replaced by conservative ideology. Displays of hedonism and excess are among the more memorable aspects of popular culture in the eighties that support this interpretation. The decadence and debauchery that characterized hair metal stood in sharp contrast to previous iterations of rock and roll, particularly the music of the sixties counterculture epitomized by the Grateful Dead who eschewed commercialism and fervent patriotism at every turn. If it seemed like nothing happened in the seventies, eighties culture announced its presence with confident demonstrations of unadulterated overindulgence.[12] Everything from big hair and flashy clothes to loud music and shredding guitar solos seemed to signal that the eighties were all about excess and success – which went hand in hand. Perhaps more than any other cultural form produced during the decade, hair metal, the subgenre of heavy metal that saw its rise and fall within the confines of the 1980s, epitomized this penchant for excess while offering a particularly conservative rags-to-riches model for prosperity and success that resonated with the working class.

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[10] For more on television in the eighties see: Jane Feuer, *Seeing Through the Eighties: Television and Reagainism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).
[11] Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes from a Decade of Greed*, (New York: Pantheon, 1990).
[12] Peter N. Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970s*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1982).

The fact that both the musicians and their fans wanted "nothin' but a good time," shaped popular perceptions of the genre as self-indulgent, shallow, and wholly apolitical. It is easy to understand how people at the time, and many since, arrived at that conclusion. Hair metal's seemingly shallow lyrics stood in sharp contrast to the overt political messages of its closest rock and roll predecessor, punk rock.[13] Visually, hair metal certainly provided a foil for the stripped down anti-commercial aesthetic of punk. Yet, however shallow the lyrics or image driven the bands themselves seemed to be, hair metal was anything but apolitical. Close readings of hair metal as cultural form reveal a politicized subtext that responded to the unique political dynamics at play in the 1980s.

The emergence of hair metal as a popular musical subgenre coincided with the development of new media outlets in the 1980s, particularly MTV (Music Television), a new cable television channel that featured a twenty-four-hour stream of music videos. Initially, most of the songs and videos MTV played varied significantly from the singles getting radio play. Thus, MTV became a powerful means of exposing people to bands and songs they would not normally hear on the radio. Among those who received heaviest rotation on MTV were hair metal bands whose association with heavy metal limited their radio exposure. Over the course of the decade MTV became increasingly popular amongst young people who listened to a variety of different musical genres. In *Rolling Stone's* 1984 yearly recap issue music critic Jon Perales, noted that after only a few months on the air, MTV had made a clear impact on how Americans engaged with music. Perales stated, "Americans may like radio, but they *notice* TV. Friends never asked if I'd heard the latest song by whomever; the invariable question was whether I'd

[13] For more on the relationship between heavy metal and punk see: Steve Waksman, *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

seen the video clip. Sure I had – it was inescapable."[14] Though music videos were never factored in to the ratings produced by *Billboard* magazine, in 1984 they began to notate songs that had music videos with a special symbol on their "Hot 100" list. By 1984 almost every song in the top 40 slots of *Billboard's* "Hot 100" bore the special symbol – music videos had changed the way people thought about, and listened to, music. By 1989 heavy metal was the nation's most financially successful musical genre.[15] Hair metal had, in less than nine years, gone from an underground cultural expression practiced in basements and garages and performed in dive bars along Los Angeles' Sunset Strip, to the industry's biggest money maker. Much of this success was owed to masterfully edited music videos played on MTV that exposed listener-viewers to the bands and their music.[16]

This dissertation reconstructs part of the cultural landscape of the 1980s through an examination of one of the decade's most popular cultural forms – hair metal. Historians have only recently begun the process of critically interrogating the 1980s. By and large their analyses have foregrounded the formal arenas of politics and economics framing Reagan and his administration as the primary catalysts that turned America toward the right. An examination of popular culture promises to add to these political and economic histories, by creating a more complete picture of the rise of conservatism and the Reagan Revolution in the 1980s. Historians looking at the rise of conservatism throughout the sixties and seventies have done well to demonstrate the grassroots, bottom-up, nature of the movement, yet this idea has not been carried

[14] Jon Perales, *Rolling Stone*, "Reaganomics of Rock" December 20, 1984, 14.
[15] "35 Years of Rock and Roll" *Spin*, August 1990, 47.
[16] Rob Tannenbaum and Craig Marks, *I Want My MTV: The Uncensored Story of the Music Video Revolution,* (New York: Plume, 2012).

into historical scholarship on the 1980s.[17] While Reagan was undeniably important, the growth of conservatism the 1980s was not limited to his political actions. Likewise, it was not only Reaganites and the New Right that disseminated conservative values and furthered the conservative agenda throughout the decade. This dissertation insists on the importance of popular culture to our understanding of history. Only by examining popular culture can historians complicate the current historiographical trend of focusing on a top-down Reagan-centric view of the decade. Historians examining the 1980s have largely ignored heavy metal music, reinforcing popular perceptions of the genre as apolitical and therefore anathema to the rise of conservatism as a political ideology. Though heavy metal music and the rise of conservatism seem to share little common ground, by putting these two seemingly disparate historiographies into conversation with one another, we gain a clearer picture of the breadth and depth of conservatism's reach in the 1980s.

Though heavy metal music remains a somewhat understudied cultural form, scholars in the disciplines of musicology and sociology have laid the groundwork for understanding the sonic, performative, and subcultural aspects of the genre. Two path-breaking works on the topic, both published in the early 1990s, offer the best academic scholarship on the subject to date. Sociologist Deena Weinstein's *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* (1991) was the first academic

[17] For more on the grassroots evolution of conservatism in the sixties and seventies see: Mary C. Brennan. *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press,1995); Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Beth L. Bailey and David R. Farber, *America in the Seventies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008).

work to look seriously at the heavy metal music as a cultural form. Weinstein carefully analyzes the aural and visual aspects of the performance of heavy metal demonstrating the ways that this particular cultural form was "a function of the life-styles and mythologies" of its fans.[18] Weinstein argues that articulations of power rest at the very center of heavy metal performance. Thus, in a cultural context, the music and performances served to empower a particular social group - that of white, adolescent, working-class, men - who, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, found themselves disconnected from mainstream notions of prosperity and success.[19] As a sociological text, *Heavy Metal* offers extensive research that uses a variety of methods – ethnography, oral history, direct observation, and content analysis – to categorize and profile the genre's typical fans and musicians and to explain the social organization that underpinned the construction of heavy metal culture. My research builds off this analysis, by looking beyond the sub cultural development of heavy metal music to demonstrate that the genre was also an important aspect of the political and economic currents that shaped American life in the 1980s.

Only two years after Weinstein offered her sociological perspective on heavy metal subculture, musicologist Robert Walser published his book, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (1993). Walser covers much of the same ground as Weinstein, though his training as a musicologist leads him to a closer analysis of the music itself – the compositional details, overall musicality, and the virtuosity of the performers. These more musically technical aspects of Walser's monograph aside, *Running With the Devil* offers an

[18] Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology,* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 99.

[19] Here Weinstein specifically discusses limited access to higher education, better paying jobs, and elevated status in society. Presumably, as the middle class expanded, or appeared to expand under Reagan's presidency, these anxieties were heightened. For more on the end of the working-class in the 1970s see: Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive : The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010).

analysis of heavy metal, as a cultural form, that utilizes an interdisciplinary methodological approach. His research is thorough, based not only on fan magazines, popular periodicals, and media representations of heavy metal bands, but also on an extensive number of fan surveys he personally conducted in the late 1980s. Walser does well to deconstruct the discourses that articulate positions of power for both heavy metal musicians and their fans; however, his analysis fails to consider the relationship between the music and the decade's conservative political climate. For the most part Walser repeats common tropes about heavy metal's transgressive nature buying into the notion that the genre was, above all else, a form of youthful male rebellion. My research complicates this understanding of heavy metal music and culture by demonstrating that the music could be widely understood as dangerous, transgressive, and rebellious, while also being an arbiter of conservative ideology.

Though a vast number of historians and biographers have taken Ronald Reagan as their subject thereby engaging tangentially in a discussion of the eighties, only a handful of historians have taken the political, social, and economic climate of the decade as their primary subject.[20] In *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (2005), John Ehrman describes the decade as a period of transition in politics, economics, and culture. Ehrman maintains that many liberal voters retained their ideological outlook, but voted Republican in 1980 because, unlike Carter, Reagan's policies appeared to better protect middle-class economic interests. Thus, he concludes that while Americans experienced many changes in the social and political fabric of American life, the most important changes, and the ones that helped to make a conservative turn complete

[20] Many Reagan biographies are hagiographical in nature while others offer apologetic revisionist histories of the decade that fall short of critical analysis. Still there are biographical works that offer a less biased view of Reagan, see: Doug Rossinow, *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s,* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2015); Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008,* (New York: Harper, 2008).

by 1989, were Reagan's successes in the economic sphere. Ehrman's emphasis on economics comes at the expense of a more thorough discussion of how conservative ideology was reflected in and reinforced by popular culture. Though middle-class Americans were certainly an important aspect of Reagan's voter constituency, a large number of working-class Americans also became increasingly conservative throughout the decade aligning themselves with Reaganite ideals. Popular culture garners only a few passing mentions in Ehrman's analysis – an oversight that flattens his argument and weakens his assertions about the socio-cultural climate of the eighties.

Reagan's public persona is also highlighted in Gil Troy's *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (2007). Like Ehrman, Troy situates Reagan as the central agent of change in the eighties. Troy more adeptly handles culture in his monograph by looking at Reagan's own use of the media, and at the relationship between public opinion of Reagan and the popular films and television programs of the decade. While Ehrman cites Reagan's ability to portray confidence as a key factor in shifting liberal support to conservative policy, Troy highlights the ways that Reagan's rhetoric "made prosperity patriotic," effectively connecting consumerism with conservative ideals.[21] Troy argues that televised coverage of Reagan's first inauguration made the affluence and glamour of popular soap operas seem real, achievable, desirable and most importantly fundamentally "American."

Though my project is clearly different from that of both Ehrman and Troy, their works offer several key ideas important to my analysis. In particular, Ehrman's notion of a center-right political climate provides a useful way of understanding how forms of popular culture, like hair

[21] Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

metal, could appear transgressive on the surface while still projecting conservative values. Furthermore, I contend that the notion of linking prosperity and patriotism that Troy identifies in Reagan's rhetoric was mirrored in popular culture. If prosperity was patriotic, hair metal modeled a viable alternative lifestyle to mainstream notions of prosperity. In other words, being a successful rock star, or looking and living the part, functioned as alternate expression of the traditional American dream.

In *Transforming America: Politics and Culture during the Reagan Years* (2007) Robert Collins argues that the relationship between politics and culture in the 1980s was antagonistic in nature. As the Reagan administration pushed public policy and politics in general toward the right, culture rebelled against the "bourgeois regime of values, mores, and institutions," to embrace a more postmodern, therapeutic, and materialistic outlook.[22] The conflicting trajectory of politics and culture, in Collins' analysis, creates a polarized nation and contributes to the series of culture wars that characterized the decade. Collins does well to document the political shift toward the right through a detailed analysis of Reaganomics, anticommunism, and foreign policy decision at end of the Cold War. Collins' assertion of a cultural move toward the left, however provocative, is ultimately unconvincing. The spread of postmodernism from academia into popular culture, the rise of therapeutic culture centered on individualism, and an increasingly materialistic outlook undoubtedly characterized eighties culture, and Collins does well to demonstrate the presence of, and indeed the predominance of, these trends; however, his insistence on a polarized division between politics on the right and culture on the left leads to an oversimplified analysis that forces a one-dimensional interpretation of these cultural trends.

[22] Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years*,(New York: Colombia University Press, 2007), 5.

The key point that Collins fails to address is the relationship of capitalism, which was wholeheartedly supported by conservatives, to the cultural trends he identifies. Capitalism created the conditions that bred individualism, fueled materialism, and generated the multiplicity of images that characterize Postmodernism. These are not necessarily "anti-bourgeois" expressions; they are, more precisely, logical outgrowths of capitalism that can be at once liberal and conservative for different people in different moments. The cultural analysis Collins provides is markedly absent of any close readings. Had he examined these trends in greater detail, deconstructing the multiple and conflicting meanings found in various forms of popular culture, it is likely he would have found it difficult to sustain the argument that culture whole-heartedly moved toward the left or that the 1980s can be neatly characterized by a conservative-liberal dichotomy.

As this dissertation demonstrates, the relationship between politics and culture in the 1980s was not always neat or oppositional – it was, in fact, messy and fragmented in complex ways. While many cultural forms appear, on the surface, to follow a liberal/left oriented trajectory that does not mean they cannot also be mirroring, in alternative form, the ideals and values of the Reagan Revolution. Conservatism's reach was not limited to formal political and economic arenas, and the Reagan Revolution was not the only agent of change working to turn Americans toward the right in the eighties. By the 1980s conservative ideology had a broad appeal that stretched well beyond the middle and upper classes. Hair metal offers a prime example of the ways that conservatism permeated popular culture, cutting across class and generational divides affecting Americans in unexpected and often unintended ways. In order to better understand the rise of conservatism we need to look beyond Reagan, beyond political

policy, and into the cultural world that took shape in the eighties – a world where even forms of popular culture, like rock and roll, could and often did reinforce conservative ideology.

This study adds to historical understandings of the decade's political history by telling us how non-political actors – musicians, producers, critics, and fans – shaped and were shaped by the currents of formal politics. It is not, however, meant to confirm a direct correlation between hair metal and support of the New Right. In other words, no attempt is made to demonstrate that the people involved in making and performing the music, or even those listening to it, became card-carrying Republicans. Rather, the evidence provided in the following chapters seeks to prove that the key tenants of conservative ideology were so deeply engrained that they permeated even the most unexpected arenas of popular culture. Whether the musicians, producers, and fans were aware of it or not, hair metal contributed to a broader cultural world that was, at its core, fundamentally conservative.

Though many heavy metal fans and musicians consider "hair metal" a pejorative label used to designate bands who were inordinately concerned with image at the expense of musical substance, that is not how the term is used within this study. Instead, I have chosen to use the term as a means of talking specifically about the unique iteration of heavy metal that became popular in the 1980s, thereby drawing distinctions between it and the other varieties of heavy metal music with which it coexisted. As genre designations are always subjective and somewhat fluid, I have applied a particular set of criteria to my selection of bands included in this study. The genre's immense popularity in the 1980s spawned hundreds of bands in the United States, many of whom contributed to a globalized rebirth of heavy metal over the course of the decade. For the most part I have limited my analysis to American bands, looking first to the musicians who gave birth to the genre in the seedy clubs along Los Angeles' Sunset strip and then to the

bands across the nation that modeled the genre's visual and musical style to achieve success. Many of the decade's most popular and memorable bands are included in my analysis; however readers will also find some less familiar names – those of aspiring musicians and less commercially successful bands who were important to the development and lasting impact of the genre.

This dissertation begins with a case study of the Parents' Music Resource Center, and their conservative crusade against what they considered the "smut and sadism of porno rock." Though their list of objectionable music spanned many genres and artists, their attack on popular music gradually zeroed in on heavy metal. Their efforts culminated in a 1985 Senate hearing that brought heavy metal music, and heavy metal culture, into the national spotlight - contributing to an overwhelmingly negative perception of the genre among mainstream Americans. As one of the most heavily publicized battles in a series of "culture wars" waged by conservatives in the 1980s, the PMRC's attack on heavy metal revealed tensions inherent in conservative ideology as an unrestricted free market bred the very excesses that social conservatives sought to contain.[23]

Chapters two and three explore the tensions the hearing brought to light through an examination of hair metal's embrace of free market capitalism and patriarchy, respectively. These chapters demonstrate that hair metal was never the threat to conservative ideology that the PMRC and other like-minded organizations and individuals believed it to be. Chapter two looks specifically at hair metal's embrace of free market capitalism and the ways that musicians and fans embodied Reaganesque notions of the American Dream. Though their efforts as business men and entrepreneurs were masked by public perceptions of the genre as wanting "nothin but a

[23] Bradford D. Martin, *The Other Eighties: A Secret History of America in the Age of Reagan*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011).

good time," hair metal musicians demonstrated that the benefits of hard work and perseverance were not limited to Wall Street. The consumer culture that erupted around the genre allowed fans to participate in the splendors of capitalism alongside the musicians they idolized. Chapter three explores the ways that hair metal modeled a new masculine aesthetic for young men in the 1980s, while simultaneously upholding conservative ideas about normative gender roles. Though the flamboyant and often feminized appearance of hair metal screamed of transgressive rebellion, as a cultural form both the musicians and their fans reflected and reinscribed the sexism and misogyny of conservative America.

Chapter four analyzes American hair metal as part of a transnational musical exchange that occurred in the 1980s. Building on the analysis of the previous chapters that position hair metal as an expression of particularly American ideals and values, this chapter argues that the musicians and fans carried those ideals out into the world enacting powerful displays of American exceptionalism. Breaking form with the previous chapters that examined only American Bands, chapter 4 looks at the cross-pollination of heavy metal culture that brought a number of foreign bands to the United States and allowed American bands to tour the world as unofficial cultural diplomats of sorts. The chapter then turns to a particular act of cultural diplomacy, the Moscow Music Peace Festival, which brought the triumphs of capitalism and democracy to the USSR and contributed to a sense of American triumphalism at the end of the Cold War.

While some bands have come to embrace the label of hair metal, others continue to eschew the label preferring to think of themselves simply as practitioners of heavy metal. It is my hope that the analysis in the following pages helps to complicate understandings of hair

metal and the rise of conservatism by demonstrating that in both image and sound these bands made a meaningful contribution to the political, social, and economic fabric of eighties America.

Chapter Two

We're Not Gonna Take It:

The Parents' Music Resource Center Attacks Heavy Metal

Early in the afternoon on September 19th, 1985, Senator John Danforth, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation called forth the next witness, "Next we have Mr. Dee Snider, *the* Twisted Sister, Free Fall Talent Group."[24] Amidst the audible chatter from the crowd, Senator Hollings, seated next to Danforth leaned away from the microphones in front of them and gasped "What? Did you say Twisted Sister?" Senator Danforth smirked and pointed to the paper in front of him as Hollings looked on, "Yep, that's the group."[25] They both had a nice chuckle before looking up as the double doors at the back of the crowded room swung open. Dee Snider entered the room clad in tight denim jeans, a black sleeveless shirt with a caricature of himself on the front, and a denim jacket frayed at the shoulders where the sleeves had been cut off. Though Snider was not wearing his signature make up – blue eye-shadow, red lipstick, dark pink blush and a pencil drawn beauty mark above his right upper lip – or his pink and black fringe and leather costume – his physical appearance drew a sharp contrast to the sea of suits and ties that surrounded him. Amidst the audible shock from the crowd Snider

[24] Emphasis added. "Rock Lyrics Record Labeling," C-SPAN, Online video clip, http://www.c-span.org/video/?69484-1/rock-lyrics-record-labeling, (accessed September 21, 2015).
[25] These comments were not included on the official transcript of the hearing; however they are clearly audible in the video recording. For comparison, these comments appear in: *Contents of Music and the Lyrics of Records: Hearing Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation*, 99th Congress, 1st Session, 72 (1985). Hereafter referred to as "PMRC Hearing."

removed his vest, took a folded paper from his back pocket, tossed his long blonde frizzy hair to one side, and took his seat. Though Snider himself was not on trial, he was the lone representative of an entire genre of music that was under attack – heavy metal.

The hearing itself was the culmination of several months of intense public debate over the effect of rock music on American youth launched by a relatively new special interest group, the Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC). From its inception in the local communities of Washington D.C. during the spring of 1985, the PMRC's self-proclaimed mission was to "educate and inform parents" about an "alarming new trend…towards lyrics that are sexually explicit."[26] In addition to a rating system for musical content, similar in nature to the one used in the film industry, and parental advisory labels on album covers, the PMRC also lobbied to have certain songs banned from radio airplay. These actions, they argued, would help parents raise morally responsible children by limiting their exposure to profane, sexually explicit, violent, and occult messages. While the PMRC singled out certain artists and particular songs, the cultural form of heavy metal quickly became their primary target. Thus, heavy metal stood at the center of the controversy that erupted. The PMRC's influence grew so rapidly over the spring and summer of 1985 that by the time the hearing was announced in August people across the nation were talking about the "smut and sadism" of "porno rock" using heavy metal as their primary referent.[27] The September hearing and the veritable media frenzy that erupted around the issue of explicit lyrics was one of the largest and most heavily publicized battles in an ongoing series of culture wars launched by conservatives in the 1980s.

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[26] Quoted in: Claude Chastagner, "The Parents' Music Resource Center: From Information to Censorship." *Popular Music* 18, no. 2 (May 1999): 181.
[27] Tipper Gore, "The Smut and Sadism of Rock", Originally published *Newsday*, article reprinted in "PMRC Hearing."

Though Reagan's defeat of incumbent Jimmy Carter in 1980 appeared to signal the triumph of conservative ideology, social and moral conservatism was not yet fully rooted in American society – the conservative revolution remained incomplete. Polls taken as late as October of 1980 showed nearly twice as many Americans considered themselves Democrats as Republicans. And while many historians have posited Reagan's charisma as a key deciding factor in his victory over Carter, polls taken in 1980 suggested that just weeks before the election 30 percent of Americans found Carter's personality "highly favorable" compared to only 23 percent for Reagan.[28] While Reagan beat Carter by a landslide in the Electoral College, he received only 50.5 percent of the popular vote.[29] The media highlighted Reagan's stance on pocketbook issues as the key to his victory. It seemed that after years of inflation and rising unemployment, economic issues had persuaded many middle and working-class Americans typically aligned with the Democratic Party to cast their vote for Reagan.[30] This did not, however, imply an ideological shift in the ways many Americans viewed social issues –

[28] George Gallup, "Carter wins on Personal Appeal, Reagan Had Edge on Issues," *Times-News*, Vol. 105 No.253, October 23, 1980. For more on the centrality of Reagan's favorable public persona see: Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Sean P. Cunningham, *Cowboy Conservatism: Texas and the Rise of the Modern Right* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010).

[29] By comparison, the last conservative Republican candidate, incumbent Richard Nixon, received 60 percent of the popular vote in 1972 despite his failure to swiftly end the Vietnam War. "Popular Votes 1940-2012," Roper Center for Public Opinion. Cornell University. http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/polls/us-elections/popular-vote/ (accessed May 12, 2015). Reagan's average approval rating throughout his eight years in office was only slightly higher 52.8 percent. "Presidential Approval Ratings: Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends," Gallup, http://www.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx (accessed May 12, 2015).

[30] See John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). Ehrman argues that many liberal voters retained their ideological outlook but voted for Reagan because his policies appeared to better protect middle-class economic interests.

conservatism may have won their pocketbooks, but the battle for their hearts and minds had only just begun.

Though the PMRC presented themselves as an organization without political affiliations, concerned only with providing unbiased information to parents, they rarely, if ever, performed as such. Instead, the PMRC, shrouded in the guise of a "resource center," worked to realign the social and moral fabric of America with conservative ideology. The PMRC's crusade represented one battle of the Reagan Revolution being fought entirely on cultural terrain. Although a great deal of the action in this particular battle took place outside of the political arena, the PMRC's end goal had unmistakably political ramifications. On the surface the battle appeared to be about obscene lyrics but underneath this façade the PMRC was engaged in a struggle to capture the hearts and minds of the American people and bring them into the fold of the New Right and ensure the longevity of conservative social ideals. This chapter examines the role of the PMRC in the Reagan Revolution arguing that the strategies employed by the organization, which relied heavily on the cultural form of heavy metal, were fundamental to gaining popular support for an increasingly conservative social agenda.

Cum on Feel the Noize: The Creation of the PMRC

Sometime in December of 1984 Mary Elizabeth (Tipper) Gore went to the local record store to purchase an album for her eleven-year-old daughter Karenna. The album, Prince's *Purple Rain*, contained one of Karenna's favorite songs "Let's Go Crazy," which she heard frequently on the

radio.[31] As Karenna listened to the tracks on *Purple Rain*, her mother, within earshot, listened too. When track four, "Darling Nikki," came on Gore couldn't believe what she was hearing:

> I knew a girl named Nikki
> Guess you could say she was a sex fiend
> I met her in a hotel lobby
> Masturbating with a magazine.[32]

A song "describing a girl masturbating in a hotel lobby with a magazine," was something that Tipper found "inappropriate for her [Karenna] and her 8-and 6-year-old sisters to hear."[33] Her initial shock turned to anger as she thought about the "millions of Americans [who] were buying *Purple Rain* with no idea what to expect."[34] Worse yet, "thousands of parents were giving the album to their children," many of whom Gore imagined were even younger than eleven-year-old Karenna.[35] These sentiments lead Gore to contact other mothers to see if they were also concerned about the music to which their children were listening. She quickly discovered that she was not the only parent incensed over the lyrics and imagery in popular music.

Tipper, who was the wife of Senator Albert Gore (D-Tennessee), quickly gained the support of other mothers, including Susan Baker (wife of U.S. Treasury Secretary James Baker), Sally Nevius (wife of the former chairman of the District of Columbia City Council), and Pam Howar (wife of a high profile D.C. area realtor). These four women acted swiftly, creating the Parents' Music Resource Center in May of 1985. The initial capital and resources needed to get the PMRC off the ground came from two generous donors. Several of the women were already

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[31] Tipper Gore, *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 17; "PMRC Hearing,"47, (Tipper Gore).
[32] Prince, "Darling Nikki," *Purple Rain,* Warner Brothers Records, 1984.
[33] "PMRC Hearing,"47, (Tipper Gore).
[34] Gore, *Raising PG Kids in an X Rated Society*, 17.
[35] Gore, *Raising PG Kids in an X Rated Society*, 17.

avid supporters of several Reaganite conservative social causes, which proved instrumental in gaining financial support. Early in 1985 Pam Howar attended an anti-drug benefit concert held in support of Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign. There she met Beach Boys vocalist Mike Love, an outspoken conservative and founder of the philanthropic Love Foundation. After a conversation about the potentially dangerous nature of lyrics in popular music, Love agreed to donate $5,000 to the PMRC's cause.[36] A second important contribution came from business magnate Joseph Coors, president and chief operating officer of Coors Brewing Company, who provided the women with an office space in Alexandria, Virginia, which became the organization's headquarters. [37] Coors was a staunch conservative that made significant financial contributions that helped propel Reagan victory in the 1980 election, most notably a $250,000 donation used to create the Heritage Foundation – a Washington based brain trust that provided many of Reagan's conservative campaign ideas.[38] As a business owner Coors was well known for his deplorable anti-union labor practices and for enacting discriminatory policies against women, minorities, and gays. With these two contributions in hand, the PMRC formally established themselves as a non-profit organization designed to "address the issue of lyrics found in some rock music which glorify graphic sex and violence and glamorize the use of drugs and

[36] Bill Holland, "PMRC Says Beach Boys' Mike Love Gave Seed Money," *Billboard*, September 14, 1985.
[37] Chastagner, "The Parents' Music Resource Center: From Information to Censorship," 179-92. Over the course of the next ten years, until the PMRC faded from the national spotlight in the mid-1990s, the organization continued to gain monetary support from a variety of corporate and philanthropic sources including 7-UP, Dow Chemical, and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation (a philanthropic organization established by the RJ Reynolds tobacco company). See: Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair. *Al Gore: A User's Manual*. (London: Verso, 2000).
[38] Harold Jackson, "Joseph Coors: The Man Who Bought the White House for Reagan," *TheGuardian*, March 18, 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/mar/19/guardianobituaries.usa (accessed November 12, 2016).

alcohol."[39] Though the PMRC continually framed themselves as a bipartisan group – an example of Republicans and Democrats reaching across the aisle to support a common cause – the group clearly sought support from advocates of the New Right aligning themselves more closely with conservative ideals and values.

Over the course of the next three months Gore, Baker, Nevius, and Howar worked tirelessly to implement a three-pronged strategy that combined grassroots mobilization, creating alliances that bolstered the credibility of the organization, and eliciting a veritable media frenzy over music lyrics. Grassroots mobilization was at the forefront of the PMRC's initial strategy; however, given the fact that Gore, Howar, Baker, and Nevius were all politically connected, building a bottom-up grassroots mobilization required a sort of reverse engineering. Undoubtedly, the founders of the PMRC understood the advantages their political connections offered for the long-term advancement of the organization and their overall mission; however, appearing as the wives of important politicians also had the potential to alienate the working- and middle- class people whom the PMRC were trying to reach. Throughout the organization's existence, which lasted well into the 1990s, the PMRC founders masterfully oscillated between their maternal and political identities, foregrounding the role that best suited their audience. This strategy was repeated, with great success, in the literature published through the PMRC. Their newsletter, *The Record*, frequently began with a section entitled "Letter from the PMRC Founders," which often closed with an informal sign off – " Sincerely, Susan, Tipper, Pam,

[39] This is the description offered by the PMRC in their organizational literature. Parents' Music Resource Center, *Parents' Music Resource Center*, (Arlington, Virginia, 1989).

Sally."[40] This informal close implied that the women were on a friendly first name basis with the parents in their membership base. [41]

Well before the PMRC officially set up office in Arlington, Virginia in May of 1985, the group was already actively seeking the support of a grassroots coalition drawn from local Washington communities. They sent letters directly to parents alerting them – from one concerned mother to another – about the morally degrading nature of popular rock music. Newspaper articles also frequently highlighted the women's roles as mothers by telling readers that Gore, for example, was a "mother of four," and that Howar had a seven-year-old daughter, while downplaying their connections to Washington politics. In interviews with local newspaper reporters, both Gore and Howar retold their stories about discovering explicit content on the albums their children listened to at home.[42] These stories along with a consistent emphasis on the maternal role of the PMRC leaders helped to personalize the organization's mission while downplaying the potential political ramifications of their attacks on rock music – namely the possibility of future legislation that bordered on censorship.

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[40] See for example the Fall/Winter Issue of *The Record* from 1992. Here the letter from the founders asks for other parents to help gathering resources and for monetary support. The sign off is informal. This is the case in several other editions of the newsletter. Parents' Music Resource Center, *File of Clippings and Miscellanea,* American Radicalism Collection Vertical File, Special Collections Division, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.

[41] Gore's book, *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society*, published in 1987, is written almost entirely from the perspective of a concerned mother. Gore appeals to other parents' emotions throughout the narrative, which provides an interesting counterpoint to sections where she appears to speak with expertise about the nature of rock music and its effects on adolescents. Interestingly, she rarely refers to the political connections of the PMRC. The entire book is framed as a guidebook for parents, written not by a doctor or a psychologist, but by another parent who through her affiliation with the PMRC could claim some expertise on raising children.

[42] "The Flip Side," *The Washington Post,* April 30, 1985, C5.

In the weeks leading up to the organization's first public meeting *The Washington Post* ran two separate articles in the local style section about the PMRC. In the earliest article the women's political connections via their husbands are noted casually; however, the article, in keeping with the PMRC's own rhetoric, downplays these connections depicting the grassroots origins of the group and emphasizing the women's roles as concerned parents. Rather than using an official title, the group is simply referred to as a "mothers' group." The meeting itself is described as a "talk" where other concerned mothers could learn "about the influence of rock music on the lives of America's children."[43] What was, in truth, the first formal meeting of an organization that had quite a bit of political clout, was framed in this article as an informal gathering akin to any other luncheon or casual ladies group meeting – a chance for mothers to chat with people like them. A second article published just a week later further and more explicitly emphasizes the women organizing this meeting as mothers. This article makes no mention of political connections, referring to Howar, as simply the "spokeswoman for the group" and "the mother of a 7-year-old daughter."[44] Like the previous article, the meeting is portrayed as a casual community gathering where "Howar and other mothers are meeting…to discuss the influence of rock."[45] As it turned out, the meeting was anything but casual from its very inception.

Early on the PMRC joined forces with Jeff Ling, a former rock and roll musician turned local youth minister. Ling prepared a detailed slide show to "graphically illustrating the worst excesses in rock music, from lyrics to concert performances to rock magazines," to be presented

[43] Donnie Radcliffe, "Mothers' Group Wants Prince to Clean Up His Act," *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1985.
[44] "The Flip Side," C5.
[45] "The Flip Side," C5.

at the meeting.[46] Not surprisingly, in Ling's presentation, which he repeated before a packed hearing room during the September hearing, he implied that the worst excesses were found almost exclusively within the genre of heavy metal.[47] In her book, Gore describes the initial process the four founders undertook in the weeks leading up to the initial meeting: "We invited the public, community leaders, our friends (some of whom [held] public office), and representatives of the music industry."[48] The meeting was shaping up to be more than an informal talk. When the day finally arrived over 350 people showed up for the mothers' meeting. If attendance is any indicator, the women had successfully organized the beginnings of a grassroots movement by highlighting their maternal roles and appealing on a personal level to other parents in the community.

Over the course of the next four months, the founding mothers continued to gain public support for the PMRC's cause. Though grassroots mobilization served them well at the local level, the women knew they needed credentialed allies that would legitimize their concerns in the eyes of the American public. Having already aligned with Jeff Ling, whose reputation as a musician and youth minister allowed the PMRC to claim some expertise on the impact of rock music on adolescent development, the PMRC worked to find other strategic allies that could help bolster the organization's authoritative presence. The first major ally the group picked up was Edward O. Fritts, President of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), a trade association that regulated the content of radio and television programming in the United States. Though the PMRC invited executives at all the major record labels as well as many other professionals within the music industry to their meeting they received very little support from

[46] Gore, *Raising PG Kids in an X Rated Society*, 19.
[47] "PMRC Hearing," 13-17, (Presentation by Jeff Ling).
[48] Gore, *Raising PG Kids in an X Rated Society*, 19.

within the industry as a whole. The PMRC's invitation did, however, peak Fritts' interest, compelling him to send out over 800 letters to radio and television executives alerting them to a growing public concern over the pornographic nature of some rock music.[49]

As their only ally within the music industry, Fritts' professional connections proved invaluable to legitimizing the PMRC's cause. He contacted the executives at forty-five record companies on the organization's behalf, requesting that lyrics accompany all new songs sent out for radio play. The ladies of the PMRC hoped that contact from the president of the NAB would sway record companies to their side. After all, if radio stations around the country refused to play music that contained explicit lyrical references, surely record companies would stop producing music that wouldn't get any radio exposure.

Fritts' efforts did help the PMRC, though not necessarily in the ways they anticipated. In June of 1985 *Radio & Records* (*R&R*) published the results of an informal survey designed to assess both radio station and record company reception of the proposal to include lyric sheets. Unlike the articles aimed at gaining the support of the community, the article in *R&R*, which was the staple magazine of the broadcasting industry, refers to the PMRC founders as "concerned wives of prominent national politicians," and names Senator Albert Gore and Secretary of the Treasury James Baker by name. Though these types of references might have been alienating or off putting to local housewives and mothers, they were integral to legitimizing the issue within the recording industry. The article also notes that while the NAB didn't wish to garner national attention, this group of Washington wives had already brought the battle over lyrics into the national spotlight through a segment aired earlier in the week on *Entertainment Tonight*. The

[49] "PMRC Hearing," 132, (Statement of Edward O. Fritts).

combination of Fritts' endorsement, the PMRC's political connections, and the media's interest in the issue functioned as a form of indirect persuasion.[50]

Though the lyrics sheets seemed like a new and much needed measure to many outside the radio industry, radio programmers already adhered to regulations provided by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that restricted profane language on public airwaves. Though none of the programming directors interviewed were opposed to the idea, some directors like Ted Utz from WMMR/Philadelphia felt the measure was superfluous. "Most radio stations are open to most lyrics, as is the FCC." Utz stated.[51] Programming directors were, at least in Utz's opinion, already acting responsibly in accord with regulations.

The random sampling collected in *R&R* didn't find any oppositional voices, though many within the broadcasting industry opposed the idea. Representatives from local heavy metal stations were understandably less amenable to the idea. When questioned about the issue of obscene lyrics, an unidentified program director at Los Angeles' progressive rock station "K-ROQ" framed the issue as one of civil rights. "Its freedom of choice…if we don't give our listeners our kind of music, who will?" he commented.[52] Others concurred, suggesting that it was the first step toward censorship. Ed Scarborough, programming director at Los Angeles station KMGG-FM, with an adult contemporary format, told a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* he couldn't identify "any instance where we reject a record because it's lyrically filthy." Noting a

[50] "NAB Asks Labels to Send Song Lyrics to Stations with Records," *Radio & Records*, (7 June 1985), 11.
[51] "NAB Asks Labels to Send Song Lyrics to Stations with Records," 11.
[52] Unidentified representative from Los Angeles station KROQ-FM (106.7) quoted in: John Horn, "Rock Porn? Stations are Warned," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1985.

popular song by pop singer Sheena Easton that the PMRC labeled with an "X" rating, Scarborough continued, "In 'Sugar Walls,' for example, there are no four letter words."[53]

Opposition to Fritts' proposal from radio programmers highlighted the subjective and interpretive nature of the PMRC's ratings, which sharply contrasted the FCC's more objective four-letter word obscenity rule. "Its hard to believe it would come to a point where the record companies would have to send lyrics," Ron Rodrigues, operations manager at KMGG-FM noted, voicing opposition to the measure, "The issue of morality reaches far beyond lyrical content."[54] While the PMRC's formal complaints were with the music's morally damaging lyrics, the organization frequently found it necessary to go beyond the actual words in a song, as Rodrigues suggested, in order to justify their objections. When questioned about the PMRC's rating for "Sugar Walls," Susan Baker told a reporter "you should hear the way she sings those lyrics using this very sexy, *erotic*, voice."[55] Baker was less concerned with *what* Easton was singing but rather *how* she was singing it. As their battle gained momentum, the PMRC's assault on rock and roll went far beyond the lyrics – it became a full-blown attack on rock and roll as a cultural form, with heavy metal as their primary target.

This was not the first time record executives were approached about explicit content. A year earlier, in 1984 the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (the national branch of the PTA organization) sent letters to upwards of thirty record companies requesting they label records that contained sexual themes, violence, and profanity. The PTA received only three

[53] Quoted in: Horn, "Rock Porn? Stations are Warned."
[54] Quoted in: Horn, "Rock Porn? Stations are Warned."
[55] Article from *Los Angeles Times* included in "PMRC Hearing," 18. Emphasis added, though the reporter noted in the article that Baker put "extra emphasis on the word erotic."

responses, all of which politely refused further discussion on the matter.[56] The record industry's response to Fritts' initial request, made on behalf of the PMRC in May of 1985 was handled similarly. If the concerns of the PTA - a national organization with millions of members – didn't set the record companies into a panic, they likely took Fritts' request on behalf of a local mothers' group in the Washington D.C. area even less seriously.

As the issue gained more media coverage and it became clear that the mothers' group actually wielded quite a bit of political clout, record executives shied away from discussing the issue with the media. Rock and roll had survived previous "moral panics," and the hope was that the issue would fade out of the spotlight relatively quickly.[57] Thus, when approached as part of the informal survey conducted by *R&R*, all but one record executive declined commentary. One of the few record executives that did speak out on the issue was Lenny Waronker, president of Warner Brothers records – the label that signed Prince. Waronker admitted that he was "bothered" by the request to include lyrics because "it smells of censorship." Ultimately, Waronker suggested that the decision to play certain songs should remain up to individual stations.[58]

Though Fritts' initial efforts yielded mixed responses from the recording industry, he was, as Tipper Gore recalled, the PMRC's "secret ally." Fritts not only held a high ranking position related to the record industry, he understood the inner workings of that industry far better than any of the PMRC founders. Fritts urged the women to forego contacting the individual record companies, advising that the best course of action would be to voice their

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[56] Gore, *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society*, 23. See also "MTV Meets with Parents' Group to Explain its 'High Standards," *Variety*, July 31, 1985.
[57] For more on the various movements to censor rock and roll see: Linda Martin and Kerry Segrave, *Anti-Rock: The Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll*. (Hamden: Archon Books, 1988).
[58] Horn, "Rock Porn? Stations are Warned."

concerns directly to Stanley Gortikov, the head of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). He also advised that they broaden the scope of their campaign from local to national coverage. Eventually, the issue even received international attention.[59]

Following Fritts' advice, the PMRC drafted a letter to Gortikov that warned of the explicit nature of certain recorded music and "steps" they wanted the RIAA to take to remedy the problem.[60] The PMRC proposed/demanded printing lyrics on the outside of all albums and providing retailers and radio stations with copies of the lyrics for every song. The PMRC also requested the creation of a ratings system, similar to the one implemented in the film industry. Songs and albums that contained "profanity, violence, suicide or sexually explicit lyrics, including fornication, sadomasochism, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, and necrophilia," would be labeled "X." Those that "glorify" the use of drugs or alcohol would get a "D/A" rating. Those that concerned with the occult would earn an "O" while those with Violence would be labeled "V".[61] The PMRC further insisted that these ratings then be used to govern the retail sales of albums by moving the albums with any of these ratings behind the sales counters at record stores. Their list of suggested protocols not only covered explicit references in the lyrical content of some music, which was the original concern that spurred Gore and the other women into action; the scope of the PMRC's demands had grown substantially and now included the content of music videos, album covers, and concert performances.

While they awaited a response from the RIAA, the PMRC worked to increase media coverage of their concerns. Between May and August the four founders and their board of

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[59] Gore, *Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society,* 23.
[60] "PMRC Hearing," (Appendix A - Letter from Stanley Gortikov to Pam Howar, President, PMRC), 98.
[61] "PMRC Hearing," (Appendix A - Letter from Stanley Gortikov to Pam Howar, President, PMRC), 98.

directors, which now included seventeen other "Washington wives," forged key alliances with journalists, scholars, and medical professionals many of whom were called to testify on the PMRC's behalf during the hearing. Support for the organization grew substantially over the course of several months partially because the issue of explicit content in music had, with the help of the PMRC, moved into the national spotlight. In addition to the hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles that covered the topic of explicit lyrics, Gore and Baker both held separate radio and television interviews with the BBC opening the issue to an international audience. In May of 1985, debates over "pornographic rock" were featured prominently on "Good Morning America." Immediately after that program aired, Howar appeared on the Washington television program "Panorama." Over the next few weeks Gore was invited on an hour-long radio talk show in Oklahoma, and both Baker and Nevius had similar invitations from stations in other states. In the end, as Gore recalled, "the media campaign took care of itself," which only goes to show how easy it was for these well connected women to gain publicity for their cause.[62] In just a few short months the PMRC brought their objections over explicit content into the national spotlight where people were forced to take notice.

In June Gortikov met with representatives from the PMRC, though the RIAA was reportedly remaining uninvolved, leaving negotiations up to individual record labels.[63] However, by the end of the summer amidst a flurry of media coverage, the RIAA was finally pressured to formally respond to the PMRC's demands. On August 5, 1985 the women received

[62] The exact number of interviews is unknown. The information here is recounted in Tipper Gore's 1987 book and is reiterated in the organizational literature from the PMRC. A basic search in newspaper databases yields hundreds of articles around the subject of record labeling. The issue was also a major topic of discussion in popular magazines like *Rolling Stone*.
[63] Bill Holland, "Mothers' Group Meets Gortikov: Concern Over Lyrics, Videos Aired," *Billboard*, June 15, 1985, 6.

a response from Gortikov – a ten-page letter that acknowledged their concerns and offered a careful rebuttal to many of their requests. Though the RIAA was unwilling to simply acquiesce, Gortikov offered what the RIAA felt was a fair compromise: individual companies agreed to voluntarily apply a "Parental Guidance: Explicit Lyrics" label to the packaging of albums with questionable content. From the beginning the PMRC claimed to be advocating for a way to easily alert parents about the potentially explicit content in some records and in the eyes of the RIAA these labels provided an adequate warning; however, the PMRC was not satisfied and they quickly refuted the RIAA's proposed solution. The negotiations quickly became a stalemate.

Shortly after Gortikov's response reached the PMRC early in August of 1985, Senator John Danforth (R-Missouri) scheduled a hearing before the Senate Committee on Science, Commerce, and Transportation. Just weeks before the scheduled September 19th hearing the 5.6 million member National PTA – a well established and trusted organization of parents and education professionals – formally announced a cooperative coalition with the PMRC giving the organization an even wider base of support and credibility.[64] A mere three months after the first meeting of a local Washington "mothers' group," the issue of explicit lyrics reached Capital Hill. Though the women had done well early on to advocate for increased awareness from their position as concerned parents – a strategy that garnered local support to mobilize a grass-roots coalition – their political connections had ultimately served them well. It was, of course, no coincidence that Tipper Gore's husband, Senator Albert Gore (D-Tennessee) was a member of this particular Senate Committee and Senator John Danforth's wife was one of the recent

[64] Parents' Music Resource Center, *Parents' Music Resource Center*, (Arlington, Virginia, 1989).

Washington wives "connected with" the PMRC."[65] Though the PMRC downplayed the importance of their political connections in the local arena, those connections became a prominent feature of the national media campaign, and it is unlikely that a less well-connected group of women could have garnered a senate hearing in such a short amount of time.

In the months leading up to the hearing, the PMRC's war against popular music drew both intense support and criticism. Public debates over the PMRC's initiatives and the upcoming trial crystalized around two key issues: consumer advocacy and censorship. The PMRC and its supporters insisted that record labeling was a means of consumer information – a type of truth in packaging - that was desperately needed to protect adolescents from dangerous materials circulating in the marketplace. However, those who opposed the PMRC felt that the suggested protocols – from a proposed rating system and explicit content stickers to restricted retail space and reduced television and radio exposure – amounted to more than simply making consumers aware of potentially offensive content. According to the opposition, these actions were not only a violation of First Amendment rights, they amounted to a cleverly disguised form of censorship aimed at purging particular artistic expressions from the marketplace.

The PMRC attempted to counter these arguments by avoiding any rhetoric that even hinted at censorship; instead, they asked the industry to engage in voluntary self-regulation. However, when the RIAA agreed to voluntarily apply a "Parental Guidance: Explicit Lyrics" label to albums, well in advance of the September hearing, the PMRC remained unsatisfied. Despite the fact that the RIAA gave the PMRC *exactly* what they asked for - a warning label that would alert consumers of explicit content and thereby allow parents to make informed choices

[65] The PMRC did not generate official membership lists, however when questioned about the connections between Senator Danforth and the PMRC, Tipper Gore told *Rolling Stone* that Sally Danforth was connected with the organization prior to the 1985 Senate hearing.

about the albums purchased for and by their children – the PMRC continued to press the issue. Their battle was clearly about more than consumer information. The RIAA and many in the music industry remained suspicious of the PMRC's true intentions and the hearing, which loomed in the not so distant future, certainly heightened their concerns.

Youth Gone Wild: A Culture of Fear

Though the PMRC did well to elicit its own media frenzy, several other powerful social currents already at work in American society coalesced under its campaign. The PMRC launched its campaign under the framework of safeguarding children – a concern that had gained a significant amount of attention in the early eighties. A series of incidents, sensationalized in the media, from child abuse and Satanism to drug addiction and murder, underpinned a wave of moral panics that gripped American consciousness. While these panics were separate and complex social issues in their own right, people rarely understood them as such. Media coverage, which frequently portrayed these issues as intertwined phenomena, helped to shape public understanding and foster a culture of fear focused on protecting the bodies, minds, and souls of American children.[66]

In the early 1980s a string of child abuse exposés shocked the nation. Reports of molestation, child sex-rings, and ritual abuse came from large cities like New York and Los Angeles, and from hundreds of small towns in between. In almost every story the alleged abusers were parents, relatives, childcare workers, or respected members of the community – the

[66] For a more expanded discussion of panics, fears, and perceived threats in eighties America see: Philip Jenkins, *A Decade of Nightmares: The end of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

very people entrusted to care for and protect children.[67] Parents became suspicious of anyone and everyone who came in contact with their children. Many parents even admitted they were "afraid to show affection for their own children, lest they themselves come under suspicion of unspeakable acts."[68] Child abuse was no longer thought of as a rare occurrence, but rather as a "widespread" epidemic.[69] "If we saw these same numbers of children suddenly developing some kind of illness," Dr. A. Nicholas Groth, director of a sex offender program at a Connecticut correctional institution explained, "we'd think we had a major epidemic on our hands."[70]

A string of startling statistics seemed to validate Groth's observation. *Newsweek* reported that one out of every ten children is sexually abused each year and that each adult offender had an average of 68 victims.[71] Results of a recent national survey published by the *New York Times* indicated a 200 percent increase in reported child abuse cases as compared to 1976.[72] At first glance these statistics are alarming, though they don't necessarily tell the whole story. While it is certainly true that child abuse became more visible in the early eighties, it was not necessarily more prevalent than it had been in the preceding decades. Child abuse cases were, and still are, notoriously underreported for a variety of reasons. Though mandatory reporting laws were

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[67] This is supported by statistics given in 1982 by the Family Violence Research Program at the University of New Hampshire, which stated that two-thirds of child abuse victims and their parents know the assailants. Quoted in: Eloise Salholz and Contreras, Joe et.al. "Beware of Child Molesters," *Newsweek*, August 9, 1982, 45.

[68] Richard Cohen. "The New Anxiety Over Child Abuse." *The Washington Post*, Vol. 107, pA21, Dec 1, 1984

[69] Glen Collins, "Studies Find Sexual Abuse of Children is Widespread," *New York Times*, 1982, 19.

[70] Collins, "Studies Find Sexual Abuse of Children is Widespread,"19.

[71] Eloise Salholz and Contreras, Joe et.al. "Beware of Child Molesters," 45.

[72] Collins, "Studies Find Sexual Abuse of Children is Widespread,"19. For more on child abuse in the 1980s see: Mark Pendergast, *Victims of Memory: Sex Abuse Accusations and Shattered Lives*, (Hinesburg: Upper Access, 1996); Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against Women,* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992); *Capturing the Friedmans,* directed by Andrew Jarecki, *HBO* Video, 2003.

passed in 1974, it is difficult to assess how effective those laws were in 1976; however, certainly by 1982 increased awareness of the laws and subsequent training on how properly to identify child abuse had resulted in more *reported* cases.

Whether the figures were accurate or not, statistics like these raised public awareness of child abuse and instilled both suspicion and fear in many parents. In his depiction of a typical all-American town in the 1980s, *New York Times* reporter Richard Cohen wrote, "the men are strong, the women are pretty and just about every other person has been accused of being a pervert."[73] Despite the satirical tone of his commentary, Cohen drew his observations from an actual town – Jordan, Minnesota – where twenty-five of the towns 2,700 residents had recently been accused of hundreds of acts of child abuse. Many of the children and even one adult who made accusations eventually admitted to fabricating their stories. The whole scandal resulted in one conviction.[74] As extraordinary as Jordan's story may seem, fear and suspicion over the wellbeing of children had become so deeply rooted in American society that cities across the nation were swept up in similar panics.[75]

Though the media played an important role in publicizing and sensationalizing child abuse cases, feeding a burgeoning culture of fear, shifting definitions of proper gender roles within the nuclear family created the social conditions necessary for this moral panic to unfold. During the postwar period women entered the workforce in record numbers, which slowly eroded away traditional roles of the male breadwinner and the maternal housewife. By the early eighties less than half of all American households remained structured according to these traditional roles. After the economic downturn of the seventies dual wage earning became a

[73] Richard Cohen. "The New Anxiety Over Child Abuse," A21.
[74] Richard Cohen. "The New Anxiety Over Child Abuse," A21.

necessity for many American families. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that by 1981 nearly sixty percent of all married couples with children were dual wage earning households. Between 1970 and 1980 the divorce rate also increased significantly, leaving one out of every five children in a single parent home.[76] These shifts in family structure meant that many American parents relied on childcare services outside the home. Thus, reports of abuse cases at daycare centers and preschools became a cause for heightened suspicion and concern.

One of the most widely publicized instances of child abuse occurred in 1982 at the McMartin Preschool in Manhattan Beach California that implicated several of the childcare workers there in hundreds of accounts of sexual molestation. When Los Angeles reporter Wayne Satz (K-ABC) broke the story on a local news station, the horrific case rapidly propelled multiple victim multiple offender (MVMO) child abuse into the national spotlight. In mid-August, the Manhattan Beach Police Department responded to the complaints of a concerned mother who believed McMartin teacher Raymond Buckey had sodomized her son. Buckey was arrested in September, but released due to a lack of evidence; however, the police department continued their investigation by sending a letter to 200 parents of current and former McMartin Preschool attendees. The letter read:

> Please question your child to see if he or she has been a witness to any crime or if he or she has been a victim. Our investigation indicates that possible criminal acts include: oral sex, fondling of genitals, buttock or chest area, and sodomy, possibly committed under the pretense of "taking the child's temperature." Also photos may have been taken of children without their clothing. Any information from your child regarding having

[76] Allison Sherman Grossman, "More Than Half of All Children Have Working Mothers," *Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Labor Review, Special Labor Force Reports – Summaries,* February 1982, 41.

> ever observed Ray Buckey to leave a classroom alone with a child during any nap period, or if they have ever observed Ray Buckey tie up a child, is important.[77]

As much as the police department may have tried to conduct an unbiased investigation, their letter openly exhibited signs that even law enforcement had been swept up in the moral panic over child abuse. Rather than simply asking parents to question their children about any inappropriate or strange occurrences at the McMartin Preschool, the letter specifically listed sexual acts, using language that was suggestive of the types of answers needed to mount a case. Even if parents read verbatim from the letter, the specificity of the examples used and the blatant naming of the suspect, suggested that these things did in fact happen and that Buckey was in fact guilty.

As parents discussed the investigation with their neighbors and friends, the number of allegations increased. In the matter of a few months the police department had sixty additional children whose alleged abuse had taken place during their enrollment at the McMartin Preschool. The number of victims and accusations grew so quickly that in October of 1983 the District Attorney's office decided to contract Kee McFarlane, a social worker at the Children's Institute International (CII), to conduct interviews with the children.[78] "By the end of the first month," MacFarlane told reporters, " we had 200 [children] on a waiting list. We were seeing them around the clock."[79] These interviews broadened the scope of the investigation to include six other McMartin Preschool employees in addition to Raymond Buckey. Ultimately, MacFarlane

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[77] Douglas Linder, *Letter to McMartin Preschool Parents from Police Chief Kuhlmeyer, Jr.* http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mcmartin/lettertoparents.html, (accessed September 1, 2015).
[78] Douglas Linder, *Chronology of the McMartin Abuse Trials,* http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mcmartin/mcmartinchrono.html, (accessed September 1, 2015).
[79] Robert Reinhold, "The Longest Trial – A Post-Mortem," *New York Times*, January 24, 1990.

and her team recorded interviews with 400 McMartin Preschool attendees, 360 of which, they said described some type of abuse.[80] At the time of their arrest in March of 1984, the seven McMartin employees had been accused of 115 acts of child molestation involving eighteen children.[81] In May of 1984 the Associated Press reported that Prosecutors added an additional 92 counts of molestation to the 115 previous charges after 24 more victims had been discovered.[82] Eventually the numbers soared even higher, reaching 321 counts and 48 victims.[83]

The sheer number of victims and allegations reported by various news outlets were certainly evidence enough to alarm parents; however the scale of the McMartin case was only part of what made it so shocking. The allegations that surfaced signaled that something more sinister than child pornography or molestation had happened at the McMartin School – the children there had been ritualistically abused. Early media coverage reported that McMartin students had been subjected to various types of molestation, from sodomy to oral copulation, and that they were forced to play "naked games," during which the children were photographed by adults at the Preschool. As the number of victims and allegations increased, new details surfaced in local and national news reports. A ten-year-old boy told of observing a ritual in a candle-lit church where figures in dark robes slaughtered animals and forced him and several other children to drink the animals' blood.[84] A five-year-old girl insisted she, and a group of her classmates, were taken on an airplane ride and to a house where Ray Buckey was wearing a

[80] Reinhold, "The Longest Trial – A Post-Mortem."
[81] "Bail Set in Molestation Case," *New York Times*, Vol. 133, March 24, 1984, 7.
[82] "92 More Charges Filed in Child Molesting Case," Around the Nation, *New York Times*, May 24, 1984, A16.
[83] Reinhold, "The Longest Trial – A Post-Mortem."
[84] Carol McGraw, "McMartin Pupil, 10, Tells of Bizarre Rite Forced to Drink Blood, Witness Claims," *Los Angeles Times*, February 21 1985, 6.

witch costume.[85] Others spoke of underground tunnels that lead to off-site locations where other adults who did not work at the Preschool participated in similar rituals and acts of sexual abuse. Numerous children claimed that Buckey and the other assailants had cut off the ears of rabbits and savagely killed horses as examples of what would happen to the children and their families if they told of the abuse.

Media coverage fueled an uncritical acceptance amongst the general public of the details they read and heard, which in turn fed a growing hysteria about not only child abuse but ritualized abuse as well. Much of the media coverage failed to refer to the indictments or accusations as "alleged," instead they were simply presented as acts that had, in fact, happened.[86] Satz' coverage of the case, which suffered from a general lack of skepticism paired with inflammatory language like "grotesque," "nightmarish, " horrific," and "chilling," set the tone for other journalists across the nation who followed suit in their reports. Despite the fantastical nature and sheer impossibility of some of the children's stories, not to mention the lack of any physical evidence to corroborate the allegations, the media simply reported these claims as truths.[87]

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[85] Carol McGraw, "Girl, 5, Tells of Abuses, Threats by Ray Buckey," *New York Times*, March 27, 1985, 1.

[86] At the close of the McMartin trial, media coverage of the case, especially the news reports by Satz, were heavily scrutinized both for using inflammatory language that triggered hysteria, and because there was a general lack of neutrality. Satz also became romantically involved with Kee MacFarlane, which many believe created a bias toward the prosecution.

[87] David Shaw, "Reporter's Early Exclusives Triggered a Media Frenzy," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1990. Results of a poll taken by the *Los Angeles Times* suggested that an overwhelming number of people believed that most of the children in the McMartin case had been abused – only two of the 2,627 people involved in the study believed that there was no abuse. See: Lois Timnick, "The Times Poll Children's Abuse Reports Reliable, most Believe Series: Second of Two Parts." *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 26, 1985, 1.

In September of 1984 Kee McFarlane testified at a congressional subcommittee hearing that she believed that the McMartin case was part of a larger "organized operation of child predators designed to prevent detection."[88] By February of 1985 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had upwards of 200 cases of MVMO ritual abuse "from jurisdictions thousands of miles apart."[89] FBI behavioral scientist Kenneth Lanning estimated that in the five years following the start of the McMartin investigation he personally investigated approximately one hundred cases of MVMO ritual abuse all of which, involved preschool aged children who described Satanic rituals involving "candles, robed adults, chanting, blood, feces, and sometimes human dismemberment," without any physical evidence or other substantiating proof to corroborate their stories.[90] Lanning also noted that these types of reports were virtually unheard of before the McMartin case exploded in 1983.

The McMartin case, and others like it, bolstered a public belief in Satanism and Satanic influence that had, until the early 1980s, been largely limited to fundamentalist congregations on the fringes of mainstream society. The growth of fundamentalism in the late seventies and early eighties played a role in heightening public awareness of satanic influence. Several isolated instances of satanic panic came to the surface in the early eighties and gained some traction in mainstream society.[91] One of the most notable instances was a rumor that began circulating in

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[88] Nadine Brozan, "Witness Says She Fears 'Child Predator' Network," *New York Times*, September 18, 1984, A21.
[89] Cynthia Gorney, "The Terrible Puzzle of McMartin Preschool," *The Washington Post*, May 17, 1988, B1.
[90] Gorney, "The Terrible Puzzle of McMartin Preschool," B1.
[91] For more information on the Satanic panic see: Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend,* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993); James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley, *The Satanism Scare*, (New York: A. de Gruyter, 1991); Bill Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions, and the Media*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000);

early 1981 concerning Procter and Gamble (P&G) logo– a moon with a man's face surrounded by thirteen stars – which some people claimed was a Satanic reference. Despite the company's efforts to contain the rumor and eliminate suspicion, customer inquiries regarding the logo came from areas across the nation reaching as far as Alaska and Hawaii. At the peak of public concern, the accusations resulted in an average of 15,000 customer service inquiries a month.[92] In 1985, four years after the rumor first appeared, P&G was still dealing with accusations of Satanism.[93] Public belief in the company's possible satanic ties proved so persistent that P&G decided to phase the logo out rather than continue fighting to clear its name.[94]

Attacks like the one on Procter and Gamble offered isolated examples of Satanism in American society; however, by the mid 1980s rock and roll music (especially heavy metal) became the ultimate exemplar of how deep and widespread satanic influence had become. The notion that rock and roll was the Devil's music was certainly not new. Beginning in the mid 1970s, concern over rock music's impact on adolescents prompted several fundamentalist evangelists to travel from city to city speaking to young people about the "evil influence" of rock and roll music.[95] These evangelists often enhanced their persuasive sermons with lurid demonstrations of back masking – a process of playing a recording backwards to reveal the subliminal satanic messages supposedly embedded in rock and roll music.[96] The Peters Brothers Ministry, one of the most successful of touring evangelist organizations in the early eighties,

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[92] Belkin, Lisa, "PROCTER & GAMBLE FIGHTS SATAN STORY." *The New York Times*, 1985.
[93] Belkin, "PROCTER & GAMBLE FIGHTS SATAN STORY."
[94] "P&G Loses Campaign for the Moon and Stars," *Globe & Mail (Toronto, Canada),* April 26, 1985, B6.
[95] Ann Silverstein, "Is Rock 'n'Roll Music a Bad Influence on Young People?" *Wilmington Morning Star*, December 21, 1983, 4-5.
[96] "Rally Informs Youth Rock 'n' Roll Sells Sex 'n' Satan," *The Dispatch*, Vol. 91 No.33, August 15, 1984, 1.

frequently gave a "seminar" entitled "What the Devil is Wrong with Rock Music?" that ended with a massive public record burning ritual.[97] The Peters Brothers, and other similar organizations, also frequently sent groups of anti-rock crusaders to concerts where they circulated handbills and created picket lines with the hopes of garnering media attention.[98] Like Billy Graham and other popular televangelists, anti-rock crusaders like the Peters Brothers embraced the media, as "an excellent way to witness to thousands of people you could never meet otherwise."[99] Between 1979 and 1984 news reports of congregation sponsored album burnings increased – early heavy metal albums by Kiss, AC/DC, Judas Priest, and Black Sabbath were among the most common records reportedly purged in the flames.[100]

Record burnings and sermons on the evil influence of rock music worked well to garner support within the fundamentalist community; however, those on the outside generally found these tactics too extreme. Though many religious leaders from various non-fundamentalist denominations agreed with the general message - that rock and roll was "definitely poisonous, disruptive and derogatory," they often considered measures like record burning "a little drastic."[101] Rock and roll fans were generally far less accepting of both the message and the approach of Fundamentalist anti-rock campaigns. In February of 1981 *Rolling Stone* ran a lengthy article based on interviews with the Peters Brothers, entitled "Is Rock Unrighteous?

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[97] Tom Zito, "Is Rock Unrighteous? Great Balls of Fire!" *Rolling Stone,* Feb 19 1981, 9. In 1980 the Peters Brothers gave this seminar on fifty separate occasions in cities across the United States – a large public album burning followed fourteen of these events.
[98] Toby Goldstein, "Is Satan in Rock?" *Hit Parader*, August 1982, 25.
[99] Tom Zito, "Is Rock Unrighteous? Great Balls of Fire!" 16.
[100] In 1983 the *Star-News* reported five official record burnings over the past two years in North and South Carolina, though unofficially there were likely many more. Other local news outlets reported record burnings in Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Laura A. Mercer, "Church Record-Burning Draws Mixed Reaction," *Star-News*, May 31, 1983, 2B.
[101] Mercer, "Church Record Burning Draws Mixed Reactions," 2B.

Great Balls of Fire!" Though the article did not pass judgment on the Peters Brothers, readers did not hesitate to do so. Their responses, featured in the Letters section of the April 2nd edition, overwhelmingly condemned the Peters' actions. Some evoked the very Christian principles the Peters claimed to stand for: "Rock music, like any art form, is part of the continuing act of creation," one fan wrote, "for *God's* sake, don't burn it."[102] Others who were clearly disgusted with the tactics of "these neo-right-wing storm troopers," expressed dismay at "see[ing] Jesus Christ with so much egg on his face." [103] Several letters expressed concern that the growing popularity of fundamentalist anti-rock seminars and album burnings could lead to other repressive measures against musicians and fans. "Before you know it," one letter read, " the Moral Majority will be dragging rock & rollers out of their homes and throwing them into the fires along with their records."[104]

The PMRC picked up the fundamentalists' message and reworked it – stripping away fanatical aspects like record burning, thereby making it more palatable for a mainstream audience. Though the New Right's attack on rock and roll never reached measures quite that extreme, the notion that rock and roll music was an evil influence definitely gained support in the years preceding the emergence of the PMRC. The PMRC also received various types of support from many of the religious organizations that supported the New Right, most notably Pat Robertson's 700 Club and the Christian Religious Booksellers Convention, which sold and distributed PMRC literature.[105]

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[102] Mark Nelson, "Letters," *Rolling Stone,* April 2, 1981, 8.
[103] Ron Christenson, "Letters," *Rolling Stone,* April 2, 1981, 8.
[104] Carl Heath, "Letters," *Rolling Stone,* April 2, 1981, 8.
[105] Claude Chastagner, "The Parents' Music Resource Center," 179-92.

In the early eighties, however, fundamentalism was still a fringe movement, and few people readily accepted the notion that rock and roll was evil, Satanic, or particularly damaging to their children – perhaps because they had few tangible examples that demonstrated that music was negatively impacting American adolescents. That changed as a series of violent crimes involving teenagers and young adults made headline news. Satanic cults, Devil worship, and demonic possession, emerged as prominent explanations for many gruesome and violent crimes committed in the first half of the decade. Media reports of supposedly satanic crimes demonstrated how deeply intertwined various perceived threats to adolescents had become. Though Satanism was perhaps the most sensational aspect of many of these crimes, the media rarely reported it as the sole cause. The search to understand these seemingly inexplicable offenses committed by young people, brought other societal concerns to the forefront – namely the rise in drug use amongst American teenagers, and the influence of new forms of popular culture that many believed glorified both Satanism and habitual drug abuse. Though several cultural forms from video games to horror films were implicated in the Satanic panic, heavy metal music's overt usage of occult symbols and themes, its glorification of drug use, and its immense popularity amongst teenagers placed it right in the center of some of the most shocking headline stories.[106]

[106] In 1981 thirteen-year-old Kimberly Goytia, who allegedly began worshipping Satan after seeing the film *The Omen*, shot and killed her eleven-year-old sister. Violent movies and music videos were reported as the primary cause for teenager Chris Mahan's self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. "Bizarre Shooting Leaves 1 Injured, " *The Lakeland Ledger*, March 4, 1984, 15A. In 1985 the role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons came under fire for its supposed Satanic influences after a Connecticut teen, who was an avid player, committed suicide. James Brooke, "A Suicide Spurs Town to Debate Nature of a Game," *New York Times*, August 22, 1985. For more information on how various forms of popular culture including heavy metal were implicated in moral panics see: Ross Haenfler, *Goths, Gamers, and Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Gregory Vance Smith, *Rhetorics of*

One of the most widely publicized examples of this occurred in 1984 in the quiet New York suburb of Northport, Long Island. On June 17th while high on angel dust (PCP), seventeen-year-old Ricky Kasso, and two of his friends, brutally murdered Gary Lauwers and left his mutilated body at a campsite in the Aztakea Woods. For nearly two weeks Kasso and his friends regularly brought other teenagers out to see the body. After hatching a plan to skip town, Kasso and James Troiano, one of the other young men complicit in the murder, buried the body in a shallow grave. By this time the Northport police had received an anonymous tip, police arrested Kasso, Troiano, and the other teenager who witnessed the murder. The confessions from Kasso's partners in crime revealed that Kasso had yelled, "Say you love Satan," several times before stabbing his victim repeatedly.[107]

Satanism quickly became the most sensationalized aspect of the murder. The day after the arrests, *Newsday*, one of Long Island's most popular newspapers, ran a front-page headline labeling the crime a "ritual killing."[108] In interviews, Northport police matter of factly asserted that Kasso and Troiano were part of a "whole group of satanic worshipers," and that Lauwers' death was a "sacrificial killing."[109] As the police escorted Kasso and Troiano into their arraignment hearing, the media caught a glimpse of Kasso who was wearing an AC/DC shirt with a devil on the front. As they walked past the cameras Troiano kept his head down remaining straight-faced and solemn, while Kasso, on the other hand, seemed to revel in the media

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Fear, Deployment of Identity, and Metal Music Cultures, (doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida, 2009).

[107] *Satan in the Suburbs*, Television Movie, Directed by Scott Hiller, New York: Win Media, 2004.

[108] Jim O'Neil and Dennis Hevesi, "2 Held in Ritual Killing of Teenager in Northport," *Newsday,* July 6, 1984, 1.

[109] O'Neil and Hevesi, "2 Held in Ritual Killing of Teenager in Northport," 3.

attention.[110] Though the media continually insisted that both teens were members of a satanic cult, only Kasso, with his piercing stare, wild unkempt hair, and sinister grin truly looked and acted the part. This image of Kasso quickly became the most widely used visual representation of the case, offering powerful evidence that Satanism, drug abuse, and heavy metal music were interconnected threats to the moral and physical wellbeing of American adolescents. The day after his arraignment Kasso hung himself in his jail cell, further cementing heavy metal's detrimental influences.

Kasso's parents openly blamed heavy metal music for their son's interest in hallucinogenic drugs and Satanism, telling reporters "all he [Ricky] thought about was drugs and rock music," and that he "listened endlessly to so-called 'heavy metal' rock groups that use satanic imagery."[111] Law enforcement and the media quickly followed suit; nearly every article about the case noted Ricky's interest in heavy metal music as a primary influence in his transformation from "the greatest kid in the world," to a satanic cult leader and murderer.[112] A common trope soon emerged in news reports of the Kasso case, which told of a promising athletic youngster living in a quiet suburban middle-class neighborhood who was "lured," into a world of satanic worship, drug abuse, ritual murder, and suicide by the imagery presented in

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[110] Jail psychologist Richard Dackow described Troiano as "remorseful and depressed," as compared to Kasso's "calm and cool," attitude. Jim O'Neil and Rex Smith, "'Satanic Cult' Murder Suspect is Found Hanged in Jail Cell," *Newsday*, July 8, 1984, 3.

[111] "Suicide Leaves Legacy of Guilt," *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, July 15, 1984, A11.

[112] In an interview Kasso's parents described Ricky's transformation, stating that through the end of sixth grade he had been "the greatest kid in the world." The interview was used in a story circulated by the Associated Press, which garnered a multitude of headline variations pairing this phrase with the shocking, gruesome, and tragic aspects of the case. For a selection of examples see: "How 'Greatest Kid in World' Ended his Life", *The Daily Reporter,* July 10, 1984, 3. "Parents Say Satanism Transformed 'Greatest Kid in the World,'" *The Michigan Daily*, July 10, 1984, 5. "Parents Say Devil Worship and Drugs Led 'Great Kid' to Ritual Death, Suicide," *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, July 10, 1984, 6A.

heavy metal music.[113] One newspaper even ran Kasso's story with the headline, "All-American Boy Turns to Satan – and Suicide."[114]

Though the details of this case were certainly shocking in and of themselves, the fact that this happened in the suburbs – in the very place that many Americans believed to be a safe haven from the crime, violence, and drug use found in urban areas – was for many the most alarming aspect of the story. In newspaper accounts idealized depictions of Northport offered a symbolic representation of the assumed safety and security of suburbia making the gruesome and often detailed depictions of Lauwers' murder seem even more horrific:

> Where Northport Bay dips below Bluff Point, something truly evil took place during a summer of sailboats and ice cream cones. Gary Lauwers, 17 years old, was murdered. His death, authorities say, took place early on June 17 during a four-hour ceremony conducted by teenagers who fashioned a kind of satanic cult. While one of his peers held him, another plunged a knife into his face, his chest, his back. Then, one of the assailants gouged out his eyes.[115]

This description of Northport is as idyllic and all-American as it is intentionally vague. It leaves much to the imagination, allowing the reader to substitute Northport for almost any suburban town where wholesome activities like "sailboats and ice cream cones," marked a typical summer day. The description of the murder that follows is far more explicit and detailed – it offers a shocking juxtaposition in content and style to the opening line of the paragraph. Ultimately, this type of retelling suggested that if something this gruesome could happen in Northport, it could happen almost anywhere – suburbia was hardly the safe-haven many imagined it to be. As police and local residents searched for a definitive cause for Kasso's actions, parents in communities

[113] Thomas J. Maier, "Drugs and Desperation Marked Youth's Life," *Newsday*, July 8, 1984, 21.
[114] "All-American Boy Turns to Satan – and Suicide," *Daily Breeze*, July 15, 1984, 1.
[115] Michael Norman, "Our Towns: Finding Answers to an Inexplicable L.I. Murder," *New York Times,* July 11, 1984, B2.

across the nation began to wonder if something like this could happen in their town, to their children.

Even though the murder had been had been labeled a drug related crime and attorneys on both sides of the case adamantly stated that Lauwers' death was not part of a Satanic ritual, the media continued to indirectly evoke Satanism, at least in the headlines, by using words like "cult" and "ritualistic." In May of 1985 the newsmagazine *20/20* used the Kasso case as an opening example on their primetime television special, "The Devil Worshippers," thereby reinscribing an explicit link between Lauwers' murder and Satanism. The program also drew connections between the murder in Northport and other violent crimes that *20/20* correspondent Tom Jarriel explained were mislabeled by police who "are reluctant to investigate these crimes as satanic crimes… they prefer to try to categorize them as drug related crimes, sex related crimes, or robbery or something they are more familiar with."[116] The segment undoubtedly heightened concerns brought to the surface during media coverage of the Kasso case – that Satanism was a widespread threat that existed in communities across the nation. The report concluded, "not a single state is unaffected."[117]

The *20/20* segment went on to show that teenagers need only look to local retail outlets where they could find Satanic influences "right on the shelves." Jarriel explained that heavy metal music, available in record stores all over the United States, was the main satanic commodity – particularly dangerous because of its appeal with adolescents. Satanic literature and horror films were both given short treatment in the report. The portion of the episode that focused on heavy metal music was, however, far more detailed. In addition to clips of music

[116] *20/20,* "The Devil Worshippers," Produced by Peter W. Kunhardt and Kenneth Wooden, ABC, May 16, 1985. Referred to hereafter as "The Devil Worshippers."
[117] *20/20,* "The Devil Worshippers."

videos and live performances and images of album covers, this section of the program also featured a demonstration of backward masking. Despite the fact that playing recordings backwards required specialized equipment, Jarriel matter-of-factly asserts that this is a "technique they [kids] have learned to use."[118] As many metal heads noted in their letters to fan magazines playing records backwards was neither popular, nor something deemed particularly necessary. "If you listened to Shout at the Devil backwards," one young man wrote, "you must really be out of it."[119] "A lot of headbangers are sick and tired of people calling our music 'Satan's rock,'" another fan wrote, "I don't listen to music backwards and couldn't care less about what it [back masking] says."[120] Though other forms of popular culture are mentioned in the segment, heavy metal music is brought up repeatedly. References to the Satanic nature of heavy metal music bookend the thirty-minute segment - in the opening clip about Ricky Kasso and again in the last moments of the episode where parents are told that heavy metal music is a key warning sign that their children might be dabbling in Satanism.

The Kasso case provided a perfect opening example for the *20/20* episode - not only because it was fresh in the minds of many Americans but also because Kasso offered a tangible example of the archetypal Satanist described in remainder of the program: an impressionable teenager who alluded parental supervision to take drugs and listen to heavy metal music. Where many media outlets implied a casual link between heavy metal music, Satanism, and drug use, in their reporting - *20/20* made explicit connections. The program's reputation as a trusted and

[118] *20/20,* "The Devil Worshippers."
[119] "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* August 1985, 11.
[120] "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, December 1986, 17.

reliable newsmagazine likely lead many viewers to unquestioningly accept the idea that heavy metal was a threat to the moral, mental, and physical wellbeing of American children.

Though the PMRC frequently used heavy metal songs and bands as examples in organizational literature and public interviews, the centrality of heavy metal to the organization's campaign did not become fully evident until the September hearing. The PMRC's mission statement, created early in 1985, highlighted the initial thrust of their campaign – explicit sexual content and glorification of drug use found in popular music. In the summer of 1985, capitalizing on negative characterizations of heavy metal music that proliferated in the media, the PMRC expanded their list of objectionable content to include references to the occult. This was a significant shift in the scope of their campaign, and though it was not entirely clear at the time - to the musicians or fans of the genre - the PMRC was gearing up to launch a direct attack on heavy metal. As the PMRC worked to garner national support for their initiatives they quickly discovered that the cultural form of heavy metal offered the perfect scapegoat – it epitomized not one, but all of their categories of objectionable content, and as an expression of adolescent rebellion, it was a genre that parents on both sides of the political spectrum could rally around.

Talk Dirty to Me: Heavy Metal Comes to Capitol Hill

Where child abuse scandals had fostered suspicion and paranoia, causing members of small communities to turn on one another – the grassroots nature of the PMRC's campaign brought parents and communities together, and gave them a cause to rally around. While fundamentalist concerns over the negative influences of rock and roll were often viewed as radical and therefore marginalized, the PMRC successfully made those concerns part of a national debate. In the process, the PMRC effectively aided the spread of both conservatism and fundamentalism – and

strengthened ties between the two. The PMRC was able to address Christian morality and conservative social values without raising the specter of fundamentalism or formal politics; instead, they limited their rhetoric to the terrain of popular culture, and heavy metal offered an ideal target. The hearing, thus, became the centerpiece in a newly reconfigured moral panic that promised to succeed where the others had failed.

Much of the opposition's concern stemmed from the fact that the PMRC's official position on government intervention remained somewhat unclear. In their television appearances and interviews the organization frequently decried accusations of censorship by framing their objections as a form of consumer advocacy and insisting that they were not asking for legislative action. "We want a tool from the industry that is peddling this stuff to children, a consumer tool with which parents can make an informed decision on what to buy," Gore stated in an interview with *Rolling Stone*.[121] However, the upcoming hearing certainly seemed to suggest the organization had bigger and more legally binding goals in mind.

On several occasions during their many televised appearances, PMRC representatives insinuated that the issue might ultimately demand governmental intervention. On August 25th the battle over explicit musical content was featured on an episode of *Nightmatch*, which was a popular television program with a debate style format. On this episode PMRC representative and CNN correspondent Kandy Stroud squared off against Frank Zappa, a renowned musician and staunch opponent of the PMRC's initiatives. The show began with a resolution: "Some rock music is becoming increasingly pornographic, offensive, and detrimental to children. The rock

[121] Robert Love, "Furor over Rock Lyrics Intensifies," *Rolling Stone,* September 12, 1985, 14.

industry should clean up its act or face legislative reforms."[122] Stroud, as the official voice of the PMRC, argued in favor of this resolution, while Zappa argued against it. Though it is likely that someone at the television station came up with the wording used in this resolution, Stroud made no attempt to clarify that the PMRC was against legislative reform. In fact, at one point Stroud clearly reiterated the threat of possible legislation stating that, "If they [the music industry] don't do something about the music and the message that they send to children, congress will."[123] Both the upcoming hearing and the PMRC's unclear stance on legislative action fueled public interest in the issue while applying indirect pressure on the music industry to acquiesce to more of the organization's demands.

The unusual circumstances that surrounded the September 19th hearing peaked public interest in the PMRC's campaign. Not only was it uncommon for the Senate to hold a hearing when absolutely no legislative action of any type had been proposed or even discussed, the hearing seemed superfluous given the fact that the RIAA appeared to be working with the PMRC to establish a voluntary labeling protocol. Both people who supported the PMRC and those in opposition anxiously waited to see what the hearing had in store. When the September 19th hearing finally arrived the PMRC had garnered so much attention that attendees packed the senate chamber and spilled out into the halls. Thousands more watched the proceedings on their televisions at home. As one of the most heavily attended Senate hearings on record, the public turnout was shocking even to some of the more seasoned Senators. "I have been around here a while and I have been through many hearings in many committees," Senator Exon (D-Nebraska)

[122] Koolstrike, "Frank Zappa on Nightmatch August 25 1985 Part 4 of 4," *YouTube Video,* Online video clip, https://youtu.be/ZnaVE6NZxC4?list=PLqEvTraA9LTLtjxgu7FstrvLfQJ3oLdFh (accessed May 15, 2015).
[123] Koolstrike, "Frank Zappa on Nightmatch August 25 1985 Part 4 of 4."

commented, "this is the largest media event, both in this room and the people waiting outside, that I have ever seen."[124] The PMRC had clearly made an impact.

In his opening statement, Committee Chairman John Danforth (R-Missouri), attempted to clear up the confusion surrounding the Senate's involvement. Danforth justified the hearing as a much-needed "forum" to "ventilate" the issue of explicit lyrics and bring awareness to the public.[125] However, his justifications were not particularly convincing. The circumstances of a hearing without proposed legislation were so unusual that even some of the Senators present wondered, "why these media events are scheduled and for what possible reason, if we [the Senate] are not being asked to do anything." The fact that the PMRC's concerns had already made national news and been featured on several debate style television programs made the hearing seem superfluous. As the large crowd amassed to listen to the hearing demonstrated, the PMRC's concerns had already entered into public consciousness. Though there weren't any legislative or regulatory actions attached to the hearing, it was undoubtedly a strategic move on the part of the PMRC, made possible by their political connections. Once the hearing was announced in August media coverage of the battle over explicit lyrics experienced a renewed fervor. The very notion that the United States Senate found the PMRC's concerns worthy of investigation suggested there was veracity to their claims. Senator Exon's description of the hearing as a "media event" was entirely accurate – it generated a means for publicity that would help sway the public toward supporting the PMRC's socially conservative agenda.

It is not surprising that the question of whether or not the government would intervene in the music industry remained a central focus of the hearing. These threats of legislation within the

[124] "PMRC Hearing," 49, (Senator Exon).
[125] "PMRC Hearing," 1, (Senator Danforth).

music industry came as the Reagan Administration took steps toward deregulation in the broadcast industry. Though these might seem like contradictory impulses the two initiatives actually went hand in hand as both worked to create an increasingly conservative social landscape – one that could be controlled by the New Right. Beginning in 1981 the FCC, under the leadership of Reagan appointee Chairman Mark Fowler, introduced several measures designed to deregulate the television industry. By 1984 the FCC proposed further measures that would extend to radio broadcasting as well. One of Fowler's more controversial suggestions was the dissolution of the 1949 Fairness Doctrine, which was designed to protect the first amendment rights of the public by ensuring equal media coverage of controversial issues and subjects. Many who opposed repealing the doctrine feared that without government oversight in the industry, broadcasters could severely limit the scope of their coverage.[126] Though the Fairness Doctrine was not formally eliminated until 1987, the FCC and conservatives in Congress continued to slowly chip away at the government's role in the broadcast industry. In 1985 the FCC removed regulations on required non-entertainment programming and increased the number of stations any one person could own, which resulted in a handful of media conglomerations controlling programming on nearly all stations.[127] Ultimately, these measures did not create a diverse and competitive market that provided the public with fair and equal access to controversial issues; instead deregulatory measures often informally censored information allowing a select few to shape the transmission of information. According to Fowler, these deregulatory measures were

[126] "FCC urged to repeal fairness doctrine." *Broadcasting* 10 Sept. 1984: 37-38.
[127] Jeremy Tunstall, *Communications Deregulation: The Unleashing of America's Communications Industry*, (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1986).

needed to bring the broadcast industry in line with other businesses that had already undergone deregulation at the hands of the Reagan Administration.[128]

Record companies, who supplied much of the material for radio broadcasts were, however, already engaged in the pursuit of free market capitalism without any real regulation- and in the mid 1980s heavy metal generated some of their most successful products. The fact that the PMRC focused their attack on the cultural form of heavy metal was not entirely surprising. Though heavy metal's popularity had grown significantly since the late 1970s, in the early eighties it was still largely considered the preferred genre of a small subsection of society - white, adolescent, working-class males. [129] However, 1984 proved a watershed year for the genre with the release of chart topping hits by Van Halen, Mötley Crüe, Quiet Riot, Bon Jovi, Ratt, and Twisted Sister which brought metal into mainstream popular American culture.[130] Heavy metal was everywhere – on television and the radio – in small towns and large cities – and its followers, so called metal heads became more visible to the dominant culture. That heavy metal was labeled as a gateway into Satanism and drug use had more to do with timing than with the development of new stylistic elements within the genre. Though the PMRC would later assert that the cultural form of heavy metal glorified drug use in new and unprecedented ways, the genre merely embraced the well-established link between rock and roll music and intoxication

[128] For more on deregulation in the 1980s see: Jeffrey A. Eisenach and Randolph J. May, *Communications Deregulation and FCC Reform: Finishing the Job* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001); Jennifer Holt, *Empires of Entertainment: Media Industries and the Politics of Deregulation, 1980-1996* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011); Steven Kent Vogel, *Freer Markets, More Rules: Regulatory Reform in Advanced Industrial Countries*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996); Richard H.K. Vietor, *Contrived Competition: Regulation and Deregulation in America*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994).
[129] Liam Lacey, " Heavy Metal: A Bluffer's Guide," *The Globe and Mail*, March 31, 1984.
[130] David F. Gleason, *American Radio History,* http://www.americanradiohistory.com/Archive-Billboard/80s/1984/BB1984.pdf (accessed May 1, 2015).

popularized by psychedelic rock in the 1960s. The use of occult imagery in hard rock and heavy metal music was hardly new - even in its earliest incarnations heavy metal music embraced the symbolic language of the occult to articulate power. [131] The level of popularity that metal reached during the 1980s was, however, unprecedented. This surge in metal's visibility and popularity coincided with the development of a culture of fear that sensationalized an increased drug use, violent crime, child abuse, and popular belief in the presence of Satanism, making it an obvious target.

In framing their argument as a consumer issue, the PMRC highlighted the role of free market capitalism in encouraging and proliferating the excesses that characterized eighties metal. The fact that the recording industry remained largely unregulated allowed violence, drugs, sadomasochism, and Satanism into the marketplace. What was, perhaps, more troubling, was the voracious appetite young consumers had for heavy metal music. Regulating the broadcast industry could help keep heavy metal off the air, but it would not prevent consumers from buying records, band related merchandise, or concert tickets. The hearing offered the PMRC an opportunity to narrow it's focus on the genre of music that was benefiting most from the lack of regulation- heavy metal - while clarifying it's position against government regulation and formal acts of censorship.

Senator Paula Hawkins (R-Florida) Chairman of the Children, Family, Drugs, and Alcoholism Subcommittee was the first person to testify in support of the PMRC's initiatives. In

[131] For more on the relationship between heavy metal and the occult see: Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000); Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993).

her statement, Hawkins adopted the same frameworks used by the PMRC, implying that the issue of explicit lyrics was really about child protection and consumer advocacy.

> It is the parent we blame if the child gets on drugs. It is the parent we blame if the child commits suicide. It is the parent we blame if the child burns down a building. Just how much guilt can we place on these parents without giving them some assistance?[132]

This portion of Hawkins' testimony is particularly interesting as it reveals the one of the key components of the PMRC's strategy: shifting the blame off of parents and onto other external forces that could be easily identified and therefore controlled. Rather than placing guilt and blame on the parents, Hawkins provides a new scapegoat, "the content of rock music and its presentation in records, on album covers, and advertising concerts, and in rock video."[133]

Though the hearing was purportedly about the explicit content of rock *music*, Hawkins ignored lyrical and aural content in favor of visual evidence. In order to illustrate that "subtleties, suggestions, and innuendo," in popular music had, "given way to overt expressions and descriptions of…violent sexual acts, drug taking, and flirtations with the occult," Hawkins offered a representative "sampling" of three album covers, W.A.S.P.'s *Animal (F**K Like a Beast),* Def Leppard's *Pyromania,* and Wendy O. Williams' *W.O.W.* She also highlighted two music videos, Van Halen's *Hot for Teacher* and Twisted Sister's *We're Not Gonna Take It* – all of which were examples drawn exclusively from heavy metal subgenres.[134] Though plenty of other genres of music also objectified women's bodies, depicted nudity, and made references to sex, drugs, and violence on their album covers and in their videos, Hawkins made no attempt to look outside of the genre of heavy metal. If this was, in fact, a representative sample – as

[132] "PMRC Hearing," 6, (Senator Paula Hawkins).
[133] "PMRC Hearing," 6, (Senator Hawkins).
[134] "PMRC Hearing," 6, (Senator Hawkins).

Hawkins claimed – it was clear that heavy metal was the primary genre of music that Hawkins, and by extension the PMRC, found objectionable.

The first album cover Hawkins showed, W.A.S.P.'s *Animal (F**k Like a Beast),* was certainly her strongest example, as it required no additional explanation from the Senator. The cover shows only lead singer Blackie Lawless' crotch. His blood stained hands rest on tight black leather pants over which he is wearing a saw-blade codpiece that reads "I F*CK LIKE A BEAST." As one of the more theatrical and audacious metal bands, there is no doubt that W.A.S.P. intended for the image to be both shocking and violent. Hawkins remained silent as she held the image up, turning so that everyone in the room could see it. The press snapped their cameras wildly. As nicely as this album cover illustrated Hawkins' point, it was, in fact, a gross misrepresentation of the type of materials available for purchase by American children –not only was the image Hawkins displayed the cover to a single, rather than an album, Capital Records pulled this song off of the band's 1984 debut album because of the clearly objectionable content in the song. At the time of the hearing, this song had not been officially released in the United States. Furthermore, even in the United Kingdom where this particular single and cover were released, the album came sealed in a black plastic bag with a warning label affixed to the front. Though W.A.S.P. did perform the song live at concerts, it would have been virtually impossible for any American child to walk into a record store and see that image or hear the song on any radio station. Ironically, it was the PMRC who first introduced this song and the accompanying image into mainstream discourse, not record companies, radio stations, or retail stores. Hawkins clearly selected this image for its shock value, not because it was representative of the type of materials children were able to purchase or hear on the radio. Even if this album had been released in the United States, it is hard to imagine that any parent would need any "assistance" in

the form of a formal rating or warning label affixed to the album, to discern whether or not the content aligned with their values and beliefs. Without any details or explanation the W.A.S.P cover certainly seemed to prove Hawkins' point – popular music, especially heavy metal, had moved from subtle innuendo to overt expressions of violence and sexual prowess. The facts surrounding the release of the single, however, worked against the PMRC's argument. Clearly, the record industry was already exercising voluntary self-regulation and restraint.

Next, Hawkins held up the cover to Def Leppard's *Pyromania,* which shows a burning office building, where the fire – a clear reference to the album's title – is framed inside a target. Unlike the W.A.S.P. cover, which required no commentary or explanation, Hawkins felt the need to explain why this particular cover was objectionable. "No question," she told the crowd, "Burn a building! Burn! Burn! Burn!"[135] Clearly Hawkins felt this album cover depicted violence, though her commentary adds a layer of hyperbolic interpretation to the image. Not only is the entire cover done in the style of graphic illustration, the building represented is supposed to appear somewhat futuristic. Interestingly, the artist who designed the cover, Andie Airfix, chose this image because the band explicitly stated that they did not want "terrible pictures of women riding motor bikes or fire breathing monsters."[136] Like the executives at Capital Records who decided not to include objectionable content on W.A.S.P's debut album, Def Leppard was also exercising voluntary self-restraint in actively choosing not to use overly sexualized images of scantily clad women or occult themed monsters and beasts - though Senator Hawkins seems to

[135] These comments were not included on the official transcript of the hearing; however they are clearly audible in the video recording. The video of the complete hearing is available through C-SPAN. "Rock Lyrics Record Labeling," C-SPAN. For comparison see "PMRC Hearing," (Statement by Senator Paula Hawkins).
[136] "Def Leppard: Behind the Pyromania Album Cover," *YouTube video*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0QtwDyo0Gk (accessed May 20, 2015).

find their choice of cover art equally objectionable. More blatantly explicit references to violence existed in many other genres of music, but Hawkins selects one of the most popular and recognizable metal bands – Def Leppard – to illustrate her point. Had she looked elsewhere she might have found *Family Man*, an album by the hardcore punk band Black Flag, which featured a comic style drawing of a father pointing a gun at his head while his children played in the background. Or the cover of The Clash's *London Calling*, which features a black and white photo of Paul Simonon in the process of smashing his bass during a performance, both of which are more overtly violent than the *Pyromania* cover Hawkins chose. That these two more violent covers were ignored in favor of the *Pyromania* cover by the wildly popular British metal band Def Leppard, demonstrates just how narrowly focused the PMRC's attack was. They were primarily concerned with the genre of heavy metal.

As her last example, Hawkins held up the cover of Wendy O. Williams' *W.O.W.* Though Williams spent several years in a popular punk-rock band called the Plasmatics, *W.O.W.* was Williams' first solo endeavor and it marked a significant departure in sound and style from her punk rock roots. Williams employed the help of KISS bassist Gene Simmons who produced and co-wrote many of the tracks on the album. Understandably, this gave *W.O.W.* a particularly heavy metal sound. In accord with this new musical style, Williams adopted some of the visual iconography of heavy metal. The album cover shows Williams in a cropped white tank top and black bikini bottoms over top of which she is wearing a leather chest strap and metallic garter belt. The leather and metal accessories demonstrate a clear attempt to adopt the same iconography used by male metal bands. Even the font used in her new logo had the sharp angular feel and style of other heavy metal logos.

Hawkins went to even greater lengths to attach a narrative to the album's cover image. After labeling it as "porn rock," Hawkins took on the persona of Williams, using first person to explain the cover's imagery: "It's my life and I love sex," Hawkins proclaimed before adding a set of qualifying statements to explain why this attitude is unquestionably negative. Hawkins implied that the kind of sex Williams likes "obviously" includes "a lot of fire and chains and other objectionable tools of gratification - in some twisted minds."[137] Hawkins commentary not only attached a set of meanings to the image that are not overtly present, she qualified her judgments within a conservative moral framework that sought to define normative sexual behavior by pointing out what is obviously abnormal and therefore only desirable to those with "twisted" minds. It is hard to discern what Hawkins could have seen as particularly "self-explanatory," as she put it, about this image except that it was clearly an example of heavy metal. There is no nudity, no violence, no drug use, and no occult imagery. Furthermore, there are no chains or other "tools of gratification," in the image. Williams is even holding a microphone, which is clearly a part of her role as a singer.

There was no shortage of sexually charged imagery circulating on popular albums in other genres of music. The selection of the *W.O.W.* cover suggests that Hawkins and by extension the PMRC with whom she was aligned, were intent on targeting heavy metal music. A quick survey of album covers from a variety of genres reveals several other more clearly sexual and potentially offensive images that Hawkins could have chosen. Hawkins needed only to look at the PMRC's own list of the most objectionable songs, dubbed the "Filthy Fifteen," to find

[137] Again, these comments are only present in the video recording of the hearing. See: "Rock Lyrics Record Labeling." For comparison, this section of testimony is available in the official hearing transcript: "PMRC Hearing," 5-10, (Statement of Senator Paula Hawkins).

other suitable examples.[138] Three of the albums that contained songs on that list- Sheena Easton's *A Private Heaven,* Madonna's *Like a Virgin,* and Vanity's *Wild Animal* - showed the female musicians in sexually suggestive poses. Outside of the PMRC's list, several other album covers featured women who were completely naked. The cover for new wave band Bow Wow Wow's *See Jungle! See Jungle! Go Join Your Gang Year, City All over! Go Ape Crazy!* released in 1981, featured the band's then fifteen-year-old lead singer, Annabelle Lwin, nude on the cover in a recreation of Edouard Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*. Roger Waters' 1984 solo album *The Pros and Cons of Hitch Hiking*, showed the back side of soft-core porn star Linzi Drew posed as a female hitchhiker - completely naked except for her red stiletto heels and a small red backpack. Hawkins' choice of the Wendy O. Williams cover to illustrate sexually explicit imagery, over covers like these, which featured a nude fifteen-year-old girl and a nude porn star, was part of a carefully calculated attack on heavy metal.

Following Senator Hawkins' statement, the PMRC took the floor. Their combined testimony overwhelmingly indicates that heavy metal was primary cause for the social problems plaguing American youth. In her statement, Susan Baker made a brief mention of Prince's "Darling Nikki," before listing three metal bands - Judas Priest, Quiet Riot, and Mötley Crüe – and offering interpretations of the themes present in their music. Quiet Riot, "has songs about explicit sex," Mötley Crüe's *Shout at the Devil* "contains violence and brutality to women," and Judas Priest has "the one about forced oral sex at gun point." Though musicians often wrote lyrics that left a song's meaning open to interpretation, Baker suggested that the meanings were fixed so that anyone who listened would draw the same interpretive conclusions. She did not

[138] The "Filthy Fifteen" list is further evidence of the central role heavy metal played in the PMRC's campaign. Nine of the fifteen songs could be classified into one of many heavy metal sub-genres.

offer any examples or provide any context within her testimony. Her analysis grossly oversimplifies the complexities that exist in compiling a set of musical tracks on an album. For example, Baker's statement makes it seem as though the album *Shout at the Devil* contains multiple references of violence toward women; however, Baker is actually referring to two lines in one song, "Too Young to Fall in Love." Though the album contains plenty of the male centered anger and aggression that typified heavy metal music, of the eleven tracks on the album, there is only one song that contains lyrics that even remotely suggest that violence might be directed at women.

Baker mentioned these metal bands before delivering statistics on rising rape, teenage suicide, and teenage pregnancy rates thereby creating a causal link between heavy metal music and these social problems threatening the wellbeing of children.[139] She went on to make a more explicit claim about the negative impact of heavy metal music by stating that the heavy metal songs "Suicide Solution" by Ozzy Osbourne and "Shoot to Thrill" by AC/DC "encourage teen suicide."[140] "Just last week in Centerpoint, a small Texas town, a young man took his life while listening to the music of AC/DC," Baker concluded, "He was not the first." Like much of her previous evidence, this story of teenage suicide is completely disembodied from any sort of context that might explain the circumstances surrounding this young man's actions. Instead, Baker makes it seem as though the music is to blame. In his testimony, PMRC consultant Jeff Ling reinforced Baker's assertions with another anecdotal story. "This is Steve Boucher," Ling told the audience, "Steve is dead. Steve died while listening to AC/DC's 'Shoot to Thrill.' Steve

[139] "PMRC Hearing," 11, (Susan Baker).
[140] "PMRC Hearing," 12, (Susan Baker).

fired his father's gun into his mouth."[141] Like Baker's previous reference to a link between teenage suicide and heavy metal music, Ling offers no other information about the victim leaving AC/DC's "Shoot to Thrill" as the only potential cause for this young man's death.

Neither Baker nor Ling offer lyrical evidence to support the link between heavy metal music and suicide. Rather, their testimony implies that a song's meaning can be easily discerned from the title alone. Had the PMRC examined the lyrics closely, or made any attempt to understand heavy metal culture, they might have discovered that the lyrics in these songs do not glorify or encourage suicide. "Suicide Solution," for example, is an autobiographical song about Ozzy's own near death experiences with alcohol addiction. Rather than referring to suicide as an answer – the interpretation Baker clearly assumes to be correct – Ozzy is singing about alcohol as a dangerous and potentially deadly liquid, a point that is clarified by examining song's lyrics: "Wine is fine, but whiskey's quicker/ Suicide is slow with liquor…Now you live inside a bottle/The reaper's traveling at full throttle/It's catching you but you don't see."[142] Both Baker and Ling grossly misinterpret AC/DC's "Shoot to Thrill," which like many of the band's other songs, explores aspects of male sexual gratification through the use of metaphors. As sociologist Deena Weinstein explains, "Their [AC/DC] trademark is to use and build on traditional blues terminology, in which sexual terms are coyly…transformed into puns and suggested by metaphors… 'Shooting' refers not to guns, but to male ejaculation. It is hardly an obscure metaphor."[143]

The remainder of Ling's presentation followed the same general pattern. Lyrics were either alienated from the broader contextual framework of the song or presented as having only

[141] "PMRC Hearing," 13, (Jeff Ling).
[142] Ozzy Osbourne, "Suicide Solution," *Blizzard of Ozz,* Epic Records, 1980.
[143] Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*, 252.

one fixed meaning, both of which worked to uphold the PMRC's argument that "violent, brutal erotica ha[d] exploded in rock music in an unprecedented way."[144] Ling mentions a total of twenty-three different bands in his presentation. With the exception of a short segment on Prince and a mention of the Jacksons and the Rolling Stones, the remaining twenty examples were all heavy metal bands from nearly every conceivable sub-genre. Ling began with bands that were more popular, and therefore potentially more recognizable: AC/DC, Metallica, Ozzie Osbourne, Twisted Sister, Judas Priest, Great White, and Mötley Crüe. However, because PMRC representatives frequently drew upon these popular bands in their interviews and television appearances, Ling was hardly showing the Senators or the public anything new or shocking. Halfway through his fifteen-minute slide show, Ling abandoned references to popular musicians and songs in favor of examples that were as obscure as they were deliberately shocking. He mentions the bands Abattoir and Impaler, while showing album covers that depict sadomasochism and cannibalism. These two bands were relatively unheard of in 1985, even to most heavy metal fans. Thus, they were in no way indicative of the types of materials young children would hear on the radio or see in a retail store. Though Ling casually alluded to the obscurity of these examples by mentioning that both bands were signed on independent labels, he quickly reframed his choices as relevant exemplars because "they are reviewed and featured in teen rock magazines and are available in local record stores."[145] Though the albums might have been "reviewed" in some magazines these bands were certainly not featured in any kind of prominent way popular teen magazines.

[144] "PMRC Hearing," 13, (Jeff Ling).
[145] "PMRC Hearing," 13, (Jeff Ling).

Ling ended his presentation on a particularly shocking note. For his last example, Ling displayed an image of an album cover by The Mentors. "How bad can it get?" Ling asked. He rattled off the titles of tracks from the album, before ending with lyrics from one of the songs, "Golden Showers." This is yet another example of choosing a band purely for their potential shock value. The lyrics that Ling recited, which included the lines, "All through my excrement you shall roam. Bend up and smell my anal vapor. Your face is my toilet paper." were certainly never played on the radio where young children might accidentally hear them. For the most part the Mentors sold their albums via mail order or at their concerts, rather than at retail stores. Furthermore, the particular album Ling referenced only sold about 7,500 copies total – a relatively small number compared to popular mainstream metal bands whose records sold millions of copies.[146] Though this example was clearly obscure, Ling attempts to make it seem more reasonable by stating that the label that signed the Mentors, Enigma, also "launched Mötley Crüe's career."[147] In making this connection Ling implied that, regardless of how far fetched it might seem it was possible, under the correct management, that The Mentors could become as popular as a band like Mötley Crüe. As convincing as this statement may have been to those who heard Ling's presentation, it was just another example of how little the PMRC truly knew about heavy metal music. Mötley Crüe and The Mentors were not both signed under the Enigma label. Mötley Crüe signed their first record contract with a similar sounding record company, Elektra Records, in 1982.

Up to this point in the hearing the PMRC avoided directly stating that they were really talking about one particular genre of music – heavy metal – though their selection of examples

[146] Eric Nuzum, *Parental Advisory: Music Censorship in America,* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 36.
[147] "PMRC Hearing," 17, (Jeff Ling).

certainly implied this was the case. However, during the round of questioning from the Senators present that followed the PMRC's official statement, Susan Baker all but directly stated that the music most damaging to young children, the music being singled out by the PMRC, was heavy metal. When asked if she restricted the radio stations her eight-year-old daughter was allowed to listen to, Baker answered, "It has not come to that in my house…heavy metal is not something…she likes to listen to."[148] It is clear from Baker's answer that the PMRC's real concern was focused on the content of heavy metal music. Two of the PMRC's supporting witnesses, Dr. Joe Stuessy a music professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio and Dr. Paul King a child and adolescent psychologist both indicated that heavy metal was *the* genre of music that is responsible for the anti-social and dysfunctional behaviors of teenagers noted by the PMRC. Dr. Stuessy testified, "Today's heavy metal music…contains the element of hatred, a meanness of spirit. Its principal themes are…extreme violence, extreme rebellion, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity and perversion and Satanism." These messages, he continued, are "reinforced by multisensory input such as the album covers…the looks of the performers, their theatrics on stage, the visual representations such as MTV, volume levels, etc." [149] In Dr. King's testimony, which followed directly after Dr. Stuessy finished, heavy metal is linked to delinquency and even murder. King stated:

> The Son of Sam who killed eight people in New York was allegedly into Black Sabbath's music. Ricky Kasso, the teenager in Long Island who stabbed his friend, took out his eyes, and then hung himself, followed Black Sabbath and Judas Priest… Most recently, the individual identified by the newspapers as the Night Stalker has been said to be into hard drugs and the music of the heavy metal band AC DC.[150]

[148] "PMRC Hearing," 51, (Susan Baker).
[149] "PMRC Hearing," 117, (Dr. Joseph Stuessy).
[150] "PMRC Hearing," 130, (Dr. Paul King).

Dr. King then noted that the teenagers who enter the treatment program that he supervised were asked specifically to refrain from listening to heavy metal music for at least a year. Neither Stuessy nor King mentioned any other kind of music in their testimony or in the printed statements included on the official record. If their professional opinions are considered in combination with the examples presented by the PMRC, it becomes abundantly clear that it was not the nature of some forms of popular music that the PMRC found objectionable, it was specifically the cultural form of heavy metal – and all of it's various expressions and outlets – that was at the root of the problem.

Three musicians – Frank Zappa, Dee Snider, and John Denver - were called to offer their opinions on record labeling. The Senate knew that both Zappa and Snider would voice opposition to the PMRC's initiatives. In the months leading up to the hearing Zappa, who was featured on several television and radio programs, emerged as an outspoken opponent of the PMRC. Denver remained a wild card, but the Senators, all of whom praised Denver at the hearing, likely assumed that, based on his reputation as an all-American folk singer and devout Christian, Denver would support the PMRC's proposals. After a lengthy assault on heavy metal, the Senate likely hoped that Dee Snider would demonstrate – in both his appearance and his actions – that heavy metal music was outlandish and morally corrupt.

In his testimony Zappa made it clear that he remained staunchly opposed to any type of rating system and highly suspicious of the PMRC's political and religious connections. "The establishment of a rating system, voluntary or otherwise," Zappa testified, "opens the door to an endless parade of moral quality control programs based on things certain Christians do not like." Though, the PMRC had done well to downplay their connections to formal politics and religious organizations affiliated with the New Right, Zappa, like many others in the opposition, saw

through their façade. In Zappa's opinion this was not simply a cultural issue, or an issue of consumer advocacy – it had political ramifications – and it represented one way that the New Right was working to seize control over the socio-cultural climate of the United States.

Zappa's testimony came as no surprise to the Senators. The day before the hearing Zappa and Senator Danforth debated the issue on the *CBS Morning News*. The Senators were not, however, prepared for the testimony offered by John Denver, who did not turn out to be the ally they had hoped for. Though Denver did praise the Senate and the PMRC for creating a forum for discussion, like Zappa, Denver felt that the purpose of the hearing seemed to be about whether or not the government should get involved with enforcing a rating system within the record industry. "May I be very clear," Denver stated, "that I am strongly opposed to censorship of any kind in our society or anywhere else in the world," and governmental oversight in the form of record labeling "would approach censorship."[151] Denver believed that "discipline and self restraint when practiced by an individual, a family, or a company" offered an "effective way to deal with this issue." "The same thing," Denver continued," when forced on a people by their government or, worse, by a self-appointed watchdog of public morals, is suppression and will not be tolerated in a democratic society."[152] Not only did Denver question the purpose of the hearings, like Zappa he believed that the PMRC, as a "self appointed moral watchdog," was in fact attempting to suppress certain cultural expressions in order to mold the social and moral fabric of American society.

Denver's opposition to the PMRC was clearly not what the Senators were expecting. The round of questioning that took place after Denver's statement, revealed several attempts by the

[151] "PMRC Hearing," 65, (statement of John Denver).
[152] "PMRC Hearing," 65, (statement of John Denver).

Senators' to reframe Denver's oppositional statements into support for the PMRC's initiatives. "You talked about the importance of communication between parents and their children," Senator Danforth remarked to Denver, "As I understand it, that is exactly the point that was made by the Parents Music Resource Center Group that was here earlier." Though Danforth implied that Denver and the PMRC were in agreement, their positions were actually quite different. Where the PMRC saw the relationship between adolescents and music as causal – the music creates undesirable ideas and behaviors – Denver's statement suggests that he viewed that relationship as reflective:

> One of the most interesting things about the music that young people are listening to is it gives us as adults a very clear insight as to what is going on in their minds. We can know what they are thinking by listening to the music that they surround themselves with. The people I have had the opportunity to talk with, the troubled children, the teenagers who are considering suicide, what they expressed to me is a real frustration in their lives, an inability to communicate with their parents, an inability to understand or to envision any kind of a possible future because of the nuclear threat that we live under. They do not see things getting better economically. They do not see things getting better for the small businessman, for the small farmer. They do not see a future for themselves. It is my opinion that it is out of this that some young people put a gun into their mouths and pull the trigger.[153]

Denver suggested that the root of the issues the PMRC identified was in the type of relationships parents have with their children. Though the PMRC was also concerned with parent-child relationships, in advocating for record labeling, which would provide an easy way for parents to recognize albums their children have that might not align with their personal values, the PMRC did little to address the generational disconnect that left many adolescents feeling isolated and alone.

[153] "PMRC Hearing," 65-66, (statement of John Denver).

Though the Senators and the PMRC were certainly taken aback by Denver's position on the issue, Dee Snider's testimony was undoubtedly the most shocking. Snider was sure that "looking at my photos and videos, and listening to my music, they [the Senate] were certain I would be the perfect heavy metal fool to make a very public example of," and when Snider entered the room he certainly looked the part.[154] His testimony, however, did little to reinforce the stereotypes of heavy metal that the PMRC promoted. Snider began:

> I would like to tell the committee a little bit about myself. I am 30 years old, I am married, I have a 3-year-old-son. I was born and raised a Christian and I still adhere to those principles. Believe it or not, I do not smoke, I do not drink, and I do not do drugs. I do play in and write the songs for a rock and roll band named Twisted sister that is classified as heavy metal, and I pride myself on writing songs that are consistent with my above-mentioned beliefs[155]

Snider spoke articulately and intelligently – and he was hardly the heavy metal fool that the Senate likely expected. Far from being an excessive hedonistic "bad boy" that the PMRC insisted characterized heavy metal, Snider was, by his own description, a lot like the other parents present in the Senate chamber that day.

As the only heavy metal musician called to testify, Snider felt as though he was "leading the heavy metal community into battle." Unlike Zappa and Denver, who drew connections between the PMRC and formal government censorship like that enacted in Nazi Germany, Snider had the advantage of addressing the issue on a personal level. In a recent article Tipper Gore misquoted lyrics from Twisted Sister's song "Under the Blade" before implying that the lyrics talked about sadomasochism, rape, and bondage. Snider explained that the song was about the fears of surgery, having your arms and legs strapped down to the table. "I can say, categorically, that the only sadomasochism, bondage, and rape in this song" Snider told the

[154] Snider, *Shut Up and Give Me the Mic,* 336.
[155] "PMRC Hearing," 73, (statement of Dee Snider).

Senate committee, "is in the mind of Ms. Gore."[156] Snider then addressed the supposedly violent content the PMRC found in the music video for *We're Not Gonna Take It*. This video, Snider explained was based on the *Roadrunner* cartoons, where the villain emerges each time "unharmed…no worse for the wear."[157] Even the United Way, a well-respected organization, understood the cartoonish tone of the video, and had recently requested permission to use it as a "lighthearted way of talking about communicating with teenagers."[158] Finally, Snider tackled a claim, made by Tipper Gore at a public panel discussing record labeling, that Twisted Sister sold T-shirts that displayed a handcuffed spread-eagled woman on them. "This," Snider stated emphatically, "is an outright lie." Senator Gore later attempted to backpedal for his wife, implying that Snider had misinterpreted his Tipper's comment, but Snider came to the hearing prepared. He quickly offered to play a tape of the interview, which he had with him, for the Senator, so that he could hear the words for himself – Senator Gore declined. "There is no authority who has the necessary insight to make these judgments," Snider noted at the conclusion of his testimony, "not myself, not the Federal Government, not some recording industry committee, not the PTA, not the RIAA, and certainly not the PMRC."[159]

Snider, like both Zappa and Denver, suggested that the appropriate site for the reproduction of values was the family unit – and that parents needed to take responsibility for this – not the government, not the record industry, and certainly not a group like the PMRC. The labels and rating system the PMRC proposed discouraged parents from having real discussions with their children that might foster a sense of understanding and bridge the generational

[156] "PMRC Hearing," 74, (statement of Dee Snider).
[157] "PMRC Hearing," 74, (statement of Dee Snider).
[158] "PMRC Hearing," 74, (statement of Dee Snider).
[159] "PMRC Hearing," 75, (statement of Dee Snider).

disconnect. At times it seemed as though the PMRC was suggesting that parents were too busy to sit down and listen to the music their children liked – or even listen to their children at all. According to Senator Gore, the idea that parents should screen the music their children listened to was "totally unreasonable."[160] However, as Dee Snider noted, "being a *parent* is not a reasonable thing. It is a very hard thing. I am a parent and I know."[161] Parenting demanded a host of actions that were equally as time consuming as listening to a few records – and a sticker on the outside of an album was certainly not going to provide the easy fix the PMRC seemed to be suggesting.

Parental Advisory - Explicit Content: The Lasting Impact of the PMRC

Though the PMRC and its supporters identified heavy metal as the main objectionable genre in need of regulation, they carefully articulated that this was a consumer issue and not a call for governmentally supported censorship. Tipper Gore's statement most clearly addressed the issue of censorship by situating the PMRC's concerns within framework of consumer advocacy:

> A voluntary labeling is *not* censorship. Censorship implies restricting access or suppressing content. This proposal does neither. Moreover, it involves no Government action. Voluntary labeling in no way infringes upon first amendment rights. Labeling is little more than truth in packaging, by now a time honored principle in our free enterprise system, and without labeling, parental guidance is virtually impossible.[162]

Gore later reiterated, "the excesses that we are discussing were allowed to develop in the marketplace, and we believe the solutions to these excesses should come from the industry who

[160] "PMRC Hearing," 79, (Senator Gore).
[161] "PMRC Hearing,"79, (Dee Snider)
[162] "PMRC Hearing," 12, (Tipper Gore). Emphasis added.

has allowed them to develop." Senator Exon later referred to the proposed solutions as a form of "free enterprise volunteerism."[163]

Though the PMRC was not asking for formal censorship, their proposal amounted to an indirect form of censorship enacted within the marketplace. Their initiatives began with record labeling – but, they did not end there. Taking the pornography industry as a precedent, the PMRC suggested that records that received any type of label that noted explicit content be shelved behind retail counters, purportedly to protect children from encountering them out on the shelves; however, this action would also limit an album's visibility and undoubtedly impact sales.[164] Essentially, the consumer would need to know ahead of time exactly which album they wanted to purchase in order to go directly to the retail counter and request that album by name. Limited retail visibility would also, without question, filter into the fan magazines being sold – which frequently featured pictures of the artists that some might find objectionable. These actions would certainly threaten the economic livelihood of individual artists, but because the entire cultural form of heavy metal remained a primary target – the repercussions of the PMRC's actions had much larger ramifications. Economic censorship threatened to not only financially impact metal musicians and the record companies that signed them, it meant that heavy metal could eventually be eliminated from the marketplace entirely. At the time of the hearing Dee Snider was already witnessing the effects of the PMRC on his band's popularity and financial success. "I am tired of running into kids on the street who tell me that they cannot play our records anymore," Snider noted, "because of misinformation their parents are being fed by the

[163] "PMRC Hearing," 72, (Senator Exon).
[164] For more information on the New Right's anti-pornography campaign see: Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

PMRC on TV and in the newspapers."[165] Though the PMRC continually attempted to frame their measures as benign forms of consumer information and helpful tools for parents, Snider's own experiences revealed some of the dangers of their proposed initiatives.

While no formal legislation was ever enacted at the congressional level, the PMRC's campaign did have a wide-ranging impact in the retail world. Even before the hearing many vendors reacted to the rising tide of opposition against rock and heavy metal music. Several national retailers, most notably Wal-Mart, discontinued carrying popular rock magazines like *Spin, Hard Rock,* and even *Rolling Stone.*[166] Wal-Mart also lodged a complaint with PolyGram over the cover image of the Scorpions record, *Love at First Bite,* which depicted a nude couple on the front. PolyGram acquiesced and changed the cover to an image of the band before the album's release. Eventually many artists decided to make "clean" versions of their songs with modified lyrics that conformed to conservative notions of morality. Amidst the furor and frenzy of the Senate hearing, many retail businesses took preemptive action. Fearing a conservative backlash that could jeopardize their leases in local malls, Camelot Music and Video, one of the leading music retailers in the United States, announced that it would not carry any material labeled with an explicit content sticker. In September of 1985 magazine wholesaler Interstate Periodical Distributors (IPD) refused to carry issues of *Hard Rock*, a heavy metal oriented periodical that frequently featured bands under fire from the PMRC. Many other distributers followed IDP's lead. By 1986 the magazine was forced to close its doors for good. As many

[165] "PMRC Hearing," 74, (statement of Dee Snider).
[166] Nuzum, *Parental Advisory*, 261-269.For more on Wal-Mart's business practices see: Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

who opposed the PMRC had feared, these measures, enacted within the marketplace, greatly reduced freedom of expression and lead to an informal censorship of sorts.[167]

The PMRC's campaign also emboldened local politicians in several cities and states to propose new obscenity laws. In February of 1986 Maryland representative Judith Tooth sponsored a bill to ban the sale of obscene material to minors. After hearing a variety of testimony, including that of chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Joseph Owens, who referred to obscene music as "the worst kind of child abuse we have in this state," the Maryland House of Representatives voted 96 to 31 in favor of the bill.[168] After a hearing similar to the one on Capitol Hill in September of 1985, the Maryland Senate voted against the ban, effectively killing the bill for the time being.[169] In November of 1985 San Antonio became the first city in the United States to officially restrict children aged 13 or younger from attending rock concerts. "This [ordinance] is saying that, In San Antonio, we are prepared to try to take a reasonable legal position that young children need not be exposed to whatever [philosophies] some rock groups…happen to have," Mayor Henry Cisneros told reporters.[170]

As a result of the PMRC's campaign, heavy metal fans, especially those in their teens, found themselves the objects of intense public scrutiny and negative stereotyping.[171] Though many teens felt compelled to "defend the heavy metal faith" and dispel myths that metal heads

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[167] Nuzum, *Parental Advisory*, 263.
[168] "Maryland House Votes to Ban 'Obscene' Rock Music Records," *Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 1986.
[169] "Maryland, for Now, will Not Regulate Lyrics, " *New York Times,* April 6, 1986.
[170] "San Antonio Passes Nation's First Ordinance Forbidding Children to Attend Rock Concerts: San Antonio First City to Ban Children From Rock Concerts," *Los Angeles Times,* November 16, 1985.
[171] *Hit Parader*, "We Read Your Mail," May 1985,10-11. One teenager reported that his high school art teacher refused to hang up his drawing of Mötley Crüe, a band targeted by the PMRC as an occult influenced and mentioned several times in the *20/20* "Devil Worshippers" episode, because she believed the band was Satanic.

were unintelligent Satanists and drug users, most quickly discovered that there were few avenues available for teenagers to publically combat the negative stereotypes proffered by the media and perpetuated by their parents and teachers.[172] Some young fans wrote directly to the media outlets they felt were responsible; however, most turned to one of the only forums that would publish the opinions of people their age - the letters section of fan magazines.[173] "I'm tired of being treated like a freak every time I go somewhere, just because I like heavy metal music," one young man wrote," I want respect just like any other person."[174]

Prior to the PMRC's public crusade against heavy metal, letters directly addressing negative societal views of metal heads and metal music appeared somewhat sporadically in the mail sections of popular fan magazines. By the end of 1985, however, belief in heavy metal's deleterious influence had become so pervasive in mainstream culture that the topic appeared frequently in issue after issue. Occasionally the letters highlighted the unrelenting nature of personal attacks on heavy metal fans: "I'm sick and tired of hearing about how destructive rock and roll is to our minds," one young man wrote, "There is nothing wrong with my mind, I'm perfectly sane."[175] Though some people used the fan magazines to further condemn heavy metal, the majority of the letters attempted to salvage the genre's reputation. Fans often used details from their own lives as proof that heavy metal was not damaging or destructive. "I've been listening to it [heavy metal] for the last four years, since I was in seventh grade," one teenager wrote, "I don't think I am corrupt. I mean how can I be when I have a chance at being

[172] *Hit Parader*, "We Read Your Mail," October 1985, 8.
[173] Loriann Stulce, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, December 1985, 20.
[174] Patrick Dunn, *Hit Parader*, "We Read Your Mail," January 1986, 22.
[175] *Hit Parader*, "We Read Your Mail," June 1985, 8-9.

valedictorian of my class?"[176] Some letters went even further, not only expressing dissent, but also calling upon other adolescents to demand recourse for negative characterizations of heavy metal and its fans:

> On May 16, the newsmagazine *20/20* on ABC, aired a program about Satan worshipers in which they stated that one of the main traits of a teenage Satanist is heavy-metal music. Personally, I am very offended by this insinuation. I have written to them demanding that they apologize to all of us who listen to heavy metal and all of the great musicians who play metal. I am asking you to write to *20/20* and tell them how you feel about what they have said.[177]

In both content and style, these letters defied societal perceptions of heavy metal listeners who proved to be both articulate and socially aware.

Though the PMRC did have a lasting effect on both musicians and fans, much of their efforts were ultimately terribly misguided. In many ways the PMRC made the entire situation worse. The media frenzy the PMRC ignited increased rather than limited adolescent exposure to the objectionable material the organization rallied against. In their numerous interviews and television appearances, the PMRC brought some of the most obscene, and obscure, bands and albums into households across the nation.[178] Furthermore, the PMRC's crusade did little to narrow the generational divide or resolve misunderstandings between teenagers and their parents. As the battle over explicit content gained momentum many adolescents who found solace and enjoyment in heavy metal music increasingly found themselves pitted against parents, teachers, and other authority figures. In response they turned to others within the heavy metal subculture for support and affirmation. By alerting adolescents to the kind of music they might like and

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[176] *Hit Parader*, "We Read Your Mail," May 1985, 8.
[177] Stulce, "We Read Your Mail," 20.
[178] Ironically, the PMRC's own educational video *Rising to the Challenge,* which was sold through their newsletter to parents, schools, and other youth oriented organizations, contained so much vulgarity that it too had to be labeled with an explicit content sticker.

their parents might object to, the "Parental Advisory – Explicit Content" labels that the RIAA instituted industry-wide after the hearing, ultimately increased the sales of many albums that bore the sticker.[179] The PMRC simply got so wrapped up in heavy metal's transgressive performativity and excess that they simply failed to see that the genre was, at its core, fundamentally conservative. As the following chapters demonstrate, a close examination of eighties metal reveals ways the genre embraced the fiscally and socially conservative ideals of the Reagan Revolution.

[179] Because of Tipper Gore's prominent involvement with the PMRC these stickers are colloquially referred to as "Tipper stickers."

Chapter Three

Everybody Wants Some:

Hair Metal's Rags-to-Riches Pursuit of the American Dream

When President Ronald Reagan was asked what his legacy would be, he answered, "Just that I helped perpetuate this great American dream."[180] Over the course of his eight years in office Reagan inspired Americans of every stripe to believe that the "dream of a better life for themselves and for their children" could be achieved through "faith, freedom, hard work, productivity, and profit"[181] In his public speeches Reagan repeatedly emphasized hard work, saving, and investing as the foundations for personal – and by extension national – prosperity. The strength of Reagan's rhetorical emphasis on work and prosperity was in its universality. In his first inaugural address Reagan appealed to workers of all stripes as heroes, dreamers, and patriots:

> You can see heroes everyday going in and out of factory gates…You meet heroes across a counter, and they're on both sides of that counter. There are entrepreneurs with faith in themselves and faith in an idea who create new jobs, new wealth and opportunity…Their patriotism is quiet but deep. Their values sustain our national life.[182]

He assured Americans that "we seek to include everyone in the success of the American dream."[183]

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[180] "Interview with Pat Robertson of the Christian Broadcasting Network" September 19th, 1985.
[181] Ronald Reagan, "Statement on the Observance of Labor Day," September 7, 1987; Ronald Reagan, "Statement on the Economy," October 13, 1982.
[182] Ronald Reagan, "First Inaugural Address to the Nation" January 20, 1981.
[183] Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on the Farm Industry," September 14, 1985.

Throughout the 1980s hair metal musicians and fans were frequently characterized as hedonistic party-animals whose lifestyle was the antithesis of the type of hard work central to Ronald Reagan's view of the American Dream of success and prosperity. In popular media outlets heavy metal was blamed for suicides and violent crimes, demonized for its supposed satanic messages, scorned for its glorification of sex and drugs, and seen as the catalyst for violence and destruction amongst teenage fans at concerts. This common perception of hair metal musicians as lazy, self-indulgent, party animals, was embraced by the musicians themselves. While mainstream Americans headed to the doldrums of their nine to five jobs, hair metal musicians played "rock and roll all night, and partied everyday!"[184]

Despite its reputation as he visual, sonic, and symbolic antithesis of the traditional American values President Reagan frequently referenced, hair metal was more than a an escapist form of popular culture – it was as much a product of the conservative forces that shaped the 1980s as it was a self-conscious reaction against them. Though their lifestyle appeared on the surface to be a rebellious rejection of traditional American values, successful and aspiring hair metal musicians embraced these ideals, albeit in alternative ways that weren't readily apparent to mainstream society. When questioned about Poison's success, lead singer Bret Michaels told an interviewer,

> When many other bands were home watching TV, we were rehearsing. You've got to remember that rock & roll's a business, and if you start screwing up business-wise you're going to fail. It's the only occupation where business and pleasure are the same. It's easy to confuse them.[185]

[184] Kiss, "Rock and Roll All Nite," *Dressed to Kill*, Electric Lady Studios, 1975.
[185] Dan Hedges, "Poison: It's only rock & roll and kids like it," *Circus,* June 1987, 21.

Far from being lazy burnouts, hair metal musicians were engaged in pursuit of the American Dream, and much like their counterparts on Wall Street, these bad boys of the Sunset Strip invested everything in rock and roll and hoped for big returns.

And the Cradle Will Rock: Van Halen Charts a Course for Hair Metal Stardom

Van Halen was one of the earliest hair metal bands to prove that this particular genre of rock and roll could constitute a successful entrepreneurial endeavor. In less than five years Van Halen went from a small local band playing backyard parties in Pasadena to major stardom, selling out arenas all over the world. Though Eddie Van Halen's genius as a guitarist certainly played a large role in propelling the band into the spotlight, the real impresario was the band's business-minded front man David Lee Roth, who, despite his early departure from the line up in 1985, molded a nascent party band into glam metal superstars. As Eddie Van Halen put it, "Dave is a, quote unquote, star type of person. I'm a musician. That's the difference."[186]

Though the Van Halen brothers were enormously talented musicians, neither was particularly business savvy. When they started renting a PA system from Roth in 1972, Eddie, Alex, and bassist Mark Stone, who was later replaced by Michael Anthony, were playing small parties and had gotten gigs at a few dive bars in the Los Angeles area. "They were playing 45 minute Cream sessions," Roth explained, referring to the British blues-rockers, and they were "having difficulties getting into local clubs."[187] According to Eddie Van Halen, the band unsuccessfully auditioned four times at Gazzarri's, an extremely popular club on the Sunset

[186] Dave DiMartino, "Give Us Van Halen!" *Creem*, March 1986, 18.
[187] Interview with David Lee Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews*, Library and Archives, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

Strip, but failed to impress club owner, Bill Gazzarri, who thought the music was "too psychedelic" and lacked the necessary qualities that would draw a crowd to his club.[188]

Roth approached the trio with a business proposition that would set them on a path to success:

> I said, I have a plan, it's very simple, now let's be constructive - if I sing with the band, I will personally test every rock song to make sure that it is danceable, we'll get the gigs. I've got a job, and you don't have to rent the PA anymore! …We started to get jobs in bars and in the clubs and stuff. Gazzarri's was one of those places.[189]

Getting steady gigs at Gazzarri's and other larger clubs on the strip was an important step for any aspiring band, but these kinds of gigs never paid exceptionally well. Roth knew that if the band was going to make a living playing music they needed a larger and more steady revenue stream. Roth's insistence that the band play danceable rock made Van Halen the perfect choice for big backyard parties where the potential for profit was far larger than at the clubs. "Playing backyard parties in Pasadena was a severe competition," Roth explained, and if you became popular "there was wealth there."[190] Roth had a good idea of what it took to become a star, and despite his lack of formal education in business, marketing, or advertising, he consistently approached the development of the band as a capitalistic entrepreneurial endeavor. Though they weren't climbing the typical corporate ladder, Van Halen, under Roth's guidance, were making strategic moves to turn playing music into a profitable career. They started out charging a dollar a head, using that money at first to rent stage equipment like a lighting box that enhanced their

[188] Interview with Eddie Van Halen, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews*, Library and Archives, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.
[189] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*
[190] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*

performance and drew larger crowds to the parties. According to Roth, "Nobody could compete with us because we were the only ones that could play rock music and you could dance to it."[191]

The heavy rock and roll sound and danceable beat that Roth guided the band towards would later prove two essential qualities that defined the mature Roth-era Van Halen sound. Heavy rock elements – Eddie's shredding guitar, loud throbbing bass lines, and screeching vocals - blended with pop music's short song form, danceable beat, and catchy melodies. Backyard parties helped the band create a sizeable fan base that drew crowds to their gigs in the clubs on Sunset Strip. In a 1981 interview, David Knight, who booked acts for the Starwood Club in Hollywood, noted that Van Halen "became the best draw of any local band we ever had."[192] Eventually they earned enough money to buy their own lighting rig and stage equipment.[193] Roth saw this as a way to improve their product while saving them money. Roth followed a consolidation strategy that cut their overhead costs and contributed not only to better quality and consistency in their performances but to higher profit margins overall.

With an eye on marketability, Roth also changed the band's name. When Roth formally joined the band, Eddie, Alex, and Michael were using the name Mammoth. Roth suggested that the band might evolve beyond a name like Mammoth, which only "works in certain circles," Roth advised them, "if you want to have distance kind of career, it [Mammoth] might not work."[194] After band members voted on a new name, "Rat Salad," the title of a popular Black Sabbath song, Roth felt that their choice still didn't have the right ring to it. He suggested Van Halen, "because you don't know what that is…maybe it's the German name for a boat, or that the

[191] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*
[192] Philip Bashe, "Van Halen's Teen Hearts," *Circus*, October 31, 1983, 50.
[193] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*
[194] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*

name for the wind, or opera – maybe that's an opera star. It can weather any test of time, any kind of music. And there you go." In his memoir *Crazy From the Heat,* Roth also claims that he liked the name Van Halen because it sounded powerful, like the name of one of his own musical influences, Santana.[195] Without knowing exactly what type of band they would become, Roth pushed for a name that was malleable and enigmatic –a name to which the band could attach their own significations as they evolved.

Roth was also the guiding force behind the band's evolving sartorial image – essentially, he taught Eddie, Alex, and Michael how to dress for hair metal success. Roth's suggestions helped give the band a signature look – a means of packaging the band that set them apart from their competition - which he believed would increase their appeal. When Eddie, Alex, and Mike met Roth at Pasadena Community College in the early 1970s, he stood out from the other students because, as Eddie Van Halen noted, he "used to walk around with these platforms and hair like that - you know he looked like [David] Bowie."[196] When Roth joined the band as their vocalist and front man, his experimental fashion choices helped push the band's look in a new direction. Bobby Hatch, a close friend of Roth's in the late 1970s, recalled that Roth was the one who "got Eddie and Alex to start dressing right," at the time they were "dress[ed] like old hippies still…Dave Roth was going, 'Come on, guys, you've got to do this. You've got to act like this.'"[197] Though the other Van Halen band members preferred a more casual look that consisted mainly of jeans and t-shirts, Roth had his finger on the pulse of popular trends in a variety of different consumer driven arenas.

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[195] David Lee Roth, *Crazy From the Heat,* (London: Ebury Press, 1997), 61. Dan Hedges, *Eddie Van Halen*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 35.
[196] Eddie Van Halen, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews*.
[197] Quoted in: Greg Renoff, *Van Halen Rising: How a Southern California Backyard Party Band Saved Heavy Metal*, (Toronto: ECW Press, 2015), 92.

Glam rockers like Bowie were undoubtedly influential, but Roth wasn't simply mimicking their style. Instead Roth carefully constructed an image that would appeal to their fan base, which he felt was key in becoming a rich and successful rock star. "I pull all of my inspirations right from the very tribe that I'm singing to," Roth recalled, "The Spandex generation was happening. I remember in the early 80s, spandex was brand new for the runners. I showed up to rehearsal in a pair of running pants and everyone said, 'Wow! That's something new!'"[198] To varying degrees the other Van Halen band members followed Roth's lead: their clothing got tighter, spandex sometimes replaced denim, plain fabrics were traded for bright eye-catching prints, and accessories from bandanas and sunglasses to bracelets and hats became part of the band image. They mixed the traditional leather and studs of heavy metal, with the flamboyant excess and eclecticism of glam to create something new - a glam metal look that matched their danceable yet metal infused sound.

Even before they were able to sign with a major label, the band, under Roth's guidance, decided that instead of hiring local manager and cutting a demo tape they would make their own press photos, flyers, and promotional materials.[199] More than simple cost cutting measures, these actions allowed the band to mold and control their own sound, image, and branding. Though he might not have described his role in these terms, Roth acted as the band's manager and marketing specialist, handling decisions that were, in the traditional business world, often overseen by teams of trained professionals. Roth knew that in order to sell out shows and make money the band needed to seem authentic to their urban working-class fan base. For promotional photos "we would pose against a brick wall," Roth recalled, "to show that we were in the

[198] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews*.
[199] David Fricke, "Van Halen Hosts Rock's Biggest Party of '79, and You're Invited," *Circus*, July 24, 1979, 32.

streets."[200] Roth understood that the band's image was important – Van Halen needed to appear like an organic outgrowth of the gritty Sunset Strip.

Roth scoped larger acts, like Aerosmith, whose fans might appreciate the Van Halen sound. Using walkie-talkies they borrowed from a friend who worked construction, the band would flyer the cars in the parking lot during the show. "We would work both sides of the parking lot," Roth recalled, "when police or security came and made you stop putting posters on the windshields of cars, you would radio and the other group of people would start putting posters on the other side of the stadium. This was a regular thing."[201]

From the very beginning, Roth envisioned Van Halen as more than just a band, it was a business venture. In many ways, creating Van Halen was simply an alternate form of the American spirit of entrepreneurship, and Roth, understood the band's efforts as an expression of the American Dream. In an interview Roth referred to the band's "tireless self promotion" as an "American ideal, " which suggests that they envisioned their hard work and perseverance as a fundamental part of what it meant to be an American.[202] By the time Warner Brothers producer Ted Templeton came to hear the band play the Stardust late in 1977 - the event that turned out to be the bands "big break," Roth had molded Van Halen into more than just a rock band, it was a commodity ready to enter the free market, which it did with astounding success.

At a time when punk, disco, and soft rock were topping the charts and music critics were ringing a death knell for heavy metal, Van Halen's eponymous debut album released in February of 1978 sold 1.5 million copies that year earning it a platinum certification from the Recording

[200] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*
[201] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*
[202] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*

Industry Association of America (RIAA).[203] Their success over the next six years was astounding. They released five albums, each of which was certified platinum in a matter of months.[204] As rock critic Andy Secher put it their "raucous, raunchy brand of rock c[ould] really grab the consumer dollar."[205] In 1979 they headlined their first tour and by 1982 sales from their "Hide Your Sheep" tour, which grossed approximately ten million dollars in ticket sales and an additional two-million in band merchandise, "outpaced even the Who's in some cities."[206] Van Halen represented more than just the band itself, it signified a type of all-American *joie de vivre* and the carefree, hedonistic, and excessive lifestyle that came along with it.

From its very inception, the Van Halen image embraced mass consumption. Since much of Roth's wardrobe was drawn from popular fashion, parts of what fans saw on stage could be purchased at a local retail store, making it easy to emulate Van Halen's style. As their fan base grew they saw more and more people in the audience emulating their look. Even the bandanas the band wore tied around their wrists, which functioned as a fashionable alternative to having a towel on stage to keep sweat out of their eyes, became popular amongst fans who proudly raised their fists in the air during Van Halen concerts.[207] But Roth did not rely solely on consumer trends to shape his own eccentric fashion choices, he also understood his target market, the "tribe" Van Halen performed for, and he drew inspiration from them as well. As the band's

[203] Dan Hedges, "Van Halen enter the studio, secretly," Circus, June 30, 1983, 72.
[204] Recording Industry Association of America, "Gold & Platinum – Van Halen," http://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=Van+Halen#search_section (accessed July 14, 2016).
[205] Andy Secher, "Stage Pass," Circus, February 28, 1983, 19.
[206] Secher, "Stage Pass," 19.
[207] Roth, *Time-Life History of Rock 'n' Roll Interviews.*

motto suggested, "there's a little bit of Van Halen in everyone;" likewise, fans could find a little bit of themselves in Van Halen.[208]

It was Roth's guidance that resulted in the band's enigmatic name, eclectic look, groundbreaking pop-metal sound, and much of their initial success. In his memoir *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll*, Ratt front man Stephen Pearcy recalled his own dreams of making it big, "I was…convinced that… Ratt was destined to 'make it.' And though I still didn't have a very precise understanding of what had to be done in order to make that dream a reality, I made sure to keep calling the only guy I knew who was clearly on the path: Eddie Van Halen."[209] "I was at Van Halen shows for a long time before my band broke," Pearcy continued "and I knew the best bands had their systems down."[210] By the early 1980s hundreds of aspiring hair bands pursued their own dreams of rock and roll stardom looking to Van Halen as a model.

I'm Always Working Slaving Everyday: Hair Metal and the American Dream

In the early 1980s hair metal exploded in the clubs along Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, California. Hundreds of bands vied for gigs, while thousands of fans, self-proclaimed "metal heads," crowded the streets. Van Halen had been instrumental in converting the strip from a punk rock haven in the late 1970s into a mecca for aspiring metal musicians. As Dee Snider recalled, "the first time I got to L.A. I thought I had reached the fricking promise land."[211] Twisted Sister was one of the few hair metal bands who managed to find commercial success

[208] Bashe, "Van Halen's Teen Hearts," 50.
[209] Stephen Pearcy and Sam Benjamin, *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll: My Life in Rock*, (New York: Gallery Books, 2013), 69.
[210] Pearcy and Benjamin, *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll,* 5.
[211] Dee Snider, *When Metal Ruled the World,* Vh1 documentary, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUrHVWa3s2Y, (accessed July 30, 2016).

away from the Strip. Most hair metal musicians knew that if you wanted to make it, you had to come to Los Angeles and you had to get gigs in the clubs along the Sunset Strip.[212] Vince Neil, lead singer for Mötley Crüe, noted "if you had a band in the Midwest somewhere and you can't go anywhere else – it's like – lets pack up and go to LA."[213]

Despite what appeared to be a voracious pursuit of sex, drugs, and rock and roll, being a successful hair metal band wasn't a non-stop party – it was hard work. They weren't donning expensive suits or attending meetings in boardrooms – in fact, their midnight marketing sessions often took place in parking lots and consisted of plastering homemade flyers on car windshields while carefully evading security – but, hair metal musicians, like their businessmen counterparts, did have to work hard in a highly competitive environment in order to achieve success. The contradictions between the popular perception of hair metal musicians and their own understanding of the work they were doing received extended coverage in Penelope Spheeris' 1988 documentary *The Decline of Western Civilization II: The Metal Years.* The *Decline* interviews offer important insight into how successful and aspiring metal musicians and their fans consistently framed their participation in the genre as a means of gaining success and prosperity.[214]

First and foremost, though they enjoyed playing music, these musicians considered this a career choice. When Spheeris asked the members of London, a band that played the Sunset Strip

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[212] For more on the history of rock and roll on Sunset Strip see: Domenic Priore, *Riot on Sunset Strip: Rock 'n' Roll's Last Stand in Hollywood*, (London: Jawbone Press, 2007); Barney Hoskyns, *Waiting for the Sun: Strange Days, Weird Scenes, and the Sound of Los Angeles*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

[213] Vince Neil, *When Metal Ruled the World,* Vh1 documentary, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUrHVWa3s2Y, (accessed July 30, 2016).

[214] *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years*, directed by Penelope Spheeris, Los Angeles, Calif.: Media Home Entertainment, 1988. Referred to here after by the name of the person speaking and the film's shortened title.

for close to a decade, "When's the last time you had a job?" The band's lead singer Nadir D'Priest replied, "This is my job. As far as I'm concerned this is what I do and I believe in it…I don't consider that I'm lazy or something or that I don't do a job because I bust my fuckin' ass doing rock and roll."[215] Spheeris' question revealed a mainstream bias that D'Priest was acutely aware of: most people simply did not consider playing rock and roll a job. Rather than playing into the stereotypes about hair metal, D'Priest rejected them by insisting that rock and roll should qualify as a job because he worked hard and he took pride in his chosen occupation.

Though it didn't seem to fit into mainstream ideas about the American work ethic, which Reagan frequently associated with traditional blue and white-collar occupations, playing music was a job – these musicians endlessly toiled so that they could climb the ladder towards success. Many musicians expressed their efforts in precisely those terms. As his band, Ratt, was trying to make it in Los Angeles, Stephen Pearcy was aware that "There's a *system* to the [Sunset] Strip. You go up the ladder one club at a time."[216] Citing Van Halen's humble beginnings at Gazzarri's as inspiration, Pearcy recalled "I was relentless in pursuing Bill Gazzarri." Eventually his perseverance paid off and Ratt got the gig.[217] "We'd made it onto the Strip, on the bottom rung of the ladder," he noted, before adding "but it was a pretty fantastic rung."[218] Every hair metal band in the eighties that gained national and international notoriety – and hundreds of bands that never struck it big but had local and regional success – paid their dues, handling their own promotional materials, booking gigs, and playing tiny clubs with the hopes of getting noticed so they could play bigger venues and earn higher wages. "People think it's a glamorous life, and

[215] Nadir D'Priest, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II.*
[216] Pearcy and Benjamin, *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll*, 97.
[217] Pearcy and Benjamin, *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll,* 98.
[218] Pearcy and Benjamin, *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll,* 99.

that you just go from playing a small club and the next thing you know you are playing the forums of the world," the lead singer from the band Lizzy Borden explained "There's a million bands out there, and all these bands are playing the clubs, and they are playing them for a long time."[219]

It wasn't a traditional nine to five job; however, becoming a successful band certainly required a lot of work –from branding and self promotion to playing gigs at night – the typical work day for most aspiring bands was far longer than eight hours. Poison drummer Rikki Rockett described a typical day's work for the aspiring band:

> During the day we'd rehearse and at night…we'd go to clubs and hand stuff out, and try to look all cool, and say, "Yeah yeah come see the band!" Later at night we'd go back, throw on your jeans, so no one knew what we looked like, then you know, puttin' all our flyers up, wallpaperin' it…then along would come another band and they'd cover it up, and you'd sneak back. It [was] a war![220]

It wasn't enough to just be practicing or auditioning for gigs during the day and playing the clubs every night. Bands also had to think about marketing and promotion if they hoped to draw crowds and climb the ladder on the Strip. Without the money to pay for advertising, the band members themselves were often the best way to sell your music to the public. Thus, handing out flyers in person required full stage make-up and clothing. As Taime Downe of Faster Pussycat recalled, "We plastered [flyers] on our cars, we plastered them on our homes. We stuffed them in their face. They threw 'em down, we picked 'em back up. It sucked."[221]

In the middle of the night after all the clubs closed and the streets were empty a virtual war over prime advertising space took place. "We'd be putting our flyers up on telephone poles," Dokken guitarist George Lynch recalled, "and then the next band would come along a couple of

[219] Lizzy Borden, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.
[220] Rikki Rockett, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.
[221] Taimie Downes, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.

hours later and rip yours down, and put theirs up. It was a very competitive scene." Poison front man Bret Michaels confessed "there may have been a *time or two* when I *accidentally* stapled over a few of the other bands that we were competing with."[222] Undoubtedly this happened more than once or twice; however, Poison quickly gained the reputation of being the "Hollywood kings of promotion" amongst their competition.[223] Though they weren't participating in boardroom negotiations, plenty of hostile takeovers took place on the Sunset Strip.

Many of the aspiring musicians who flocked to the Sunset Strip had to work side jobs in order to make ends meet. Lynch and the other Dokken band members worked as delivery drivers for a liquor company and played gigs at night. Mötley Crüe's Nikki Sixx worked as a retail clerk at Capitol Records. Ratt guitarist Chris Hager worked at a Toys'R'Us.[224] Sometimes side jobs involved playing music. Frankie Banali of Quiet Riot recalled,

> I was in about five bands at the same time, all the time. One fed me. The other one I could stay at somebody's house. The third gave me enough for drumsticks. The latter two because they were better [musically] than the other ones…one of those bands happened to be Quiet Riot.[225]

These musicians did what they had to in order to survive and continue pursuing their dreams. This was the daily grind for most of the bands that hoped to make it big.

During the *Decline* documentary, Spheeris asked the band members of an aspiring hair metal group, Odin, if they ever got discouraged. One member replied, "I have thought of going out and being a bum on Skid Row. You know, taking the easy way out."[226] This comment is particularly telling, as it reveals just how differently these musicians saw the work they were

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[222] Bret Michaels, *When Metal Ruled the World,* Vh1 documentary, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUrHVWa3s2Y, (accessed July 30, 2016).
[223] Taimie Down, *When Metal Ruled the World.*
[224] Pearcy and Benjamin, *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll,* 87.
[225] Frankie Banali, *When Metal Ruled the World*.
[226] Odin, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.

doing. While more traditionally minded Americans might have considered being a rock and roll musician as "the easy way out," that was certainly not how these musicians saw themselves. Even when bands climbed high enough on the ladder to leave the Strip on tour, their schedules were often relentless. Tours could last weeks and even months at a time, and bands typically played a show every night, traveled during the day, and held rehearsals upon arrival at their next location. This lifestyle might appear glamorous, but as Lizzy Borden confided, "You do get tired of the road…it gets to the point – you kind of – you go crazy."[227]

Many musicians even thought of themselves as businessmen. When Spheeris asked Seduce band member David Black where he saw himself in 20 years, Black replied, "Retired. Livin' someplace nice. My stocks working for me –investments, bonds, securities –shit like that. I'm responsible. I've got long hair, but I'm a businessman, ya know."[228] Black was not only using the language of the business world, he readily identified himself as a part of that world – even if his appearance and choice of occupation might suggest otherwise. Furthermore, Black's response revealed his desire for the outward markers of success – a nice place to live and a comfortable retirement – while also suggesting that his job as a musician is a literal investment in his future. The fact that Black believes wholeheartedly in his business venture – Seduce –is undeniable. "You go hungry, you go broke – but if you believe in yourself, you'll fuckin' make it, you know?" Black and his band mate Chuck Burns told Spheeris.[229] "I'm bustin' my balls at this," added Black. "Whatever it takes, man, last drop of blood, cause I'm in it till the death."[230]

[227] Lizzy Borden, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.
[228] David Black, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.
[229] David Black and Chuck Burns, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.
[230] David Black, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.

Part of the business-minded approach bands took involved branding. The first step toward success as a hair metal band was to be where the action was – and in the 1980s the Sunset Strip was *the* place to be. However, that also meant entering into a highly competitive market in which bands were forced to set themselves apart from their competition. Geoffrey Randall, author of *Branding: A Practical Guide to Planning Your Strategy*, notes that in "crowded markets," brand differentiation is tantamount. Randall explains, "the more mature the market, and the more functionally similar the products on offer, the more vial it is that your brand can give the consumer a handle, a reason for buying. It involves defining what the brands core values are – what it stands for, whom it is for."[231] Though these musicians had no formal training in the business world, their thought processes and actions reflected an innate understanding of marketing and branding. The competitive nature of the strip simply necessitated this type of thinking.

Bands that hoped to attract fans and the attention of record executives had to think about how they would brand and package their product – a unique combination of sound, image, and on stage performance – that would allow them to stand out amongst in a highly saturated market. When asked about Poison's method for success, front man Bret Michaels noted: "We play what makes us excited, that's first base. We push our image 110%, that gets us to second. We're more energetic on stage than the entire Olympic squad. We raise real hell, that's third base – and what brings it all home is that we have attitude and personality to spare."[232] Michaels implicitly understood the essentials of branding in LA's crowded musical marketplace.

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[231] Geoffrey Randall, *Branding: A Practical Guide to Planning Your Strategy.* (London: Kogan Page, 2000).
[232] Paul Gallota, "Bringing Poison to the masses," *Circus*, March 1987, 72.

The issue of differentiation on the Strip was somewhat of a complex balancing act that required simultaneously appealing to the popular tropes fans expected of heavy metal and finding a way to make your band stand out in a crowded and rapidly maturing market. To do this, hair metal, as a subgenre of heavy metal, drew upon a previously established aural and visual code, picking and choosing which elements they adopted, which served to clearly ground them in the broader genre thereby making them appealing to metal heads. Musicologist Robert Walser identified the key sonic elements of heavy metal as "vocal extremes, guitar power chords, distortion and sheer volume."[233] Visually, the code of heavy metal also had a set of key elements. Sociologist Deena Weinstein argues that "the heavy metal code specifies that what is depicted must be somewhat ominous, threatening, and unsettling, suggesting chaos and bordering on the grotesque," often drawing from "the iconography of horror movies, gothic horror tales, and heroic fantasies…and impressions of studded, black leather-clad biker types."[234] But hair metal, unlike previous forms of heavy metal, also appropriated visual elements from glam rock, embracing aspects of femininity from clothing and accessories to make-up.[235]

The introduction of glam elements into the heavy metal code offered many hair bands new avenues for differentiating themselves according to their visual image. As Barbara Coffman, one of Mötley Crüe's first managers noted, "you need[ed] to spend money to…look important," to be successful the band had, "to make it look like they had already hit number one."[236] In an

[233] Walser, *Running with the Devil,*108-9.
[234] Weinstein, *Heavy Metal,* 29.
[235] For more on glam rock image and its gender implications see: Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006).
[236] Barbara Coffman, *The Rise and Rise of Mötley Crüe*, Vh1 documentary, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q88BDNAUe8I, (accessed July 18, 2016).

interview, Poison front man Bret Michaels discussed how his band sought to differentiate themselves from the plethora of other hair metal bands playing the Strip:

> You're gonna look and say, man, there's millions of bands out there. They look great, they sound great, they're doin' their own thing, and all of a sudden Poison! What's Poison gonna do that's gonna make us stick out of the crowd? Well, We're gonna have an outrageous look, an outrageous sound; everything that we did was outrageous. And all of the sudden people said, '"well, these guys have a *great* gimmick!"[237]

One of the first things the band did upon their arrival in Los Angeles in 1983 was to change their name from Paris to Poison, which was a more traditionally heavy metal name that implied danger. Next, they fine-tuned their image to set them apart from other hair metal bands. For Poison, this meant bigger hair and more make-up to achieve a more outrageous, and more self-consciously feminine, look than their competition. As Poison drummer Rikki Rockett recalled, "Our image [was] the only thing we had to show people that we were a different kind of band."[238]

There was a brand of hair metal for everyone on the Sunset Strip. Michaels was right – each band had it's own "gimmick," that not only helped to set them apart, but eventually created scores of loyal fans that threw their hearts, minds, and wallets behind the bands with whom they identified. While Poison's image relied more heavily on feminized aspects of glam rock, Mötley Crüe took an opposite approach, pairing abundant black leather and studs – which often appeared to be drawn directly from the pages of an S&M catalogue - with platform boots, spikey teased hair, and stage make up worn like war paint smeared across their cheeks. Other bands more consciously combined their image with new aspects of on-stage performativity. The band W.A.S.P., set themselves apart from other bands on the Strip by becoming shock rockers,

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[237] Bret Michaels, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II*.
[238] Rikki Rockett, *Poison: Behind the Music Remastered*, Vh1 documentary, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wwlkj1wPyY (accessed July 25, 2016).

renown for their horror-show styled image epitomized by singer Blackie Lawless' saw blade codpiece and their on-stage antics that included throwing bloody pieces of raw meat into the audience purely for shock value. Stryper found an untapped market of Christian metal heads who admired the sound and look of hair metal but questioned its supposed occult influences. Donned in black and yellow spandex, Stryper sang Christian themed pop-metal songs in front of a cross made of bright lights and frequently threw copies of the New Testament to fans in the crowd.

Image was not the only element of branding that hair metal musicians leveraged to sell tickets and records. The use of logos was more prevalent in heavy metal than in other genres of music. Weinstein notes that within the genre of heavy metal "logos serve to identify the band both visually and verbally, since most of them present the band's name in stylized lettering." Before a band developed their logo, they needed a marketable band name. As Poison's decision to abandon the name Paris suggests, musicians realized the importance of a strong band name. More often than not band names drew upon elements from the established heavy metal code – especially notions of threatening chaos that bordered on the grotesque. The name Mötley Crüe, for example, implied a sense of rowdiness and disorder –hallmarks of the Crüe's lifestyle on and off stage. W.A.S.P. also took up the threatening and ominous tones of the heavy metal code with their band name. Though in its written and visual presentation, the band's name was clearly an acronym, the word wasp conjured thoughts of the insect - of a stinging attack complete with venom and pain. As an acronym, its meanings were less clear, and lead singer Blackie Lawless refused to definitively state what the letters stood for though the band frequently juxtaposed the colloquial use of this acronym "White Anglo Saxon Protestant," with "We Are Sexual Perverts," which was imprinted on the B-side of their U.S. debut album. Lizzy Borden named their band after a woman who was accused of using an axe to gruesomely murder her father and stepmother

in 1892 – suggesting the band was equally bizarre and menacing. Gregory Charles Harges, the lead singer for the band who legally changed his name to Lizzy Borden when the band was created, incorporated these elements into his on stage performance.

Band names formed the foundation for logo design that would encapsulate the band's core values into a compact visual symbol printed on flyers, stenciled on band equipment, and eventually used in band related merchandise. For many bands, logo design was the least inventive aspect of branding. Weinstein notes that though there was some variance, the code for heavy metal logos followed a set of rules, which aspiring hair metal musicians learned from their own musical idols:

> Gently rounded typefaces are avoided, since they communicate an image of softness. The ubiquitous Helvetica typeface, which has come to dominate all manner of official signs from interstate highway information to logos of government bureaucracies, is also rejected. Helvetica, lacking embellishments of any kind, suggests neutrality, efficiency, and order, all of which are antithetical to heavy metal. The minimum requirements for a heavy metal typeface are angularity and thickness. The typefaces are more elaborate than mere block lettering, incorporating a multitude of oblique angles and rather squared off ends.[239]

Often bands incorporated other elements into their logos that created unique variants on the general characteristics of Weinstein identified. Mötley Crüe's original logo used an italicized block typeface with umlauts over the o and u and was often combined with an upside down pentagram. Twisted Sister used a block typeface with jagged ascenders and descenders that made the letters appear broken. Following in the footsteps of Van Halen, who used shortened version of their full band name to create their band logo, Twisted Sister began using an angular interconnected "TS" as their official logo. The amount of symbolic currency a logo had is evidenced in Twisted Sisters shift in album cover design. In 1983 when they released their debut

[239] Weinstein, *Heavy Metal,* 28-29.

album, *Under the Blade*, an image of the band dominated the cover design. Just a year later, a version of this shortened "TS" logo made from riveted metal was the sole image on the cover of their second album – the Twisted Sister logo had become a signifier for the band, its values, and its music.

Despite hair metal's obvious success in the microcosm of the Sunset Strip, record executives remained skeptical of its earning potential in the national market. After all, music magazines from *Rolling Stone* to *Creem* had pondered the death of heavy metal in the late 1970s.[240] Though Van Halen had done well to prove them wrong, record executives still found newer iterations of hair metal emerging from the Strip in the early eighties incredibly risky, especially given the conservative turn that appeared to be gripping the United States. Radio airplay was an important means of gaining national exposure; however, in the early eighties most stations were simply not playing heavy metal. Many of the record companies' artists and repertoire managers (A&R) frequented the Strip scouting out new talent, but met stiff resistance when pitching new groups to their superiors.

Hair metal needed to prove itself in the national market. In the early1980s there were plenty of bands that might have been up to the task, but Mötley Crüe stood out above the rest. Not only had they produced their own album, *Too Fast For Love*, on their own independent record label, Leathür Records – but they also sold every last one of the 900 copies produced in the original pressing. The Crüe proved that excess and success were compatible. Doug Thaler, one of Mötley Crüe's early managers at Elektra Records, recalled his first time seeing them on the Strip at the recommendation of Elektra A&R manager Tom Zutaut: "I looked at this [Mötley

[240] Robert Smith, "Will Heavy Metal Survive the Seventies?" *Circus,* May 1978, 27-28; Rick Johnson, "Is Heavy Metal Dead?" *Creem,* October 1979, 42-46.

Crüe] and said 'this just needs to be taken from town to town, across the country, around the world. *This* will work."[241] It was none other than Mötley Crüe, the band that had branded itself as incorrigible bad boys complete with leather, make up, platform boots, and pentagrams, that wound up proving hair metal's profitability.

This would not be an easy task. Mötley Crüe did not fit into the profile of Elektra Records, who typically signed artists like Linda Ronstdat and Joni Mitchell. Believing that the band had a huge earning potential, Doug Thaler and Doc McGee, the Crüe's new management team, approached Elektra president Bob Kraznow to discuss the Crüe's contract. The meeting did not go well. Thaler recalled that Kraznow simply "didn't get this band."[242] After seeing pictures of Mötley Crüe, Kraznow and the other Elektra executives were, according to McGhee, "hysterical."[243] Kraznow told Thaler and McGhee "this is a record label, this isn't the circus."[244] Kraznow became confrontational – insisting that a band like Mötley Crüe had no place with the Elektra label. According to Zutaut, Kraznow was "not interested in selling music to people who live in the gutter."[245] Thaler, McGee, and Zutaut knew that Mötley Crüe drew huge crowds on the Strip, and they believed that the band would be a profitable addition to the Elektra label. Realizing that Mötley Crüe wasn't going to get radio airplay, they booked the band to play the US festival, a multi-day music festival sponsored by Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, which was being headlined by Van Halen. Though the Crüe reportedly played terribly – understandable since this was their first show off the Strip and they were playing to an estimated 250,000 people – the crowd went wild. It was the push needed to get Kraznow on board. When

[241] Doug Thaler, *The Rise and Rise of Mötley Crüe.*
[242] Doug Thaler, *The Rise and Rise of Mötley Crüe.*
[243] Doc McGhee, *The Rise and Rise of Mötley Crüe*.
[244] Doc McGhee, *The Rise and Rise of Mötley Crüe*.
[245] Tom Zutaut, *The Rise and Rise of Mötley Crüe*.

Shout at the Devil, Mötley Crüe's first record on the Elektra label, went platinum, McGhee recalled that suddenly Kraznow and the other executives had "amnesia," and couldn't remember ever not liking the band.[246] McGhee joked, "So now we've got Kraznow with a Mötley Crüe headband on."[247]

Like their yuppie counterparts who relied on designer suits, upscale urban apartments, and high-end domestic goods to mark their status, hair metal musicians looked to the market too for outward signifiers of their success. Visual media like fan magazines and music videos played an important role in identifying which commodities were markers of hair metal's prosperity and success. Hair metal imagery often reappropriated older symbols of masculine power and success – namely fast, expensive, or rare cars and motorcycles and beautiful women – all of which were featured prominently in both magazines and music videos. Hair metal musicians understood that these items functioned as powerful signifiers of their status. In an interview with *Motor Trend*, Mötley Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx recalled spending his first advance from the 914. "I spent every nickel that I had…I had to call my grandparents to get enough money for license and registration. So I was actually in debt but I had a Porsche, and I was in a rock fuckin' band and that was it. I had made it."[248] During more than one interview Sixx bragged about driving that Porsche at 70 MPH and then crashing it into a tree.[249] In each retelling of this story Sixx specifically mentions both the brand of car and the speed at which he was driving. His Porsche, a

[246] Doc McGhee, *The Rise and Rise of Mötley Crüe*.
[247] Doc McGhee, *The Rise and Rise of Mötley Crüe*.
[248] Motor Trend, "Celebrity Drive: Nikki Sixx, Mötley Crüe Bass Player, Radio Host," http://www.motortrend.com/news/celebrity-drive-nikki-sixx-motley-crue-bass-player-radio-host/ (accessed August 1, 2016).
[249] *Hit Parader,* December 1983, 27. There are multiple versions of this story – in the eighties Sixx recalled speeds from 70 to 90 in his interviews, and insisted he crashed the car into a tree. More recent interviews he has claimed he crashed into a telephone pole.

notoriously expensive sports car, his excessive use of speed, and his reckless driving perfectly embodied hair metal's obsession with success and excess. Sixx's discussion of the event, where he casually wrecked such an expensive car, suggests that commodities like these were, for a successful musician like him, completely expendable.

Visual images in popular fan magazines helped to solidify the signifiers of hair metal's conspicuous consumption. One prime example was *Creem* magazine's ongoing column, featured in every issue, called "Stars Cars" that visually paired a famous rock star with a vehicle that fit his (or her) personality. Hair metal musicians frequently appeared in this column. In April of 1981 Eddie Van Halen was pictured on the roof of a Jeep with the model name Renegade clearly printed across the front quarter panel– not a particularly expensive flashy car, but one that was rugged and masculine.[250] The word "Renegade" printed on the side furthers the rebellious posture of hair metal masculinity. As Van Halen became more successful, the commodities that marked their status also rose. Just a little over a year later in May of 1982, the same year that Van Halen went on a high-grossing nation wide tour, Eddie Van Halen was featured in the "Stars Cars" section a second time. This time he was shown leaning on a 1962 Porsche 356 – a rare, flashy, and expensive sports car – with a second newer Porsche parked in the background. [251] In January of 1984 Vince Neil was photographed in leather chaps and a studded chest harness in front of a new Camaro IROC-Z, a higher end model of a car renown for it's speed, filled with scantily clad women.[252] This image clearly showed the hair metal image and linked it directly with two markers of masculine success: fast sports cars and beautiful

[250] "Stars Cars," *Creem,* April 1981.
[251] "Stars Cars," *Creem*, May 1982.
[252] "Stars Cars," *Creem,"* January 1984.

scantily clad women. It was the visual embodiment of what Neil wrote in his 1983 Elektra Records biography: "I'm obsessed with sex, fast cars and faster women."[253]

Videos frequently contained scenes of hair metal musicians in classic cars that had been restored and then customized to fit the excessive, flamboyant, and eclectic hair metal aesthetic. The opening sequence of Poison's "Unskinny Bop," video features shots of Poison band members speeding down the highway. Rikky Rockett drives a 1930s coupe, Bobby Dall a 1960 Porsche Super 90, and a helmetless Bret Michaels rides a Harley Davidson Heritage Softail. These vehicles drew upon older symbols of masculine success; however, within the format of the video the vehicles gain new signification as markers of eighties hair metal prosperity. This happens first through the pairing of visual imagery that alternates between shots of the vehicles and close up shots of the glammed out metal musicians driving them. Rockett's old coupe has been given a flashy paint job and customized to allow for excessive speed. The first few frames pair the sound of tires screeching with visuals of sparks flying off both Rockett's coupe and Dall's Porsche. The Heritage Softail that Michaels rides is a eighties model that Harley Davidson designed to "drip[s] with the nostalgia of days gone by."[254] Like Rockett's old coupe, Michaels' Harley has been given a custom taxicab paint job that draws upon Poison's glam eccentricity. In the final frames before the actual music begins, Poison guitarist C.C. DeVille arrives in a restored Checker taxicab to meet the other band members in the back lot of a rehearsal space. Before DeVille exits the taxi, the video shows two beautiful women wearing red stiletto heels getting out of the car. The emphasis in these frames is on the women's physical beauty – the camera frames their legs as they step out of the car and then tilts upward to slowly reveal that

[253] "The Quotable Mötley Crüe," *Circus*, July 1987.
[254] Harley Davidson USA, "Softail," Harley Davidson USA, http://www.harley-davidson.com/en_US/Motorcycles/softail.html, (accessed August 2, 2016).

they are dressed in skimpy tight black dresses. DeVille enters the rehearsal space flanked by two beautiful women who also carry his amps, suggesting they are there at his beck and call.. When "Unskinny Bop" begins, the viewer sees only Poison performing on stage. The women don't reappear until the very end of the video, which reinforces the role these women play - as DeVille goes to exit the building one of the women reaches out and hangs a "Private Session" sign on the door – their physical beauty and their subservience to DeVille are markers of his rock star status. The video begins and ends by showing the viewer outward signifiers of hair metal success - fast, expensive, flashy cars and beautiful women – thereby providing bookends to the narrative of masculine power and success shown in Poison's on stage performance.

These markers of status were repeated in hair metal's aural, lyrical, and visual expressions, further strengthening their meaning as signifiers of a new type of success and prosperity. Both the song and video for Van Halen's "Panama," released in 1984, demonstrate just how powerful these signifiers had become.[255] According to David Lee Roth, "Panama" was written in response to criticism that Van Halen's songs were all about sex, partying, and cars. This lead Roth to the realization that Van Halen didn't actually have any songs about fast cars and he set out to rectify that – "Panama" was the end result. If hair metal musicians marked their success through conspicuous consumption that relied chiefly on cars and women – Roth felt that a song about both of those things was a necessary addition to Van Halen's repertoire. Roth claimed the song was written about a race car he saw in Las Vegas called the Panama Express; however, the lyrics contain double entendres created through the use of car related terminology

[255] VHTelevision, "Van Halen – Panama," *Youtube Video*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuKDBPw8wQA&index=1&list=PL69E7CB8F976BD5DE, (accessed September 14, 2016).

that when coupled with Roth's use of the female pronoun "she," suggest the song is about both a race car and a woman. In the opening verse Roth sings:

> Jump back, what's that sound
> Here she comes, full blast and top down
> Hot shoe, burnin' down the avenue
> Model citizen, zero discipline
> Don't you know she's coming home with me?
> You'll lose her in the turn.[256]

In the video these lyrics are paired with images of David Lee Roth driving a red 1950s Mercury convertible – top down, his hair blowing in the wind. At this point the video posits that "full blast and top down," are most directly a reference to a convertible car; however, in the lyrics Roth refers to the car specifically as "she" rather than "it," which suggests a secondary meaning – the "she" here is not only a car, but a topless woman as well. A similar layering of meanings happens in the following lines. "Don't you know she's coming home with me?" appears to be a remark made about a woman, but the subsequent line, "You'll lose her in the turn," makes use of racing terminology. When the song breaks into the first chorus, the video shows Alex Van Halen peering out from between a woman's legs. This oscillation between references to the female body and automobiles continues throughout the lyrics of the song. In the second verse Roth intentionally conflates these ideas once again:

> Ain't nothin' like it, her shiny machine
> Got the feel for the wheel, keep the moving parts clean
> Hot shoe, burnin' down the avenue
> Got an on-ramp comin' through my bedroom.[257]

[256] Van Halen, "Panama," *1984,* Warner Bros. Records, 1984.
[257] Van Halen, "Panama," *1984,* Warner Bros. Records, 1984.

Again here, the lyrics suggest the song is about a vehicle – a shiny machine – and the video furthers this association by showing Roth driving on a Harley Davidson. However this isn't just a shiny machine, the lyrics describe it as *her* shiny machine – a reference to a woman's body.

Though one possible setting for the song is the highway, which is pictured several times in the video, Roth notes in the second verse that the "on-ramp" is located in his bedroom. The references to driving are therefore also simultaneously about sex. The most obvious sexual overtones come at the end of the song before the final chorus when the song breaks with the verse/chorus structure. After a shredding guitar solo, the music hollows out, the drums quiet, and Eddie begins to play a single, simple, and somewhat ominous guitar riff that accompanies Roth's spoken lines:

> Yeah we're runnin' a little bit hot tonight
> I can barely see the road from the heat comin' off it
> Ah, you reach down, between my legs
> Ease the seat back.[258]

At the end of each line, during a brief pause, the sound of a revving engine – Eddie Van Halen's own Lamborghini – fills the dead space. As the music moves back into the original harmonic structure of the song, a steady crescendo is paired with lyrics that continue the conflation of cars and women while furthering the sexual overtones of the spoken lines: "She's blinding, I'm flying…got the feeling, power steering….Pistons popping, ain't no stopping now!" After these lines the song virtually explodes back into the chorus – a loud and intense climax to the sonic and sexual build up created by the preceding music and lyrics. Though the lyrics are certainly suggestive of two possible meanings for the song – fast cars and women's bodies – it is the video that clearly marks these as signifiers of hair metal success by tying these themes to footage of

[258] Van Halen, "Panama," *1984,* Warner Bros. Records, 1984.

actual fancy cars, women, and the financial success of a live Van Halen concert complete with thousands of fans in the audience.

The music and video for Mötley Crüe's "Girls, Girls, Girls" is another prime example of how the hair metal aesthetic and forms of conspicuous consumption were modeled for metal heads.[259] Like the video for "Panama," this Mötley Crüe video uses women and expensive vehicles to mark status; however, "Girls, Girls, Girls," is a song that embraces this conspicuous consumption unabashedly. The opening sequence in the video alternates between shots of a woman performing at a strip club and the Mötley Crüe band members arriving to the strip club on their Harley Davidson motorcycles. The strip club is featured prominently in both the visuals and lyrics – many strip clubs are mentioned by name in the song and pictured in the video. Immediately, the viewer is transported into a space where the commodity for sale is the female body. Later in the video lead singer Vince Neil is shown dangling a dollar from his mouth as a stripper dances in front of him. In the scenes where the strip show takes place the audience of men is always somewhat present, in other words, the male gaze is emphasized by the framing of the camera to include the audience. However, in the shots where Neil is on the strip club stage singing directly into the camera, the club appears empty - the stage remains a site for consumption but the exchange is somehow different. This camera angle allows the viewer at home to replace the raucous strip club audience. It is not Neil's sexualized body being offered as a commodity but rather his image, the Mötley Crüe brand, and by extension the hair metal lifestyle.

[259] MotleyCrueVEVO, "Mötley Crüe – Girls, Girls, Girls (Uncensored)," *YouTube Video*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYaDkWV1QT8&list=PLIWYSFmkVoqAcMEe_Zt9sDb--l1zE-Tjq&index=4 (accessed September 17, 2016).

Take a Ride on the Wild Side: Hair Metal and the Commodification of Subversion

Mötley Crüe's meteoric rise provided two important lessons to the recording industry. First and foremost, white working-class adolescents were not simply "people in the gutter," but a powerful market segment that had largely gone untapped. Teenagers and young adults not only had increasing independence in the 1980s, they also had purchasing power. Second, and perhaps more interestingly, Mötley Crüe offered up a particular vision of what those young people wanted to invest their money in – the subversive "bad boy" image and lifestyle. Soon an entire commodity culture centered on obtaining the hair metal look, attitude, and lifestyle erupted and working-class adolescents were participating in the free market in unprecedented new ways.

Advertising agencies also saw an opportunity in hair metal's popularity. Throughout the 1980s, hair metal musicians provided endorsements that helped to sell a variety of new musical instruments and sound equipment – all geared toward the new adolescent heavy metal consumer. The new heavy metal sound and look lead to the development of new guitar manufacturers that threatened to put well established traditional companies like Gibson and Fender out of business. These new companies catered to the heavy metal market by creating "hot-rod guitars."[260] One of these new companies was Kramer Guitars, who had some moderate success in the late 1970s, but saw a huge boom in their business during hair metal's heyday in the 1980s. Though guitarists like Mick Mars of Mötley Crüe and Chris Holmes of W.A.S.P. both played Kramer guitars, it was the endorsement deal made with Eddie Van Halen in the early 1980s that had the most profound effect. In one print advertisement for Kramer, Eddie is shown holding his iconic red, black, and white patterned guitar – the ad reads " It's very simply the best guitar you can buy

[260] David Konow, *Bang Your Head: The Rise and Fall of Heavy Metal,* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002), 198.

today – Edward Van Halen"[261] According to Henry Vaccaro, former chairman of the board at Kramer, Eddie Van Halen's endorsement provided a type of "instant credibility that would take other companies years to achieve."[262] This proved true, Kramer, which had virtually no name recognition in the 1970s, increased it's annual sales from $1 million to $15 million in the years following Eddie Van Halen's endorsement.[263] Other companies quickly followed suit. Washburn Guitars ran advertisements featuring Quiet Riot bassist Rudy Sarzo and guitarist Carlos Cavazo, which boasted "Heavy metal's hottest new band going for gold with Washburn."[264] Meanwhile the band's drummer Frankie Banali endorsed Pearl Drums in an advertisement that read "Cum on feel the noise…with Pearl's new 'Export Series'"[265] Twisted Sister guitarist Jay-Jay French and bassist Mark "the Animal" Mendoza appeared in advertisements for the struggling Guild Guitar Company in 1985.[266]

For fans who idolized these musicians, these endorsements were important. If you wanted to play guitar and become successful like your favorite musician, you had to have the right equipment to begin with. Advertisers recognized this and sought to capitalize on it. By the end of the decade heavy metal was being considered for endorsement opportunities outside the music industry. An accounts supervisor for The Gary Group, an entertainment and advertising firm, reported that of the 45 million American households identified as containing "music consumers…one in every ten likes heavy metal." Statistics were even higher for consumers in

[261] Kramer Guitar Advertisement, https://rediscoverthe80s.tumblr.com/post/128772537258/kramer-guitars-by-sound-goods-on-flickr-edward (accessed August 8, 2016).
[262] Quoted in: Konow, *Bang Your Head,* 198.
[263] Quoted in: Konow, *Bang Your Head,* 198.
[264] Washburn Advertisement, *Circus*, 1983.
[265] Pearl Drum Advertisement, *Hit Parader*, July 1984.
[266] Guild Guitar Advertisement, *Hit Parader,* August 1985.

the 12-15 age bracket, where the firm noted that "51% like or strongly like metal." Thus, an advertiser could "impact 11 million homes" by using heavy metal in their ad campaigns.[267]

These advertisements often appeared in fan oriented music magazines like *Circus, Creem,* and *Hit Parader* who shifted their content toward the heavy metal market and away from older formats that included a wide variety of different rock oriented genres. This shift in content was undeniably a response to the rebirth of heavy metal on the Sunset Strip; however, magazines also responded to the demands of their readers who frequently wrote letters to the editor to express their opinions of the previous issues. In one letter from the June 1981 issue of *Hit Parader*, reader Carl Turso states,

> In your subscription renewal letter you said I was your friend. Well, you're one friend I can do without. In 1976 and 1979 you were the best rock magazine around. You had articles of rock and roll groups of some value. Since your Eurobeat issue all you've features were Clash, Boomtown Rats, the Police and Blondie…Why don't you have some heavy metal groups like Judas Priest, Scorpions, Van Halen, Pat Travers, AC/DC, Sammy Hagar and Def Leppard?[268]

Hit Parader answered demands like this from their readers by increasingly focusing their content throughout the eighties on the most popular metal bands. Between January of 1985 and February of 1986 *Hit Parader* featured fourteen articles on what was arguably the year's most popular band, Mötley Crüe – an average of one article in every issue – and had the band on the cover of the magazine six times.[269] By the mid 1980s even *Creem*, which tended to favor punk during the 1970s, was now dedicating approximately 80 percent of its content in each issue to heavy metal. As one faithful punk reader noted, "So cut out the…pinups of David Lee (yeah, I know he sells

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[267] Kathy Brown, "Rockers give sponsors heavy mettle; head bangers appropriate for some sponsors," *ADWEEK Western Edition* 2 Oct. 1989, *Academic OneFile*, (accessed November 24, 2014).
[268] "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, June 1981, 10.
[269] "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* February 1986, 12.

mags, but – jeez – a little restraint, huh?)."[270] Fan magazines and their readers realized that covering heavy metal tapped into a profitable consumer market. The change in content fueled an intense rivalry between punks and metal heads – who imagined themselves on opposite sides of the commercial divide. As one punk fan put it "heavy metal exists for the sheer purpose of filling record co. execs' pockets with moola."[271] Though punk rockers self-consciously embodied and perpetuated a rebellious image, it was hair metal musicians who helped to commodify that sense of subversion through the genre's embrace of free market capitalism – the intense sound, the incorrigible bad-boy image, and the reckless party-centered lifestyle were its key selling points. Hair metal made rebellion and subcultural resistance available for purchase.

Consumption became an intrinsic aspect of hair metal fandom. In an ongoing exchange between Van Halen fans, writing to the "We Read Your Mail" section of *Hit Parader* magazine, the quantity and total expenditure made on band merchandise became the primary means of expressing devotion to the band. In response to a letter published in the November 1983 issue, one reader wrote:

> I'm writing to tell the girl who thought she was Van Halen's most devoted fan that she's wrong. I am. I have 6 posters, 3 LARGE photo albums (starting #4), 2 Van Halen shirts, a jean jacket with Dave painted on the back (which took me 2 weeks to paint and a guy offered me $200 for it and I turned it down), 7 buttons, and just this year I've spent over $350 on Van Halen items…When I get enough money I'm packing my bags and following them all across America.[272]

This sparked an ongoing debate between *Creem* readers over who had purchased more Van Halen merchandise and could therefore claim the title of biggest Van Halen fan. In the April issue a fan pronounced herself "the #1 Van Halen fan" because over the course of four months

[270] "Mail," *Creem*, October 1982, 8.
[271] "Mail," *Creem,* August 1980, 10.
[272] "Mail," *Creem,* January 1983, 11.

she spent $813.27 on Van Halen merchandise.[273] For these fans, and many others, loyalty and allegiance was expressed explicitly in consumerist terms.

As a commodity themselves, fan magazines participated in hair metal's commodification of subversion; however, they also acted as a guidebook for their readers on how to obtain the look, attitude, and skills necessary to model hair metal success.[274] Yet they were more than purely instructional, these magazines offered vivid visual examples of the hair metal aesthetic through glossy color photographs and centerfolds while simultaneously providing a mail order marketplace where aspects of the hair metal lifestyle were available for purchase. What readers learned by flipping through the pages of these magazines was that the exterior *look* of success embodied in the hair metal aesthetic was relatively affordable and easily obtained. Tight jeans or spandex pants, fitted t-shirts – preferably with band logos emblazoned on the front – with the sleeves cut off, leather accessories, and an abundance of Aquanet was all the average young man needed to visually emulate his hair metal role models. Fan magazines offered their readers an entire mail order marketplace of hair metal commodities. Band shirts, bandanas, studded leather cuffs, and other accessories were marketed in fan magazines alongside images of successful hair metal musicians wearing similar items. Readers could literally purchase items to help them "dress like a rock star," as they read the rags-to-riches stories of their favorite hair metal idols.

Clothing wasn't the only thing available for purchase in these magazines – by the mid 1980s aspiring musicians could also send away for videos and cassettes that promised to teach them how to play an instrument, sing, dance, and even work in a recording studio. Though most

[273] "Mail," *Creem*, April 1983, 8-9.
[274] For information on similar business strategies in postwar America see: Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

magazines had an advertisements section at the back, advertisements for these services were placed within the mail section, which readers used as a sounding board and a way of communicating with fellow metal heads. Prior to 1982, the "We Read Your Mail" section of *Hit Parader* typically contained only letters to the editor, and the occasional comic strip, contest – advertisements of any type were few and far between. However, by 1986 the layout of the mail section was entirely transformed and advertisements for mail order instructional material on how to become a rock star sometimes occupied more space than the letters themselves. While Advertisements for clothing and accessories suggested, through their juxtaposition with photographs of actual rock stars, that readers might attain a similar status by purchasing certain commodities, the copy in advertisements for mail order courses makes that connection explicitly. One such advertisement read:

> Even the big boys had to crawl before they could fly!
> The hottest rockers on the road today had to start learning guitar just like you -at the very beginning. Tuning the guitar, chords, strums, the whole boring thing! But being a beginner doesn't mean you have to sound like a beginner. If you have a guitar, access to a videocassette recorder and a little time, our videotape…will have you playing chords and strums after just one watching. You don't even have to know how to read music either!...We're not going to tease you with promises of hot licks, riffs and runs you're not equipped for yet - we just offer the equivalent of twelve weeks of private lessons at a price even a weekend job can finance…Order your copy of "Secrets of Beginning Guitar" today, then practice like crazy when you get it, and maybe someday **your** picture will be on the cover of this magazine![275]

This advertisement reinforced the idea that making it on the cover of a fan magazine was the ultimate sign of rock star status. As one fan noted, "I'm a 16-year-old guitarist/songwriter in a hard rock/heavy metal band called Resistance. I've always dreamed of seeing my picture on the cover of Hit Parader"[276]The text in this advertisement caters to hair metal's adolescent working-

[275] *Hit Parader*, January 1986, 12.
[276] K.C. Houston, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* January 1989, 28.

class audience by emphasizing affordability and value. Additionally, it implies that this rock star lifestyle requires no prior experience and no special talent – all you need is an instrument, a VCR, and the desire to become a star.

A similar advertisement for mail order drum lessons delivered on cassette tape read:

> "BANG YOUR HEADS" WITH PERCUSSION PLUS.
> Specializing in heavy metal.
> Percussion plus was designed by top drum instructors for drummers who want to make it in their musical career…Beginners to Advanced should take advantage of this easy to learn step by step instruction.[277]

Next to this was the company's slogan, "Making Tomorrow's Stars Today!" which was accompanied by an image of a young man with long hair seated at a drum set.[278] The connection was once again explicit – buying this product will help you become a successful heavy metal drummer. In making use of the phrase "bang your head," which was the title of the popular Quiet Riot song and a colloquial phrase used to describe the dance-like movements performed to heavy metal music, the company, Percussion Plus, gained legitimacy with metal heads. An advertisement for "Heavy Metal Vocal Lessons," touted that "no prior singing experience is necessary to achieve your full potential. By simply learning the methods taught in this course, you will have all the tools necessary to succeed as a heavy metal vocalist."[279] These advertisements, coupled with the real life rags-to riches stories of popular hair metal bands, helped aspiring musicians believe in an alternate path to the American Dream – and the necessary skills were conveniently available for purchase.

The remaining pages of these magazines were filled with advice columns, articles, and interviews that taught readers how to act the part of a hair metal rock star and encouraged them

[277] *Hit Parader,* November 1986, 14.
[278] *Hit Parader,* November 1986, 14.
[279] *Hit Parader,* November 1986, 16.

to pursue this path. In October of 1981 *Hit Parader* began a series entitled "So You Want to Be a Rock Star?" that spanned the course of five issues. This series offered the advice of successful musicians and industry professionals on topics like songwriting, self-producing a demo tape, getting signed with a small label, and creating a music video.[280] Fan magazines also helped to frame hair metal stars as role models, which subsequently reaffirmed this alternate version of the American Dream as an achievable endeavor. Fans frequently wrote in to these magazines just to publically identify who their idols were. Letters from fans that read "Nikki Sixx is my idol and I'm going to follow in his footsteps."[281] or "I want to be just like Bret Michaels. He's my idol."[282] were common. Other fans wrote in to note their perseverance and determination. Aspiring drummer Ferrell Foster wrote, "I practice drums every day by pounding sticks on my bed. I ain't got enough money for drums yet. But even if it kills me, I will be a drummer."[283] Because the mail sections of magazines functioned as a means of communication amongst metal fans, letters like these fostered a sense of community and helped readers to feel like they weren't alone in their desire to pursue this career choice.

The American dream was alive and well, even amongst a segment of society that appeared to be rebelling against traditional values in almost every way possible. Against all odds these musicians had a tremendous belief in their ability to succeed, and they inspired countless fans to follow their dreams as well. By 1987 when Spheeris began shooting

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[280] Janel Bladow, "So You Want to be a Rock Star: Working with small companies," *Hit Parader,* October 1981, 30. Janel Bladow, "So You Want to be a Rock Star: Songwriters – For Love and Money," *Hit Parader,* January 1982, 30. Janel Bladow, "So You Want to be a Rock Star: Working with small companies," *Hit Parader,* October 1981, 30. Janel Bladow, "So You Want to be a Rock Star: Making Your Mark With A Videotape," *Hit Parader,* February 1982, 30.
[281] Eric the Mötley Crüe Fan, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* March 1988, 25.
[282] Brett Tate, We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* December 1987, 26.
[283] Ferrell Foster, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, April 1988, 26-27.

for the *Decline* documentary, scores of other bands had rags-to-riches success stories, some of which rivaled that of Van Halen and Mötley Crüe. As fans flocked to packed arenas and read about their favorite bands in magazines, they too became inspired by this new vision of the American Dream.

Interviews with popular metal bands helped to perpetuate the notion that anyone could become a hair metal rock star. Chris Dillingham, an aspiring musician and avid *Hit Parader* reader sent this letter to the magazine's mail column in February of 1985:

> I was reading your interview with Kevin DuBrow [lead singer for Quiet Riot] in Hit Parader and Kevin's statement that he used to be told "You can't sing, your band stinks!" caught my eye. Thank you a million times. Just when my hopes and dreams of ever being a star were about gone, along comes someone who is a star who went through the same bull from all the nerds who've never touched a musical instrument…After being enlightened by Hit Parader about the metal scene, I'm going to crawl on bloodied hands and knees to L.A., playing and screaming all the way.[284]

It is clear that *Hit Parader's* interview with Quiet Riot's Kevin Dubrow helped Dillingham to believe in himself – despite criticism – and to continue pursuing his dream of becoming a successful musician. Fan magazines often included a special section where famous metal musicians answered letters from their fans, who frequently wrote in asking for advice. In June of 1985 *Hit Parader* included one such feature, called "Def Leppard answer readers' mail," that included a letter from an aspiring metal musician:

> I'm a struggling vocalist who can't seem to get a break. Instead of being able to spend time with my band, I'm wasting time working so I can buy gas for my car and keep a roof over my head. Is the only way you can be a successful rock performer is to be rich before you begin?[285]

[284] Chris Dillingham, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, February 1985, 9-10.
[285] Rita Simmons, "Def Leppard answer readers' mail," *Hit Parader*, June 1985, 74.

Def Leppard lead singer Joe Elliot replied:

> Before I joined Def Leppard I spent most of my time driving a van. I really didn't have much money, but I knew that I wanted to be in a group so I devised a plan where I'd drive the van during the day and then borrow it at night to get the band to its gigs. We'd usually get home at about four in the morning, then I had to get up at six to drive the van back to work. It wasn't an easy life, but I knew my hard work would be rewarded in the end.[286]

Elliot's response reaffirms the rags-to-riches narrative of hair metal success while also emphasizing the notion that hard work yields a rewarding payoff using Def Leppard's success as an example.

Music videos helped to reinforce what fans gleaned in magazines – that hair metal was a means of achieving success and prosperity. Initially, many executives in the music industry considered music videos and MTV rotation as "adjunct" to radio airplay in terms of increasing record sales.[287] However, MTV proved a force to be reckoned with, and music videos offered some of the decades most convincing evidence of hair metal success. Prior to the development of MTV, heavy metal videos, which were available for purchase, consisted of mainly on-stage performances or live concert footage; however, as MTV's influence grew the stylistic formula for music videos changed significantly. This shift was marked by a move away from videos of straightforward on-stage performance in favor of a more theatrical mini film style. Despite this shift, which hair metal undeniably embraced, most bands continued to include scenes of live concert footage – either by working it into the theatrical narrative or intersplicing it with other visual imagery. These scenes offered powerful affirmations of the prosperity, success, and freedom hair metal provided.

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[286] Joe Elliot, "Def Leppard answer readers' mail," *Hit Parader*, June 1985, 74.
[287] Leo Sacks, "Labels: Video Won't Kill Radio – Promo Chiefs Call Clip Exposure Airplay 'Adjunct'," *Billboard*, 1984, 3.

In the case of Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer" video, the viewer sees both the work required to prepare for a concert and the concert itself. [288] Initially the video, which begins in black and white, shows the band going through a sound check, practicing their on-stage stunts (one of which involves lead singer Jon Bon Jovi suspended from a cable so that he can fly over the audience), and rehearsing this particular song. Though the band is clearly working, their job looks like a lot of fun - they are laughing and joking around with one another the entire time. However, the visuals provided in the video sharply contrast the lyrics of the song, which tell the story of a working-class couple struggling to get by:

> Tommy used to work on the docks, union's been on strike
> He's down on his luck, it's tough, so tough.
> Gina works the diner all day. Working for her man
> She brings home her pay, for love, for love.[289]

A little over halfway through the video, as the band explodes into the second chorus where Bon Jovi sings "Whoa! We're halfway there. Whoa! Livin' on a Prayer!" the footage shifts into color and the crowd appears. The remainder of the video consists of shots of the packed concert from multiple camera angles that allow the viewer to experience the concert from both the performers' and fans' perspective. Close up shots of the band members reveal that the concert is just as much fun as the rehearsal – Bon Jovi is playing for thousands of adoring fans. When the video and lyrics are considered together, the distinctions between two versions of the American Dream are clear. In the song Tommy and Gina struggle to make ends meet, they work hard, and wind up living on a prayer, while the band's hard work brings them happiness and success.

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[288] BonJoviVEVO, "Bon Jovi – Livin' On A Prayer," *YouTube Video*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDK9QqIzhwk (accessed September 30, 2016).
[289] Bon Jovi, "Livin' on a Prayer," *Slippery When Wet*, Mercury Records, 1986.

The video for Poison's "Nothin' But a Good Time" also visually illustrates an alternate version of the American dream through the theatrical framing that surrounds the video's concert footage.[290] The video opens with a young man working as a dishwasher in a restaurant. His only source of enjoyment is the radio by his workstation, which is playing Kiss' "I Wanna Rock and Roll All Nite." His noticeable unhappiness is exacerbated by an older overbearing manager, who clearly represents traditional ideas about hard work, that enters the scene and condescendingly states "Hey, I'm paying you to wash dishes not to listen to rock and roll," as he flips off the radio and returns to the dining room. The dishwasher turns the radio back on just in time to hear the DJ say "For all of you slaving on the job, here's some Poison to get you thinking about those good times." The young man looks like he is going to go give the manager a piece of his mind, but when he kicks the door to the dining room open, he finds himself transported to a Poison concert. He has, in essence escaped his mundane existence and traded it in for a life where people do get paid to listen to and perform music. The entire middle section of the video is standard concert footage where the bright neon stage lights and glam rock performers provide a sharp visual contrast to the dull, dirty, kitchen area where the dishwasher was working. When the music ends the video cuts back to the dishwasher who is leaning on the sink in the kitchen with a big smile on his face. The confetti from the end of the concert scene also floats through the air in the kitchen. In many ways the narrative paralleled Poison's own transition from working-class kids in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania to hair metal superstars. What the video posits for viewers is undoubtedly an escapist fantasy, but as the confetti in the last scene demonstrates, that fantasy could and often did blur with reality. By framing the concert footage

[290] Emimusic, "Poison – Nothin' But A Good Time," *YouTube Video*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_88L-CU7PD4 (accessed March 15, 2015).

with scenes of mundane working-class life, "Nothin but a Good Time" offers viewers an alternative version of the American Dream - one particularly suited to working-class adolescents coming of age in the 1980s.

The fact that countless young men and women came to believe in this alternate means of achieving the American Dream is undeniable. When Spheeris asked the fans she interviewed for the *Decline* documentary why they wanted to become rock stars, they expressed their aspirations in terms that drew clear divisions between mainstream notions of the American Dream and their own pursuits. "I'd rather get rich at playing music than get rich doing plumbing," one young man replied. Another told drew her "I don't want to work until I'm 60 and die poor at 70." This response points to the attitude many working-class adolescents had about the futility of the career choices ahead of them and suggests that the traditional notions of hard work yielding prosperity simply didn't apply to them. Thus, they were forced to find another way – an alternate means of achieving the same end goal. Spheeris asked another aspiring hair metal musician "Are you going to be a rock star?" the young man replied "As long as rock star is defined as rich and – rich!"[291] In fact, many of the fans she interviewed simply refused to believe in the possibility of failure. Spheeris asked another young man, "What if you don't make it as a rock star?" He replied, "Oh I will." His determination and belief in himself became clearer when Spheeris pressed him with a similar question, "But what if you don't, in 10 years what will you be doing?" He confidently retorted "I *will* though, you see."[292] Another aspiring musician expressed similar

[291] Fan interviews, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II.*
[292] Fan interviews, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II.*

sentiments, "The main key is perseverance, and I *will* persevere."[293] That question is not in my mind," yet another fan responded, "the minute you doubt is the minute you lose it."[294]

Dirty Rotten Filthy Stinkin' Rich: Hair Metal's Excess Breeds Success

By the end of the decade hair metal had successfully forged a new pathway to the American Dream. Warrant, a hair metal band that experienced a meteoric rise to superstardom in 1989, epitomized this. After being inspired by stories of Mötley Crüe and the metal scene on the West Coast printed in fan magazines, lead singer Jani Lane and drummer Steven Sweet left Florida for Los Angeles to pursue their dreams. They joined forces with two guitarists – Erik Turner and Joey Cagle – and bassist Jerry Dixon to form Warrant in 1986.[295] They adopted tried and true self-promotion and marketing strategies used by other bands that found success on the Strip, and soon they were selling out venues that held 1,000 people.[296] However, after a year or so working to make a name for themselves in the Los Angeles area, Warrant still hadn't been picked up by a major label. "It was starting to get frustrating," Turner recalled, "The people kept coming, and lots of people were talking about us. But we weren't signed. What kept us going was the shows. They kept getting bigger and bigger , and more and more people were coming out and the crowd response was getting better."[297] Eventually, in 1988 the band received multiple offers and signed with Colombia Records.

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[293] Fan interviews, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II.*
[294] Fan interviews, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II.*
[295] Warrant was the name of the band that Turner and Cagle were playing in prior to Lane and Chamberlain's arrival. The band broke up, and then reemerged with a new line up in 1986.
[296] Sharon Liveten, Warrant finds rock & roll heaven (& hell) on the road," *Circus*, November 1989, 53.
[297] Liveten, Warrant finds rock & roll heaven (& hell) on the road," 51.

In 1989, the same year that *Spin* reported heavy metal was the largest revenue grossing musical genre in the world, Warrant released their debut album, *Dirty Rotten Filthy Stinkin' Rich*.[298] The album's title and the related songs and music videos overtly proclaim hair metal as a prosperous and successful endeavor, exemplified by Warrant's own seemingly instantaneous success. The album cover featured a caricatured fat greedy businessman who sprouted hundred-dollar bills where his hair should be. His left hand, which is adorned with gold jewel studded rings on every finger, holds a lit cigar made from a rolled hundred-dollar bill. The videos for the songs on this album feature this figure who follows the band from show to show (the narrative is extended through several different videos). During the video for "Big Talk," this figure, who identifies himself as Cashly Guido Bucksley, captures and tortures the Warrant band members to extract the secrets of their success. The video then alternates between images of the band performing at a packed concert, which Bucksley watches on a small television screen and scenes inside Bucksley's office where the entrapped band members are being tortured. One of the gauges on the torture machine, which spikes to maximum every time a Warrant member is tested, measures "attitude." At first Bucksley reacts with shock to the band's rowdy on stage performance, which includes spraying the crowd with alcohol. However, by the video's halfway point Bucksley is bobbing his head to the music while puffing on his hundred-dollar bill cigar. At the end of the video Bucksley rips Jani Lane out of the machine and says "Gimmie some of that! I want some of that!" The character Cashly Guido Bucksley, who reappears in the video for this song, functions as a symbolic representation of corporate America. The fact that he is trying to extract the secret to wealth and prosperity from a Warrant provides a powerful testament to how successful and profitable hair metal had become. Though the exchange in this video plays

[298] "35 Years of Rock and Roll" *Spin*, August 1990, 47.

out in a cartoonish and exaggerated form, it was, in many ways, a reflection of the rise of hair metal and the commodification of subversion.

The lyrics to the song "Dirty Filthy Rotten Stinkin Rich," (D.F.R.S.R) satirically illuminate the greedy mindset of corporate America: "Give me just half a chance/ To lead you in this corporate dance / I'll be dirty rotten filthy stinking rich!" The irony here is that as Warrant performs a song about the excesses of corporate greed, they are also participants in that system. Though the outward signifiers of success were different for hair metal musicians, they participate in conspicuous consumption just like their counterparts on Wall Street. Though on the surface it appeared markedly different from conservative visions of the American Dream, hair metal had the same end goal in mind – to become dirty rotten filthy stinking rich. Before playing the song live Lane told the audience "If you play your cards right and you switch the right people, maybe someday you will be dirty rotten filthy stinking rich!" [299]

Hair metal musicians were thinking in market terms long before they benefited from the expertise of brand managers and record executives. Bands that emerged successful from the Strip recognized that the market was saturated and consciously worked to set themselves apart from their competition. Like their mainstream American counterparts, hair metal musicians believed in the American dream - they just chose an alternate means of getting there. Though they didn't look the part, these musicians were "entrepreneurs with faith in themselves and faith in an idea" that Reagan told Americans "create new jobs, new wealth, and opportunity."[300] In the course of pursuing their own version of the American Dream, hair metal musicians inspired a

[299] Warrant, *Warrant: Live – Dirty Rotten Filthy Stinking Rich*, VHS, directed by Nick Morris, New York: Colombia, 1990.
[300] Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address to the Nation," January 20, 1981.

generation of young people to believe that America was a land of opportunity where anyone could be successful if they worked hard and had faith in themselves.

Unlike previous forms of rock and roll that originated and rose to success outside the mainstream market, hair metal relied on free market capitalism for its success. Though fans of many other types of rock and roll often lamented that their favorite bands had "sold out," to become popular and gain success in the marketplace, hair metal fans rarely used the phrase at all. Unlike the anti-consumerist music of the sixties counterculture – epitomized by bands like the Grateful Dead – or the overt rejection of capitalism found in the stripped down sound and image of seventies punk roc, hair metal glorified conspicuous consumption, necessitated mass-consumerism, and fully embraced the free market enterprise.[301]

[301] For more on seventies punk rock see: Penelope Spheeris, *The Decline of Western Civilization,* Los Angeles, Calif.: Media Home Entertainment, 1981; For more on sixties counterculture and consumerism see: Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture*, (New York: Harper Business, 2004); Michael J. Kramer, *The Republic of Rock: Music and Citizenship in the Sixties Counterculture*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Chapter Four

Look What the Cat Dragged In:

Articulations of Gender in Eighties Hair Metal

On any given night in the mid-1980s Hollywood's Sunset Strip was teeming with high heels, spandex, lace, and leather. A sea of teased hair, the bigger the better, appeared to float above the crowd. At first glance, the crowd appeared predominantly female – from their clothing and hairstyles to their flawless application of lipstick and eyeliner – the overall aesthetic was feminine. As the adage goes, looks can be deceiving, and that was certainly the case on the Sunset Strip in the eighties. The teens and young adults that lined the sidewalks and spilled out into the street were mostly young men who flocked to the Strip emulating the look of their heavy metal idols who were playing the clubs along Sunset Boulevard. As hair metal gained popularity throughout the eighties, crowds with a similar aesthetic became commonplace at record stores, local clubs, and arenas in cities across the United States. When questioned about his band's overtly feminine appearance, Poison front man Bret Michaels confidently boasted, "We're not ashamed of a little hairspray and make-up. We've always said it takes a *real man* to wear make-up."[302] For many young men coming of age in the 1980s wearing make up and women's clothing were part of what made them men.

In *Manhood in America,* sociologist Michael Kimmel argues that "crisis points in the meaning of manhood" corresponded to "crisis points in economic, political, and social life;" thus

[302] Steven Blush, *American Hair Metal*, (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2006), 56.

"America and American masculinity evolved together, each in relation to the other."[303] The narrative that Kimmel presents is a series of crises, a repetitive cycle, that has "besieged" American men. Kimmel notes that the way that men respond to these crises creates different historically contingent and socially constructed "masculinities," each of which work to resolve tensions between the real lived experience of *being a man* and the "ideal singular masculinity" against which all men measure themselves.[304] Hair metal, with its unique blending of androgyny and misogyny, was one of many socially constructed masculinities that emerged in the 1980s as both a response to and a reflection of the tensions Kimmel describes.

The spandex, teased hair, and makeup that give hair metal a gender ambiguous and even feminine aesthetic were the most readily apparent aspects of the genre that sharply contrasted conservative ideals; however, despite its seemingly rebellious façade the gender play found in hair metal was fundamentally conservative. Hair metal musicians ascribed to a traditional "ideal masculinity" characterized by men who were powerful, confident, and aggressive, and who maintain their power by subjugating the feminine other. Ironically, the most outrageous and seemingly anti-conservative characteristic of hair metal as a cultural form – its androgynous gender play – is one of the genres most fundamentally conservative aspects.

Looks that Kill: The Aesthetics of Hair Metal Masculinity

In their visual presentation, hair metal musicians played with gender. Though differences existed in the visual style of each band, there were general characteristics that typified the hair metal aesthetic. As the moniker hair metal implied, musicians tended to have long hair, and lots of it,

[303] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006), 7.
[304] Kimmel, *Manhood in America,* 3-4.

teased and hair sprayed into styles that resembled, usually in exaggerated form, hairstyles popular with women. Additionally, the hair metal aesthetic appropriated elements from two gendered arenas: feminized glam rock costuming, which included bright colors, loud patterns, sequins, and make-up, and the seemingly ultra-masculine leather and studs wardrobe of heavy metal.[305] Combining these elements in different ways allowed hair metal bands to create variations on a theme that gave them a unique visual style. I have found it useful to think of these permutations of the glam metal aesthetic according to the following typography: the glammified biker, the glam-grotesque, and the ultra-feminine.[306] All three of these image types played with gender through the male performers' varying combinations of feminine "glam" and masculine "metal" characteristics that punctuated various points along the male-female gender spectrum. A few bands cultivated a niche image and stuck with it; however, many bands experimented with all three types with varying degrees of success throughout the 1980s.

The glammified biker, which drew heavily upon the previously established costuming of heavy metal was by far the most visually masculine type. There were, however, noticeable visual differences between hair metal's glammified biker image and the look of traditional heavy metal bands. Leather clad rockers like Judas Priest and Black Sabbath rarely flirted with any kind of feminine markers of beauty. Many of these more traditional heavy metal rockers had long limp locks or kept their hair short. Hair metal bands like the L.A. Guns, Faster Pussycat, and Dokken that modeled the glammified biker aesthetic often eschewed the most eclectic, flamboyant, and feminine aspects of glam rock attire, limiting their wardrobe to frayed denim or

[305] For more information on the history of fashion in rock and roll see: Mablen Jones, *Getting It on: The Clothing of Rock 'n' Roll*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987).
[306] These are my own categories. For an alternate typography of eighties hair metal aesthetics see: Blush, *American Hair Metal*, 85.

black leather vests, adorned with embroidery or patches, and tight leather pants. Like their spandex clad glam metal counterparts, their leather clothing revealed the contours of their masculine physique. Leather accessories – wrist cuffs, belts, and hats - adorned with shiny silver studs completed the look. Despite their interest in attire drawn specifically from the masculine world of biker culture, hair metal musicians who modeled this aesthetic often embraced a feminine aesthetic from the neck up by teasing their long dangling locks and wearing some make up – mainly eyeliner and lipstick.

The glam-grotesque also drew heavily from traditional heavy metal sources - the macabre, gothic, and gritty – and combined them with aspects of femininity in ways that were at once ominous, threatening, and theatrical. This allowed for many androgynous variations on the glam-grotesque theme, some of which pushed the look in extreme directions. Twisted Sister, which one fan complimentarily referred to as "a bunch of tormented Avon ladies," crystallized their image around lead singer Dee Snider, who transformed himself into a glammified monstrous transvestite.[307] His signature pink and black outfit featured a tattered lace and fringe cropped top and matching spandex pants. To add to his already looming six foot four figure, Snider wore leather platform boots and had shoulder pads from a football uniform sewn into his shirt. Snider exaggerated traditional feminine methods of make-up application by covering his eyelids with bright blue eye shadow, painting his lips with bright red lipstick, and staining his cheeks with dark pink rouge in rectangular unblended blotches. A pencil drawn beauty mark above his lip completed the look. Rather than modeling a believable version of femininity where the masculine is remade to "pass" as feminine – Snider's appearance amplified aspects of feminine beauty and presented them in their most extreme caricatured form. Snider's signature

[307] Bill Childs, "Letters," *Circus*, January 1985, 6.

pose – hands raised in claw like gestures beside his face, mouth opened in a snarling roar that revealed his teeth filed into fang like points – created a threatening monstrous vision of femininity.

Other bands modeling the glam-grotesque drew directly from gruesome horror movies for their look. W.A.S.P., who called their variety of hair metal "shock rock," were known for their gruesome menacing appearance. Front man Blackie Lawless embodied the image of a deranged madman. His stage outfits paired spandex pants and animal print high-heeled boots with studded leather chest harnesses, leather armbands, and wrist cuffs with spikes the size of hardware nails protruding from them. The crowning piece of his ensemble was his signature saw blade codpiece. Though his look was less overtly feminine than Snider's, Lawless did have long teased hair that was dyed jet black with stark white stripes on both sides. Lawless also wore make-up, which he accentuated with fake blood dripping down his mouth and onto his bare chest. In a letter to *Circus* magazine one fan praised the band's deranged image: "Just by looking at the cover of their album, I think W.A.S.P. stands for 'We Are Sick People.' Bestial, immoral and perverted. I love it dudes."[308]

Lizzy Borden, lead singer of the Los Angeles-based band of the same name, offered a hybrid between Snider's monstrous transvestite and W.A.S.P.'s gruesome horror image. The cover of the band's debut album *Terror Rising,* released in 1984, shows only Borden's face – his mouth open wide, teeth clenched in a snarl. His blonde frizzy hair was teased until it was standing on end – as though he had been electrocuted – and he wore heavy black eyeliner that formed sharp points at the corners of his eyes and bled down onto his cheeks. His clothing typically involved an eclectic mix of leather, lace, and fringe. In the 1987 video for "Me Against

[308] Axe Wolfe, "Letters," *Circus*, December 1984.

The World," Borden, donning his signature blonde coif, appeared in silver faux-leather pants and sequin cape with exaggerated silver eye make-up, lipstick, and long pointed silver fingernails that resembled talons. In both instances Borden combined masculine and feminine elements to create a look that was intentionally androgynous and threatening.

Other practitioners of the glam-grotesque aesthetic embraced the grittiness of the street as the basis of their style. In order to show they were from the streets, performers wore tight fitting shirts and pants with rips and tears, which exposed their lean muscular bodies. This street look was often glammed up by adding colorful scarves with long dangling tails tied around the head or arms. This look incorporated various fabric choices from denim and leather to spandex, mesh, and sequins. This was by far the most common look for hair metal bands by the mid 1980s, however two bands – Mötley Crüe and Ratt – were seen as the frontrunners of this style.

As self-proclaimed gutter rats, Mötley Crüe adopted what they called a "street sleaze look," which involved appropriating items from their immediate surroundings to create their wardrobe.[309] "We'd just go to the hardware store and buy things and put em' on," lead singer Vince Neil recalled, "When we see something blowing down the middle of the street, we stop the car and reach out. You know, old newspapers, rags, a bag."[310] Taking a note from hard rockers *KISS*, the members of Mötley Crüe – Nikki Sixx, Vince Neil, Tommy Lee, and Mick Mars – each created their own unique spin on this sleazy aesthetic. Nikki, Tommy, and Mick all dyed their hair jet black, which drew a sharp contrast to Vince Neil's platinum blonde locks. Neil

[309] Mikael Kirke, "Mötley Crüe: The Masters of Trash are Back with More Flash," *Faces*, September 1985, 45.
[310] Jeff Tamarkin, "Face to Face with Mötley Crüe," *Circus*, May 1984, 52; Rick Johnson, "Who is the Greatest Band Ever in the Complete History of the Entire Universe? Ratt vs. Mötley Crüe," *Creem*, February 1985, 28.

applied make up in a way that made him appear more straightforwardly feminine. This furthered the contrast between his look and that of the other band members, who created different characters for themselves. In addition to lipstick and eyeliner, bassist Nikki Sixx drew a black streak on each of his cheeks that made his make-up look more like war paint. Lee opted for a less dramatic but somewhat feminine make-up application, while Mars used make-up to create a vampire like look. In a section entitled "Haberdashery" in *Creem* magazine, music critic Rick Johnson described Mötley Crüe's version of the grotesque-glam look:

> Nikki's get-up has it all: a destroyer escort of shiny studs…faucet screen T-shirt, enough protective gear to start his own girls field hockey team and so much new leather, he kinda looks like a wet telephone. Front man Vince looks pretty daddeo too, although you sometimes want to call in a surgical air strike on his eye make-up. Drummer Tommy's perpetual pucker is so touching, your heart will want a cockle ring and guitarist Mick Mars is still Count Chocula for all practical purposes.[311]

Though Johnson's description is written using the cheeky sarcastic language for which *Creem* magazine was known, the key elements of each band member's look are evident in his description. From Nikki's appropriation of scraps of trash mixed with leather and studs, to Vince's ultra-feminine make-up application, Mötley Crüe had, in Johnson's assessment, successfully codified their glam-grotesque image.

Like their rivals Mötley Crüe, Ratt also embraced the grittiness of the street as the basis of their glam-grotesque aesthetic. Lead singer Stephen Pearcy described the band as "modern day cement pirates," and their look certainly fit this description.[312] Like Mötley Crüe, Ratt wore clothing that had been modified with rips and tears to show wear – though they never quite mastered the straight from the gutter look as well as Mötley Crüe. Ratt's aesthetic was slightly

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[311] Johnson, "Who is the Greatest Band Ever in the Complete History of the Entire Universe? Ratt vs. Mötley Crüe," 27-28.
[312] Danielle Mazur, "Ratt '85 Party Invasion!" *Faces Rocks*, September 1985, 36.

more polished and drew more heavily from glam elements than from those of heavy metal. Bassist Juan Croucier noted, "We [Ratt] feel that there could be a lot more fashion in rock, outside of the spikes and the dark leather look." He continued, "I don't want to say that it should be more *GQ*, but it could be more colorful and up to date."[313] Front man Stephen Pearcy's look encapsulated both the grit and glam of Ratt's cement-pirate aesthetic. In an image from the inside cover of the June 1985 edition of *Faces Rocks*, a popular fan magazine, Pearcy is shown wearing silver sequin spandex pants and a full length lace jacket. The lace shirt he is wearing underneath has been modified – the left shoulder and sleeve removed – to expose his upper chest; a look that resembled the off-the-shoulder style popular with young women in the eighties. His accessories included a sequin scarf draped over his shoulder and slouchy suede boots, splattered with red paint. His curly hair is styled with bangs that drape down over his eye – a popular feminine hairstyle. His make-up is largely unnoticeable except for around his eyes, which are heavily layered with dark grey eye shadow and black eye liner.[314]

Ratt's more fashionable glam-grotesque look was far less menacing than the street-sleaze of Mötley Crüe – a fact that was noted by fans and music critics alike. In the same article in which Rick Johnson offered praise for Mötley Crüe's image, he noted:

> Ratt have…a ways to go on their image. They lean towards suede instead of leather, which is strictly a case of Fluffo interruptus from the metal standpoint. Pearcy wears enough crap around his eyes to frighten a raccoon, but refuses to spray on the cheekbones like Vince. The real giveaway? All their clothes are intact![315]

Ratt styled themselves as plunderers of the Sunset Strip, a mix of feminine and masculine elements that was more bizarre and outlandish than menacing. Despite the subtle differences

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[313] Michael Smolen, "Ratt: L.A.'s Latest Metal Gods," *Circus*, September 1984, 68.
[314] "Stephen Pearcy of Ratt," *Faces Rocks*, June 1985, 1.
[315] Johnson, "Who is the Greatest Band Ever in the Complete History of the Entire Universe? Ratt vs. Mötley Crüe," 28.

Johnson noted, by 1985 Mötley Crüe and Ratt had become so similar – in both look and sound – that fans and critics alike continually made mention of it. In an attempt to distinguish themselves from their rivals, Ratt decided to "be the nice guys." "Motley's the Jack Daniels," Ratt front man Stephen Pearcy explained, so Ratt would "be the champagne."[316]

Of the three image types, the ultra-feminine glam metal image drew most heavily from the feminine arena of glam rock. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Van Halen front man David Lee Roth, who donned feminine accessories and had an affinity for flamboyance and glamour, helped to lay the foundation for this ultra-feminine aesthetic. Unlike the gender-bending characteristic of the previous two image types, musicians who adopted the ultra-feminine self-consciously attempted to emulate a more believably feminine look. In order to achieve this gender illusion, practitioners of the ultra-feminine hair metal image wore women's clothing adorned with ruffles and lace, which they accessorized with feather boas, sequin scarves, and women's jewelry. Their hairstyles closely modeled, without mocking, those styles worn by actual women. They shamelessly polished their nails in bright colors and applied lipstick, eyeliner, mascara, and blush to make themselves look unmistakably feminine. Occasionally leather and studs made the mix but didn't garner much visual attention amongst the other flashier aspects of the bands' wardrobes. Bands like Cinderella and Britny Fox adopted components of this look in the mid 1980s, combining them with "fluffy duds inspired by Elizabethan England or the court of Louis XIV."[317] As Britny Fox bassist Billy Childs recalled, "It made us look like a sexy glam rock band…But upscale…that Amadeus kind of thing…it just worked."[318] This ultra-

[316] Quoted in: Martin Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal: The Illustrated Oral History of Heavy Metal's Debauched Decade*, (Minneapolis: Quatro Publishing Group USA Inc., 2014), 51.
[317] Blush, *American Hair Metal*, 85.
[318] Quoted in: Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal,* 181.

feminine aesthetic reached its peak in 1987 when Poison, the band music critic and author Chuck Klosterman described as "the glammiest of the glammy," hit the metal scene.[319] As Klosterman, a heavy metal fan who was in his teens during the 1980s, recalled in his memoir *Fargo Rock City: A Heavy Metal Odyssey in Rural Nörth Daköta:*

> Poison perfected glam metal. They weren't the era's best band and they didn't make the best music…but they provided an identity for this period of music…whenever anyone asks me to describe heavy metal in unspecific terms, I inevitably find myself unconsciously describing a hypothetical band that looks, acts, and sounds a lot like Poison.[320]

The cover of the band's debut album, *Look What the Cat Dragged In,* featured glossy headshots of the four male band members that a casual observer could have easily mistaken them for women – bassist Rikki Rockett even had a pencil drawn beauty mark above his upper lip. Poison provided an image model for several other bands who either partially or fully adopted the ultra-feminine look. Pretty Boy Floyd and Tuff both adopted aspects of the ultra-feminine image – particularly the use of feminine hairstyles and make-up to create an illusion of femininity – and rode the waves of Poison's success in the late eighties.

Many hair metal bands experimented with their image by trying on these different types. Mötley Crüe is perhaps the best example, as they utilized all three aesthetics at different points in the eighties. When the band formed in 1981 their image best fit into the glam biker aesthetic. Their earliest photos show them wearing jeans paired with leather jackets and a variety of biker inspired accessories from neck collars to leather gloves. Their long hair has been slightly teased, but they do not appear to be wearing any make-up. The release of *Shout at the Devil* in 1983 marked a noticeable shift in the band's look from the glam-biker to the glam-grotesque.

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[319] Chuck Klosterman, *Fargo Rock City: A Heavy Metal odyssey in Rural Nörth Daköta,* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 67.
[320] Klosterman, *Fargo Rock City,* 67.

Promotional photos for the album show the four band members wearing a mixture of tattered pirate-like attire – shirts with rips across the chest and jagged tattered hems paired with red and black studded leather pants, vests, and chest harnesses adorned with draping metal chains. Bassist Nikki Sixx's jet black hair now stood at least five inches off his head in jagged spikes that shot in every direction as though he had been electrocuted. Guitarist Mick Mars and drummer Tommy Lee added a noticeable amount of volume to their previous coifs, which sharply contrasted lead singer Vince Neil's long blond hair that had a messy just-jumped-out-of-bed feel. In these photos all four band members are pictured wearing eyeliner, blush, and lipstick applied in a traditional feminine fashion. The addition of two black streaks on Sixx's cheeks and exaggerated dark eyeliner around Mars' eyes gave them a menacing macabre look. By 1985, when Mötley Crüe released *Theater of Pain*, the band had transformed its look again, this time to a more feminine glam-rock image. The leather and studs that dominated their look were minimized in favor of stripes, polka-dots, and animal print scarves, jackets, and pants. Nikki Sixx and Mick Mars maintained a more monstrous look while both Vince Neil and Tommy Lee adopted a more clearly ultra-feminine aesthetic. In 1987 the band returned to a glam-biker image with the release of *Girls, Girls, Girls.* The video for the album's title track shows the four Mötley Crüe band members riding Harley Davidsons, dressed in denim and leather, and with noticeably less make-up.

Mötley Crüe was not the only band to experiment with the different styles of hair metal masculinity, though they were arguably one of the only bands to find success using all three image types. Twisted Sister, who were most well known for their glam-grotesque image, adopted a more straight-forward biker look in their 1985 video for "Leader of the Pack," where they opted for tight fitting distressed jeans, leather studded belts, black t-shirts with the sleeves

cut off, and denim vests emblazoned with the Twisted sister logo on the back. Lead singer Dee Snider dropped his signature gaudy make-up but kept his long frizzy blonde hair. This was, however, a momentary change for Twisted Sister – the single was a flop and the band returned to their signature sound and look for subsequent videos.

In mobilizing the transgressive discourse of cross dressing, hair metal musicians seemed, at least on the surface, to be challenging naturalized constructions of gender – much like their glam rock predecessors. In the seventies, glam rockers like David Bowie and the New York Dolls mobilized gender bending and androgyny to question the notion of normative gender characteristics. In his extensive study of the genre, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender & Theatricality in Popular Music,* Philip Auslander asserts that "glam offered a new, implicitly queer, image of masculinity in rock."[321] Furthermore, glam rockers embraced the theatricality of rock performance by maintaining a clear division between their on stage and off stage personas. The 1973 documentary of a live David Bowie concert, *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars: The Motion Picture* begins with a makeup artist transforming Bowie into the character of Ziggy Stardust. The New York Dolls 1974 television appearance on *Don Kirschner's Rock Concert* shows band members sharing a tube of lipstick to get ready for their performance. In allowing fans to witness the transformation of the male body into a more androgynous or feminine character, glam musicians overtly proclaimed that gender was both constructed and performative.[322] These glam rockers used gender bending and cross dressing to create feminine/androgyne "characters" for their on stage performances. This method of playing with gender explicitly attacked the notion of natural gendered identities, revealing gender as a

[321] Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam: Gender & Theatricality in Popular Music*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 40.
[322] Auslander, *Performing Glam*, 62.

fabricated construct. Nobody confused Davie Bowie with the character of Ziggy Stardust – they were two separate entities – one unquestionably male and the other androgynous and alien. David Bowie was not attempting to "pass" as female – and he made the artifice of his gender performance readily apparent to viewers by giving them a window into the transformative process.[323]

Despite obvious visual similarities, the gender play found in hair metal was actually quite different from that of seventies glam rock. Hair metal musicians gradually closed the gap between on and off stage personas – eventually arriving at an insistence in the authenticity of their androgynous gendered identities, which they overtly proclaimed as hyper-masculine. However, this did not happen overnight. The earliest glam metal bands occasionally acknowledged their appropriation of feminine gender signifiers as part of their costume or performance. Though they refused to go on stage without the costumes and make-up, Twisted sister made a conscious decision to include a photograph of the band out-of-character on the back of their first album. In his memoir Dee Snider recalled the reasoning behind this decision:

> The back-cover photo was taken without our makeup and costumes to establish a core belief of the band: we were not hiding. Twisted Sister wore costumes to enhance our live performances, more as a special effect. By putting a photograph of us without our makeup and costumes on the back cover, we felt it instantly communicated the message. The band didn't want this point to be lost.[324]

When it came time to make their first music video, *You Can't Stop Rock and Roll,* most of the decision-making power was in the hands of the record company, Atlantic, that signed Twisted Sister. Snider recalled that one of the few decisions the band was truly happy about was director

[323] For other scholarly analysis of glam rock see: Barney Hoskyns, *Glam! Bowie, Bolan and the Glitter Rock Revolution*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1998); Stuard Lenig, *The Twisted Tale of Glam Rock*, (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010).
[324] Snider, *Shut Up and Give Me the Mic,* 170.

Arthur Ellis' decision to show the band with and without makeup throughout the video's narrative. Though Twisted Sister embraced a division between their on and off stage personas, they did so for different reasons and with different effect than performers like David Bowie. Though they did appear with and without make-up in the video for *You Can't Stop Rock and Roll,* the viewer is never privy to the transformation that takes place. One moment the band is shown in their street clothes, and the next they are on stage in costume. The shift is instantaneous, thus, the male to female transformative process itself is obscured entirely. In this Twisted Sister video the transformation is instantaneous, as opposed to an hours-long hair and makeup session like the one found in Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* concert video, which functioned to call gender norms into question. Sudden transformations like the one that takes place in this music video do not suggest to viewers that gendered identity is a constructed artifice; rather, they seek to prove that *real men* can and do wear make-up. Dee Snider is not becoming a wholly different character, instead he is simply playing himself – a hyper-masculine rock singer. Thus, Twisted Sister's decision to appear without makeup appears to be rooted in their desire to sustain an ideal hegemonic masculinity while linking it to a new aesthetic.

As hair metal gained popularity the tendency to reveal the hair metal aesthetic as a costume or special effect became less frequent. By the mid 1980s, when Mötley Crüe gained notoriety, the look of hair metal had become part of a discourse of authenticity. Despite noticeable shifts in their image, Mötley Crüe openly denied that the gender play they presented was a construction. "When this band got together everybody in the band looked the way they looked" Nikki Sixx told an interviewer, "It wasn't like after we came out it was 'Lets look like

this.'"[325] In music videos from the mid 1980s performers are shown in a variety of different settings, but they are always already made up in the glam metal aesthetic – it appears as their natural state. Hair metal musicians, especially those who embraced the ultra-feminine aesthetic, often "passed" as women a first glance. In 1987 Aerosmith released the song "Dude Looks Like a Lady," which front man Steven Tyler claims came to fruition after he mistook Mötley Crüe singer Vince Neil for a blonde stripper sitting at the end of a bar.[326] Poison front man Bret Michaels also insisted in the authenticity of their ultra-feminine appearance:

> Why separate everyday life from the music? I look this way and I play this way. Bret Michaels on-stage is just the same as Bret Michaels off stage. As far as the clothes go, they are just our way of expressing ourselves…sure we get looks and we get comments, but if I didn't want 'em, I wouldn't dress this way.[327]

When Poison decided to drop the make up at the end of the decade, fans were outraged. [328] Both on and off stage Poison embodied the glam metal image – and fans understood it as a marker of their authenticity. Rather than demonstrating a divide between the real and performative, Poison's decision to deviate from this look called their authenticity into question. This backlash from Poison's fans shows how deeply rooted the new aesthetic of hair metal masculinity had become.

Appetite for Destruction: Aggression, Misogyny, and Hyper-Masculinity in 1980s Hair Metal

Much of hair metal's popular appeal in the eighties relied on its ability to further rock and roll's longstanding tradition as the soundtrack of teenage rebellion. As Lemmy Kilmeister, founder of

[325] Quoted in: Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal*, 39.
[326] Sue Kerr, "Aerosmith's 'Dude (Looks Like a Lady)': The Real Story," The Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sue-kerr/aerosmith-dude-looks-like-a-lady_b_3848538.html (accessed August 15, 2016).
[327] Paul Gallotta, "Behind the makeup with Poison's Bret Michaels," *Circus*, August 1988, 80.
[328] "Heavy Metal Happenings," *Hit Parader*, October 1989, 33.

the heavy metal band Motörhead put it, "It's fast and it's aggressive and it's rebellious and…parents hate it! That's the mark of good rock and roll. If your parents don't like it, it's good."[329] Sonically and visually hair metal musicians embraced their roles as arbiters of rebellion. The music, characterized by "vocal extremes, guitar power chords, distortion, and sheer volume," sent plenty of parents searching for earplugs.[330] The genre's ostentatious displays of androgyny provided a readily identifiable "look" of rebellion – a clear visual marker that these young men were not like the conservatively dressed generation that had come before them. In fact, heavy metal was so strongly linked to this sense of teenage rebellion that by the mid-1980s even the U.S. Army had transformed it's "Be all that you can be," jingle into a heavy metal anthem, which according to musicologist Robert Walser, functioned as a "subliminal seduction: military service was semiotically presented as an exciting, oppositional, youth-oriented adventure. Rebel, escape, become powerful: join the army!"[331] Hair metal's rebellious posture found its strongest appeal amongst white, working-class, adolescent, males – a constituency that mirrored the racial, social, and gender make up most hair metal bands. As an article published in *TIME* magazine in 1985 suggested, heavy metal appealed to "a crowd of tuned-out, working-class white adolescent males who drink too much beer and whoop it up for the thunderous guitar licks and outrageous stage antics."[332] As a genre dominated almost exclusively by male performers, who created music for male consumers, hair metal expressed and subsequently sought to ameliorate anxieties about masculinity and masculine power. The

[329] Lemmy Kilmeister, *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years*, directed by Penelope Spheeris (1988), DVD.
[330] Walser, *Running with the Devil*,108-109
[331] Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 15.
[332] Jay Cocks, "Rock is a Four Letter Word," *Time,* September 20, 1985, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,959999,00.html. Accessed May 2014.

sense of generational conflict that hair metal acknowledged was intrinsically tied to a transition from adolescence to adulthood – a crucial developmental milestone when boys become men.

In the 1980s, the path to becoming a man was anything but clear for many adolescents – masculinity, it seemed, was once again in crisis. Though the Civil Rights Movement and Gay Liberation posed significant threats to notions of hegemonic masculinity as white and heterosexual, feminism was the largest and most immediate threat because it issued a broad challenge to the notion of patriarchal authority that transcended race, class, and sexual orientation. Throughout the sixties and seventies feminists made significant advances in various socio-political spheres. At the end of 1975 *Time* magazine announced that its "Man of the Year" issue would feature American Women. "Women's lives are profoundly changing," the cover story noted, "and with them the traditional relationships between the sexes." The story opened with a list of occupations, "cops, judges, military officers, telephone linemen, cab drivers, pipefitters, editors, [and] business executives," jobs that were previously almost exclusively held by men. The editors also emphasized the role of feminism in reshaping the subservient relationship between women and men, arguing that this new understanding of women's place in the world stretched to even "housewives and mothers."[333]

The implementation and enforcement of Title VII, and the alliance forged between women and civil rights activists, proved a powerful tool, which aided working-class women in attaining jobs traditionally reserved for men.[334] The number of women in the workforce grew from 43 percent in 1970 to nearly 60 percent by the end of the 1980s, a further blow to

[333] "Women of the Year: Great Changes, New Chances, Tough Choices," *Time*, January 5, 1976, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,947597,00.html, accessed May 2014.
[334] Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

patriarchal constructions of women as passive servants to domestic interests.[335] By the 1980s American women were experiencing what Susan Faludi, in her 1991 national best seller, identified as a "backlash" against feminism that gradually gained "political and social acceptability" and "passed into the popular culture."[336] Men had experienced losses at home and at work, and as the heavily publicized 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match between Bobby Riggs and Billy Jean King demonstrated, no arena, even sports, was a safe haven for masculine dominance. Historian Philip Jenkins notes that by the late 1970s defeat in Vietnam and the seeming inability to emerge from the Cold War victoriously coupled with increasing domestic social ills to signal not only America's "inability to defend or assert itself" but by extension the inefficacy of American masculinity.[337]

Young men coming of age in the 1980s were forced to grapple with these failures without adequate traditional avenues for regaining a sense of masculine power. Though Vietnam had proven disastrous, for many adults active combat duty remained a fundamental aspect of masculine identity – one that young men in the 1980s had decreased interest in and limited access to. Rather than mobilizing young men for combat, in the 1980s America engaged in a nuclear standoff that only furthered feelings of helplessness and inadequacy amongst adolescents. The faltering economy in the late seventies and early eighties also left many young men questioning both their desire and ability to fulfill traditional male roles of husband, father, and breadwinner.[338] This was especially true for working-class men, who suffered

[335] Jenkins, *Decade of*, 28.
[336] Faludi, *Backlash*, xix.
[337] Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares,* 20.
[338] Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012); Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. (Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983).

disproportionate economic hardship during long periods of stagflation in the late seventies and early eighties. With the threat of feminism looming large, and limited access to political and economic means of asserting masculinity, young men in the 1980s found the stakes for reasserting masculine positions of power in popular culture were much higher than they had been in the past. Hair metal appealed to the same young men who were transitioning into adulthood, desperately searching for alternative ways to demonstrate their masculinity. Rather than carrying guns into combat zones, hair metal musicians entered rowdy arenas armed with six stringed "axes" poised to kick some ass.

In *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* musicologist Robert Walser asserts that the genre of heavy metal "depended upon the desire of young white male performers and fans to hear and believe in certain stories about the nature of masculinity."[339] If the genre is judged solely on appearances, it would seem that the stories young white men – hair metal musicians – wanted to tell about masculinity in the 1980s were not very masculine at all. Though the hair metal aesthetic undeniably played with the gendered categories of male and female in ways that seemed transgressive and rebellious, hair metal embraced very traditional ideas about gender – in particular masculinity. Rather than employing androgyny as a means of queering the gender binary, hair metal musicians paired their gender bending with performances of hyper-masculinity, which often took the form of aggression and/or misogyny that ultimately reaffirmed the performers masculine status and the power that status conferred.

The recoding of the androgynous hair metal aesthetic as decidedly masculine relied heavily on the pre-existing patriarchal structure of rock and roll music – a concept that heavy

[339] Walser, *Running with the Devil,* 109-110.

metal seemed to embrace more enthusiastically than other rock genres. In their 1978 essay "Music and Sexuality" sociologists Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie discuss the patriarchal nature of rock and roll, taking issue with a particular variety they term "cock rock." Frith and McRobbie argue that in concert settings the "aggressive, dominating, and boastful" rock star perpetuates exclusively male ownership of power and control.[340] They identify the rock concert as a male oriented spectacle "explicitly about male sexual performance…where mikes and guitars are phallic symbols; the music is loud, rhythmically insistent, built around techniques of arousal and climax" and "the lyrics are assertive and arrogant."[341] Thus, masculine power is not only embodied in the gestures and posturings of the musicians, but also in the aural sensations of the music itself. As a variety of cock rock, hair metal embraced and even exaggerated this pre-existing template for the swaggering hyper-masculine rock star.

Aggression and violence were key elements of hair metal masculinity. In his analysis of masculinity in the 1980s, Kimmel suggests that the "manhood regained under Presidents Reagan and Bush was the compulsive masculinity of the schoolyard bully…a defensive and restive manhood, of men who needed to demonstrate their masculinity at every opportunity."[342] In its outward appearance, the feminine aesthetic of hair metal masculinity hardly conjures up the image of a "schoolyard bully"; however, in their actions and the themes of their music, hair metal musicians epitomized this mindset. "We do have a reputation for getting into trouble," Mötley Crüe front man Vince Neil boasted in an interview, "Last Halloween night, I had a fight

[340] Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Music and Sexuality," *On Record: Rock Pop, and the Written Word*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 374.
[341] Frith and McRobbie, "Music and Sexuality," 374.
[342] Kimmel, *Manhood in America,* 192.

and got locked up for it…it seems we can't go anywhere without getting into fights."[343] Neil, by far the most feminine looking member of Mötley Crüe, not only embraced the bands aggressive reputation, he offered anecdotal evidence that articulated his own contributions to the band's masculine exploits. Hair metal musicians were often referred to as the "bad boys," of eighties rock and roll – a title that they quite self-consciously propagated. In 1982 Twisted Sister proclaimed themselves the "Bad Boys (of Rock 'n' Roll), Quiet Riot followed suit in 1983 with their own song titled "Bad Boys." In 1986, Poison gave themselves the title of "#1 Bad Boy," and Mötley Crüe gave their masculine aggression a theme song with the 1987 release of "Bad Boy Boogie." Guns 'n' Roses took an opposite approach, titling a song off their 1988 album *GN'R Lies* "Nice Boys." However as the album title bluntly proclaimed - Guns N' Roses lies - and Lead singer Axl Rose was anything but a nice boy. The song's chorus makes that message clear: " Nice boys don't play rock and roll/ I'm not a nice boy, and I never was!"[344]

Many musicians noted a correlation between their feminine exterior and manifestations of masculine aggression. "Oddly, the more feminine I got visually," Twisted Sister front man Dee Snider wrote in his memoir, "the more aggressive and hostile I got as a person."[345] Though Snider seems to find a sort of irony in the "odd" disparity between his appearance and actions, other musicians understood their propensity for aggression as a counterpoint to their effeminate aesthetic. Corky Gunn, lead singer of the ultra-feminine hair metal band Sweet Pain explained, "We had to be tough because we dressed in women's clothing. We would get drunk and high and want to fight with anyone."[346] For Gunn, and many other hair metal musicians, acting tough

[343] Richard Hogan, "Mötley Crüe – are they out to lunch?" *Circus,* March 1984, 34-35.
[344] Guns N' Roses, "Nice Boys," *GN'R Lies*, 1988, Geffen Records.
[345] Snider, *Shut Up and Give me the Mic,* 95.
[346] Blush, *American Hair Metal*, 60.

and getting into fights resolved questions of gender identity raised by the band's cross-dressing. In other words, it proved that they were real men.

Aggression was a consistent trope in hair metal lyrics, which often posited a connection between physical violence and attaining/maintaining masculine power. Two Mötley Crüe songs, "Bastard" and "Live Wire," offer prime examples of how hair metal songs linked violence and power. In "Bastard," Vince Neil sings the lines:

> Out go the lights
> In goes my knife
> Pull out his life
> Consider that bastard dead.

Because the lyrics are written in first person, when Neil sings them he assumes the role of the attacker. The next two lines, "Get on your knees/Please beg me, please," offer insight into the results of this violence, which portrays the attacker, Neil, in a position of power, forcing future victims into a subordinate position, kneeling and begging for mercy.[347] The lyrics assert that displays of physical violence lead to masculine power. In "Live Wire, " which is also written in first person, Neil sings the lines:

> Take my fist
> Break down walls
> Cause I'm on top tonight[348]

These lyrics assert violence as a means of maintaining masculine power – the violent actions of punching and breaking things both demonstrate and maintain the powerful position "on top" that the lyrics describe. Physical toughness, a trait associated with masculinity, is played out in exaggerated form within the lyrics of these songs.

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[347] Mötley Crüe, "Bastard," *Shout at the Devil*, Elektra, 1983.
[348] Mötley Crüe, "Live Wire," *Too Fast For Love,* Leathür, 1981

The androgyny and gender bending that characterized hair metal was more often than not, coupled with misogyny, which offered glammed up hair metal musicians another means of proving their masculine prowess and power. At concerts and in interviews, hair metal musicians displayed attitudes that were clearly sexist and misogynistic. In an article for *Rolling Stone*, music critic Mikal Gilmore described a series of radio interviews with Van Halen that took place outside the arena in Cabo just before one of their concerts. At the first interview outspoken front man David Lee Roth invited two "silk-stockinged, milk skinned twins" into the radio booth.[349] At one point during the interview, Roth cued the DJ to play "Everybody Wants Some," a song off Van Halen's new album. In clear sight of the crowd outside the radio station Roth then had one of the twins stand on a stool. When the song reached Roth's spoken lines:

> I like the way the line runs up the back of your stockings
> I've always like those kind of high heels too
> No-no-no-no don't take them off – leave 'em on
> Yeah, that's it – a little more to the right[350]

Roth visually enacted the lyrics, lifting the woman's skirt above her waist while he used his finger to trace a line up the back of her stocking.[351] Mirroring the sexist lyrics he sings in the song, Roth reduced this woman to a sexual object, which he put on display for the entire crowd. At the next interview Roth selected another attractive girl from the crowd, this time handing her a mic and asking her what she thought of Van Halen. After a fair amount of heckling from Roth and drummer Alex Van Halen, she reluctantly responded with a clear sexual innuendo, "Every one of the guys in this band knows how to get *down* –that's for *god*damn sure." Alex Van Halen

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[349] Mikal Gilmore, "The Endless Party: Van Halen revels in the rewards of heavy-metal stardom," *Rolling Stone,* September 4 1980, 10.
[350] Van Halen, "Everybody Wants Some," *Women and Children First,* Warner Bros. Records, 1980.
[351] Gilmore, "The Endless Party: Van Halen revels in the rewards of heavy-metal stardom," 10.

laughed and muttered under his breath to Gilmore, "Can you believe the mentality of some of these girls?"[352] Though it was perfectly acceptable for the guys in Van Halen to dish out innuendos and enact sexual displays, these actions were unacceptable and even laughable when coming from a woman.

Similar sexist and misogynistic attitudes toward women were prevalent amongst most hair metal musicians. When male musicians discussed female fans, regardless of their reason for liking a particular band, these women were typically all lumped together as "groupies." Mary Miller, a Mötley Crüe fan, sent a letter to *Circus* magazine to address the Crüe's tendency to stereotype female fans:

> Vince [Neil], you said that 'groupies are real sleazy, and all they want to do is f--k your brains out!" Well maybe that's true, but there are some of your female fans that just want to meet you and tell you how they feel about your music… Remember those so-called 'sleazy' girls made you and the Crue what you are today. All bands should respect their fans. Without us, you'd be nothing.[353]

Though the term groupie was occasionally used to describe male fans, it was most typically used to describe women. Bassist Chip Znuff, of Z'nuff noted:

> There's as many male groupies as there are female groupies. It's just that the female groupies are magnified because they have tits and an ass. The male Rock & Roll groupies are hipper than the female ones, but the female ones will do things to you that you just wouldn't want the males to do.[354]

Though Z'nuff claims that there are both male and female groupies, he draws clear distinctions between their prescribed roles. Men are described in terms of their fandom – they are cool for liking the band – while women are nothing more than sexual objects – tits and ass – there explicitly to fulfill the band members' sexual demands. Groupie was an overwhelmingly pejorative and particularly sexist term that, as Poison drummer Rikki Rockett explained, referred

[352] Gilmore, "The Endless Party: Van Halen revels in the rewards of heavy-metal stardom," 21.
[353] Mary Miller, "Letters," *Circus*, June 1987, 6.
[354] Quoted in: Blush, *American Hair Metal*, 36.

to "a girl that fucks any guy just because he's in a band."[355] Even when female fans were not explicitly called groupies, hair metal musicians cast them into a purely sexual role. "Our tour bus is like our pirate ship – it's where we rape and pillage," Ratt front man Stephen Pearcy explained, "I want to make sure our female fans know how to behave."[356] Skid Row front man Sebastian Bach explained, "We come into towns, make friends, get welcomed with open arms and hopefully, open legs."[357]

By casting all female fans as groupies, hair metal musicians added gendered dimensions to the power dynamics already at work in the rock star/fan relationship, which allowed male musicians to reaffirm masculine dominance and power often at the expense of female fans. In an interview, Mötley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee recalled an interaction with a female fan backstage after a concert: "You think you've got some god-like power over this person," Lee explained, "I set a bottle of champagne on the ground and said 'Take off all your clothes'… I told her to squat on the bottle and don't move…I came back an hour later and she's still there waiting. You think 'doesn't this person have any sort of couth?" [358] Though this woman did express the desire to "fuck" the members of Mötley Crüe, Lee didn't simply accept or decline her offer; instead he used her sexual advances as a means to reaffirm his masculine dominance and control. The fact that she submitted to his request made her a joke – the subject of his boastful anecdote – while further diminishing her value as a person. Rather than seeing the blatant misogyny of his own actions, Lee characterized her behavior as a sign of her lack of feminine refinement. In a 1984

[355] Quoted in: Blush, *American Hair Metal*, 38.
[356] Quoted in: Blush, *American Hair Metal*, 44.
[357] Quoted in: Blush, *American Hair Metal*, 35. For more on female rock fans see: Susan Fast, *In the Houses of the Holy: Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[358] Quoted in: Blush, *American Hair Metal*, 45.

interview for *Circus* magazine the Mötley Crüe band members were questioned about their misogynistic reputation. "We love women," Vince Neil explained, "we treat them like shit…that doesn't mean…that we hate women." "We have nothing *against* women," Nikki Sixx added in an attempt to clarify, "but this is a male dominated world and we're dominant males."[359]

The treatment of women in hair metal culture was informed by sexism that underpinned the very formation of the genre. Hair metal, like the broader genre of heavy metal, was largely a homosocial boys club that excluded women from meaningful participatory roles as musicians themselves. In the eighties there were only a handful of female hair metal bands – most notably Girlsschool and Vixen – none of which reached levels of fame comparable to their male counterparts. Women who did find success as hard rock/metal performers did so not on the merits of their music, but by acquiescing to the male dominated sexist culture that characterized the genre. For example, it was only after Lita Ford embraced an overtly sexualized image that she found success as a heavy metal guitarist. Even after touring with some of the most popular male metal bands of the time, in the eyes of many male metal fans Ford was a sexual object first and a musician second. Female metal musicians like Ford found themselves in the precarious position of needing to legitimize their presence within the masculine homosocial world of heavy metal, while simultaneously embodying the role of sexual objects offered up for the male gaze. In an image from the May 1988 all-metal special edition of *Creem* magazine Ford, who was the only female musician featured, embraces the contradictory roles of female sex symbol and legitimate metal rocker. The photograph showed Ford dressed in a skintight black leather outfit that exposed the curves of her feminine frame. In her hands, Ford held a can of aerosol hair spray, which she is lighting on fire. This aggressive action was matched by the expression on

[359] Jeff Tamarkin, *Circus* December 1984, 66.

her face. The quote that accompanies this image, "I wear my balls on my chest!" demonstrates a preoccupation amongst the magazine's editorial staff, Ford's management team, and Ford herself, with fitting into the masculine world of heavy metal. [360]

Fan magazines unabashedly adopted the hyper-masculine framework of hair metal in both their format and the tone of their articles. This worked to reinforce the sexism and misogyny found in hair metal lyrics and videos. One female reader addressed this in her letter to the editor:

> What is it you have against females? I noticed two 'sit on my face' references in your 11/80 issue and I wasn't searching or anything. 'I like women' and 'sit on my face' just don't go together…Is it illegal to mention or review women without referring to their sexuality?...Too much glee over women's discomfort/discomfiture in your magazine…God I wish the aliens would come and start dumping on white U.S. males. Just for a while. Hate, hate, hate. Lay off, why don'tcha? I'd like to laugh at *all* the jokes, sometimes it's just too close to home.[361]

The November 1980 issue this reader referenced included an article entitled "Women in Rock," which highlighted a few of the biggest female stars in a variety of rock-oriented genres. This article was labeled as a "special feature," which highlighted its rarity in what was otherwise a magazine dominated by images and stories about male rock performers. Male readers were also noticeably disappointed when *Creem* made editorial decisions to include women, though it wasn't the magazine's sexism that they took issue with. Instead, they complained about the attractiveness of the women featured. As one fan explained, "Your 'Women's' issue was about as much fun as seeing a fat girl masterbate (sic) in a sex education film."[362] Clearly this male reader expected an issue about female rockers would only feature the best looking musicians, not those who were particularly talented, and picture them not as legitimate musicians, but as

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[360] Laurel Fishman, "Lita Ford," *Metal*, May 1988, 36-38.
[361] Vandella, "Mail," *Creem*, January 1981, 6-8.
[362] "Mail," *Creem*, July 1980, 9.

Playboy playmates fulfilling male sexual fantasies. In their lyrical and visual presentations, hair metal songs reiterated these misogynistic attitudes of male performers by depicting women as sexualized objects that existed for the sheer purpose of male enjoyment and/or sexual gratification.

The range of expressions of misogyny in hair metal music and videos ran the gamut from sexism and objectification of women to overt displays of sexualized violence. The video for David Lee Roth's 1988 cover of the Beach Boy's hit "California Girls," employs a narrative that furthers the misogynistic sexual objectification found in the song's lyrics. The opening of the video shows Roth, dressed as a tour guide, driving a bus full of tourists to an undisclosed location. When they arrive, just as the song begins, the viewer discovers that these tourists are on a sightseeing venture – but instead of landmarks and monuments the visitors ogle and gawk at the different kinds of girls depicted in the song. They travel from site to site, watching Roth interact with dozens of women – from "east coast girls" and "Southern girls" to "Midwest farmers' daughters" –all of whom wear only string bikinis. As tourist attractions, these women serve no other purpose within the narrative other than that of eye candy. The video objectifies aspects of these women's bodies that connote what Laura Mulvey referred to as "to-be-looked-at-ness," thereby replicating, within the narrative of the video, the passive/female and male/active roles. [363]

Often hair metal songs went beyond mere objectification of the female body to present vivid descriptions of male oriented sexual fantasies. Warrant's hit single "Cherry Pie," offers sexism and misogyny steeped in sexual innuendo, where the lyrics of the song explore a

[363] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," In *Feminism and Film Theory*, Edited by Constance Penley, (New York: Routledge, 1988).

masculine sexual fantasy through a series of metaphors. The female figure in the song, played by model Bobbi Brown in the music video, is equated with a mouthwatering piece of all-American cherry pie. Cherry pie is also a slang term for a virgin's unadulterated genitals. Thus, when lead singer Jani Lane tells listeners she "tastes so good she'll make a grown man cry," he is making an implicitly sexual reference. The first verse of the song introduces a baseball metaphor where "swingin" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. The male oriented sexual fantasy that unfolds throughout the rest of the song involves Lane noting all the places where "swingin'" takes place – the front porch, the lawn, the living room, the kitchen, on the bathroom floor, and the back seat of Lane's car. The woman in this song follows Lane from place to place, her only purpose is to fulfill his sexual fantasies. In the second verse, Lane tells us that they are "swingin' in the Kitchen…'cause she wanted me to feed her/ So I mixed up the batter/ And she licked the beater." Even the woman's desires feed into a male oriented fantasy about Lane's sexual virility. Furthermore, the lyrics imply that the ultimate end goal of sex is only gratifying for men – while the man "mixed up the batter," which implies foreplay and possibly intercourse, in the end she ensures his sexual gratification by performing fellatio, or licking the beater.[364] In the video Brown is shown wearing several different sexy costumes that fit with the imagery presented in the lyrics; however, ultimately she is depicted as the archetypal all-American girl – a beautiful blonde wearing a red crop top, very short cutoff denim shorts, and cowboy boots – as all-American as cherry pie. The video overtly reinforces her role as a sexual object through several tightly framed close up shots of her breasts and buttocks. In one scene the band members, dressed as firemen, find that their fire hose spontaneously sprays a powerful stream of water when she walks past them – a metaphor for sexual arousal and climax. Much to her delight the

[364] Warrant, "Cherry Pie," *Cherry Pie*, Columbia, 1990.

water sprays all over her face and breasts in a display that explicitly glorifies male gratification.[365]

Often the male sexual fantasies presented in hair metal music take on a forceful tone where women are robbed of their right to consent. The title of Poison's 1986 hit, "I Want Action!" illuminates hair metal's demanding and assertive masculine posture. The lyrics of the first verse:

> Long legs and short skirts
> These girls hit me where it hurts
> I can't wait to get my hands on them
> I won't give up till they give in

reduce women to sexual objects that can and will be dominated by men. Later the song reiterates this theme when Bret Michaels sings

> Now I'm not lookin' for a love that lasts
> I need a shot and I need it fast
> If I can't have her, I'll take her and make her.[366]

These lines clarify that the "action" Michaels is looking for is purely sexual, he has no interest in a meaningful relationship of any kind. Furthermore, no consideration is given to whether or not this purely sexual relationship meets the woman's desires – if it's not what she wants, she will be made to submit. "Let's Get Crazy," a song released by Quiet Riot on their 1983 *Metal Health,* album tells the story of a man's sexual desires and exploits. Front man Kevin Dubrow sings

> Lookin' for some action, want a mean machine
> Getting' hot 'n' nasty, climbin' in-between
> I'm-a rockin' in the mornin' and in the night
> I'm gonna find mama that makes me feel right.

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[365] WarrantVEVO, "Warrant – Cherry Pie," *YouTube Video*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjyZKfdwlng, (accessed September 23, 2016).
[366] Poison, "I want Action," *Look What the Cat Dragged In*, Enigma/Capitol Records, 1986.

The lines imply that Dubrow needs a woman - a "mean machine" – for the sole purpose of satisfying his seemingly insatiable appetite for sex. The following stanza is even more explicit:

> Wanna kiss your lips, not the ones on your face
> Your innocent jive is really out of place
> In need of assistance
> A dog for my bone
> Ain't no way tonight I go home alone.[367]

The relationship described in these lyrics is based purely on sex, and the woman's "innocent jive" doesn't fit with Dubrow's sexual demands. The lyrics also make it clear that he is not willing to take no for an answer – he's sure he will not go home alone at the end of the night. The menacing guitar riff that punctuates the end of each line enhances a sense of his masculine prowess asserting that his sexual demands will be met.

Displays of misogyny also helped to resolve masculine anxieties that were directly connected to the threat women posed, via their physical beauty and sexual allure, to masculine control. This loss of control fit within a discourse of male victimization, where women are depicted as gold diggers, liars, cheaters, and the cause of endless suffering. Even Bon Jovi, who kept their bad-boy tendencies to a minimum, made these assumptions about women in their hit song "You Give Love a Bad Name." The cultivation of the female threat and the male victim was, of course, particularly ironic given the way that male hair metal musicians glorified their own sexual exploits with women. *Look What the Cat Dragged In,* the same album that included Poison's male oriented sexual fantasy "Talk Dirty to Me," also included the song "Blame it on You," which begins by demonizing women:

> She's got pizzaz
> Like a razzmatazz
> I'd like to slide it in

[367] Quiet Riot, "Let's Get Crazy," *Metal Health,* Pasha, 1983.

But where do I begin
Wastes all my money
Spends all my time
I ain't got no luck
Can't change her mind.

The song then clearly positions men as the victims of these behaviors which render them powerless:

Blame it on you
I can't stand up
Blame it on you
I'm keepin' my mouth shut
Blame it on you
I can't see straight
Blame it on you
Uh oh, it's too late.[368]

Though the song never resorts to depictions of violent revenge, it clearly offers an unfavorable view of women that helped to legitimize aggressive and assertive demands that women fulfill the sexual needs of men.

Guns N' Roses "I Used to Love Her," offers less detail about what abuses the woman in the song committed beyond nagging and complaining; however, the lyrics offer a violent resolution to the feelings of powerlessness those abuses exacerbated. The lyrics offer a vision of masculine power and control that can only be solidified by killing the femininity that threatens them:

I used to love her
But I had to kill her
I knew I'd miss her
So I had to keep her
She's buried right in my backyard.[369]

[368] Poison, "Blame it on You," *Look What the Cat Dragged In*, Enigma/Capitol Records, 1986.
[369] Guns N' Roses, "Used to Love Her," *GN'R Lies,* Geffen, 1988.

Guns N' Roses rhythm guitarist Izzy Stradlin explained the origins of the song: "I was sitting around listening to the radio and some guy was whining about a broad who was treating him bad. I wanted to take the radio and smash it against the wall. Such self-pity! What a wimp! So we rewrote the same song we heard with a better ending."[370] The better ending Stradlin and the other Guns N' Roses band members devised turned the wimpy guy they heard on the radio into a powerful man that adequately resolved his problem with women. Ratt's "Scene of the Crime," tells the story of a woman, referred to as a "cold blooded bitch" who is caught cheating by her boyfriend. The lyrics imply a violent solution to the transgressions this woman committed: "I've got me a weapon, got a loaded gun/ You know I'll track you down."[371] The song implies that enactments of masculine power in the form of aggression and violence are an appropriate means of overcoming the helplessness and inadequacy created by this woman's deceit.

Other songs combined aggressive masculinity and misogyny in explicit descriptions of violence toward women in order to reaffirm masculine dominance. In the second verse of Mötley Crüe's "Live Wire," the violence depicted earlier in the song is given gendered dimensions:

> I'll either break her face
> Or take down her legs
> Get my ways at will
> Go for the throat
> Never let loose
> Goin in for the kill.[372]

The lyrics offer a fantasy of power and control that blur violent aggression and sexual exploit.

[370] "Used to Love her Song info," Internet Archive Wayback Machine, http://gnrsource.com/songinfo/lies/utlh.htm, (accessed September 28, 2016).
[371] Ratt, "Scene of the Crime," *Out of the Cellar*, Atlantic, 1984.
[372] Mötley Crüe, "Live Wire," *Too Fast for Love*, Leathür, 1981.

Though violent misogynistic fantasies were frequently explored in the lyrics of music, actual acts of violence were not typical in hair metal. The theatrical on stage performances enacted by shock-rock bands like W.A.S.P., were the exception. These bands directed much of their gruesomely violent performance directly at women, who frequently appeared on stage bound and gagged or in shackles ready to be "tortured" in front of a live audience. These performances replicated the overt sexual violence found in many of the band's songs. "Animal (F*ck like a Beast)" is a prime example of the way that W.A.S.P frequently conflated violence and sex to convey a sense of masculine authority and power. During the chorus front man Blackie Lawless repeats the lines "I come round, round I come feel your love/ Tie you down, down I come steal your love." In the verse that follows Lawless screams, "

> I'm on the prowl and I watch you closely
> I lie waiting for you
> I lick my chops and your tasting good
> I do what ever I want to, to ya
> I'll nail your ass to the sheets
> I fuck like a beast![373]

Lawless was well known for his on-stage antics, that often included acting out the aggressive misogynistic acts depicted in their lyrics. In the early eighties the band's signature stage show included a woman dressed in black leather bondage gear strapped to a medieval style torture rack, who Lawless pretended to sexually assault and physically abuse before slitting her throat.[374]

In *Running with the Devil,* Walser argues that glam metal androgyny "from the point of view of women" offers "a fusion of the signs specific to current notions of femininity with

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[374] W.A.S.P. Nation, "Stage Antics," http://www.waspnation.com/stage.html (accessed November 14, 2016).

musically and theatrically produced power and freedom that are conventionally male."[375] However, when androgyny is combined with hyper-masculine performances of aggression and misogyny, the resulting perversion of the "female as spectacle" hardly seems to offer the access to male-centered power that Walser implies. When "the men onstage elevate important components of many women's sense of gendered identity," their physical beauty, it does not afford women access to the power presented in the cock rock spectacle. Instead, glam androgyny functions to assuage male anxieties about women and, when coupled with displays of hyper-masculinity, to reaffirm hegemonic notions of men as dominant and women as subordinate.

The androgynous appearance of hair metal musicians did lead some people to question the sexuality of male performers. This occurred most frequently in the mail sections of rock music magazines where fans from a variety of rock genres engaged in back and forth banter about which variety of rock and roll was superior to the rest. Rather than insulting the music directly, these readers consistently leveraged assumptions about performers' sexual preferences as proof of a band's inferiority. In the September 1980 edition of *Creem*, one male new-wave fan addressed their letter directly to David Lee Roth:

> To you Elvis Costello may look funny. Well at least there is no question that he is a man. The first time I saw a picture of you I thought you were a girl. The way you dress and act I thought that if you were not a girl you must be some kind of pouf. I know that Elvis would never go around puckering and pouting like a girl. What are you trying to do when you do that? You look like you're ready to give somebody some head…the only difference between you and any girl is that you shove a sock in your spandex pants. If you are trying to look sexy, then what sex are you trying to appeal to, anyway?...My advice to you is either get a sex change or a hair cut. Either be a man or a woman. Don't do something in between. If you don't, somebody may kick your faggoty ass around the world and back again.[376]

[375] Walser, *Running With the Devil,* 131.
[376]Peter Kovak, "Mail," *Creem*, September 1980, 8.

The countless tales of male hair metal musicians' sexual exploits was undeniably the strongest anecdotal evidence of their heterosexuality. However many musicians still found their androgynous appearances created questions about their sexuality.

Twisted Sister front man Dee Snider was admittedly concerned about "taking things too far and having people think [he] was gay."[377] In his memoir he repeatedly notes that the presence of his attractive blonde girlfriend, Suzette, was proof enough of his heterosexuality. Snider recalled an instance during one of his concerts when someone in the audience yelled out, calling him a "fag:" "I strode (all two steps) to the front of the postage stamp sized stage and glared threateningly at the crowd. 'Who said that?!' I shouted into the mic. No Response. *Coward!*"[378] Though Snider didn't react with physical violence, he did use intimidation in order to silence this insult to his heterosexual status. In a 1980 interview with *Rolling Stone,* Van Halen front man David Lee Roth recalled a similar altercation where his sexuality was called into question, "Then he [a male audience member] brought my sexual preferences into the conversations. I like girls, and at that point I decided his problem was more dental than mental. Shortly after, they had to pull me away from him."[379]For Roth it was easier to demonstrate his masculinity through a fist fight than to change someone's mind by other non-violent means. Rather than embracing the queerness of gender bending, hair metal rockers used aggression and misogyny to fix their gendered identity as unquestionably heterosexual and masculine.

[377] Snider, *Shut Up and Give me the Mic,* 77.
[378] Snider, *Shut Up and Give me the Mic,* 64.
[379] *Rolling Stone*, "Van Halen Begin Nine-Month World Trek" April 17,1980, 13.

Boyz are Gonna Rock: Constructions of Gender in Hair Metal Music Videos

Music videos took the male-oriented spectacle of the rock concert and opened the display up to a wider and gender diverse audience. Where Frith and McRobbie see the rock concert as overtly male, MTV differs from the typical concert because, as Ann Kaplan argues, it "refuses to construct just one dominant gender address" and instead offers "several different positions for the spectator to take up in relation to sexual difference."[380] It is therefore entirely possible for "people of both genders to undertake multiple identifications" as specific to the video being shown.[381] In the 1980s MTV extended the concept of the cock rock spectacle into a new format, music videos, which played almost continuously 24 hours a day. According to an MTV marketing research study conducted in 1983, the average viewer watched music videos for at least one uninterrupted hour each day. [382] The earliest MTV format didn't bracket videos by genre, which meant that a light pop video by an artist like Carly Simon could be, and often was followed by a heavy-metal hit by a band like Iron Maiden. The lack of predictability in this format meant that many people were exposed to music, and by extension images, they might not have normally sought out on their own. Many videos forced viewers to address their own subjectivity within narrative structures and images that perpetuated the masculine sexual iconography of the cock rock concert.

Music videos were powerful because they offered viewer-listeners a second layer of interpretation, beyond just the lyrics or the aural sensations. The visual representations in music videos are centered on the lyrics, but intentional visual and narrative choices must be made by

[380] E. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture,* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 89.
[381] Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock,* 89.
[382] Janet Maslin, "A Song is No Longer Strictly a Song, Now It's a 'Video'" *New York Times*, January 23, 1983, H25.

the video's director and these present the viewer with a clear vision of one potential interpretation of the song's meaning. In her sociological study of the heavy metal subculture, Deena Weinstein argues that music videos attach a new set of meanings to the song:

> The prominence, indeed predominance, of the visual component of MTV means that the song is read through the visuals, not through the lyrics of the music. If we only hear the song, our interpretations are not given to us: we must actively create them. Some argue that videos stop viewers from thinking for themselves by telling them what to think and 'what to see in the words.'[383]

A close reading of two music videos, Twisted Sister's *We're Not Gonna Take It* and Van Halen's *Hot for Teacher,* illustrate the ways that the constructions of gender articulated hair metal's gendered take on new meaning with the addition of a video component. Though their setting and story lines differ, both videos mobilize the transgressive symbolism of gender bending in order to lay claim to hypermasculine dominance that ultimately reaffirms the traditional patriarchal hierarchy.

Twisted Sister's 1984 *Stay Hungry* album, which contained the hit "We're Not Gonna Take It," is best described as an early glam metal album that showcased Snider's ability to lighten the sound and bring metal into the pop mainstream. According to Snider, the *We're Not Gonna Take It* video was "a game changer" that "changed the face of the format" influencing bands like Van Halen to create videos that relied on a narrative rather than straightforward concert footage.[384] The video begins as a film short about an average middle-class American family who are seated together at a table having dinner. The father's angry face and his pejorative tone of voice immediately establish his position as the powerful patriarch of the family. As the camera rotates to focus on the mother's face one of the boys politely asks to be

[383] Weinstein, *Heavy Metal,* 166.
[384] Snider, *Shut Up and Give me the Mic,* 289.

excused from the table. The mother immediately looks across the table at her husband, seated out of the camera's view, and hesitantly excuses her son. When the camera rotates back to the father's face the viewer hears music, presumably coming from the son's room upstairs – the song playing is later identified as a song by Twisted Sister. The father asks, in a condescending tone, "What is THAT? I know what that is, it's music! " to which the mother replies, "Douglas C., please, he's just a child." The father proceeds to belittle her saying "Don't Douglas C. me!" While the video never formally shows aggression or dominance in their marital relationship, this scene tells the viewer a great deal about the power dynamics at work in this family.

The camera cuts to the son, wearing his school uniform, pretending to play a red and white electric guitar, mimicking the gestures of heavy metal guitarists. The boy's room contains markers of traditional middle-class American ideals – pennant flags from prestigious colleges like Yale and Stanford, and a poster of a baseball player. The boys appearance and the décor of his room suggest that he was raised in a traditional household and has accepted the norms passed down by his parents. The guitar he is playing and a Twisted Sister poster on the bed foreshadow his rejection of those traditional ideals. When his father enters the room the music abruptly stops. The father ransacks the son's tidy room, calling it a "pigsty" and referring to his son as "a disgusting slob."[385] Once again the father's patriarchal dominance is on display.

The interactions between the father and his son in this scene reveal one of the major themes of the video's narrative: masculinity. After finding the Twisted Sister poster on his son's bed, the father points to Dee Snider's image and asks "WHAT is THAT?" This suggests a

[385] RHINO, "Twisted Sister – We're Not Gonna Take it [Extended Version] OFFICIAL MUSIC VIDEO," *YouTube Video*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9AbeALNVkk, (accessed April 27, 2014).

disconnect between the father's idea of masculinity and a new type of masculinity that his son clearly identifies with. The father yells, "What kind of a man are you?" To which the boy has no response. It is clear to the viewer that the boy is not a man at all. The father, now enraged, shakes his fist, and with spit flying from his mouth he yells "I carried an M-16 and you carry that, that, that, guitar!" This line clearly articulates one potential source of difference between their conceptualizations of masculinity. It also points to a broader issue that many young men growing up in the late seventies and eighties faced – finding new ways of proving their masculinity outside of work and without active combat duty – things that previous generations of men from all class backgrounds relied on to validate their masculine authority. When the father yells "What do you want to do with your life?" The son replies "I wanna rock!" and strikes a chord on his guitar that sends the father forcefully flying out of the bedroom window and onto the pavement below. The voice the viewer hears is not that of an adolescent boy but rather one of a grown man, which reinforces the idea that this is a battle over masculinity not simply a narrative about youth rebellion. The young boy then transforms, before the viewer's eyes, into Dee Snider in full makeup and costume, just as the opening drum solo to *We're Not Gonna Take It* begins. At this point the young boy disappears, and Snider transforms all of the other siblings into Twisted Sister band members. The children never reappear in the video – the battle over masculinity takes place between grown men who are relatively similar in age but entirely different in appearance.

This transformation makes the difference between the father's ideas of masculinity and the son's visually evident. Dee Snider's long curly blond hair, blue eye shadow, pink blush, and the fake beauty mark drawn above his lip parody, in hyperbolic form, markers of feminine beauty. His costume blends elements of masculine and feminine fashion with the regalia of

heavy metal. Visually, Snider is the exact opposite of the father who is dressed in traditional masculine work attire. Snider presents a stereotyped caricature of female beauty – one that like blackface minstrelsy "puts on the insignias of a sex, class, or race that stands in binary opposition to one's own."[386] Thus, even as Snider rebels, within the video's narrative from the seeming position of a woman, he is simultaneously pointing out how unreasonable such a position might be.

The son's transformation helps give song's title, which is also the repeated refrain of the chorus, "We're not gonna take it" meaning as an anthem of eighties adolescent rebellion. However, the absence of any adolescents throughout the remainder of the video makes it difficult to sustain the logic that the video is simply talking about rebellion rooted in generational authority. The video goes beyond simply positing the idea that young boys aspire to be like the men in Twisted Sister by immediately transforming them into those very men – not likenesses of them, but the band members themselves. Interpreting the conflict as one between grown men gives the earlier references to masculinity in the father's rant new meaning. What Twisted Sister asserts, much to the father's dismay, is a new type of masculinity being appropriated by their fans – boys coming of age in the eighties – that upholds hegemonic notions of masculine power but uses new culturally available signifiers. What these men aren't going to take is, in fact, the father's articulation of masculinity, which the song describes as "trite, jaded, boring, and confiscated."

The lyrics, written by Snider, support this understanding of the video. In the first verse Snider sings:

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[386] Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise : Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 30.

We've got the right to choose and
There ain't no way we'll lose it
This is our life, this is our song
We'll fight the powers that be, just
Don't pick our destiny, cause
You don't know us, you don't belong.[387]

However it is the addition of the video that creates this potential meaning, the lyrics alone simply come across as youthful rebellion – something that almost every generation experienced as a rite of passage. As Snider sings these words he circles the dining room table, converting the other siblings into Twisted Sister band members. Their transformations confirm the sentiments in the lyrics. If the code of heavy metal is structured, as Walser claims, so that the collaborative singing in the chorus sections of a song serves to "enlarge the statements of the solo vocalist, enacting the approval or participation of the larger social world" the transformed band members joining Snider in the "We're not gonna take it" refrain further confirms the sentiments that converted them from conservative non-rebellious young boys into the band members of Twisted Sister. The participation of the larger social world is made real when, at the end of the video, a live audience at a Twisted Sister concert is shown singing the refrain with the band.

Throughout the video the chorus is paired with visuals of Dee Snider and the other members of Twisted Sister sending the father flying through windows and walls. After each scene the father reappears, unharmed, to continue the altercation. The PMRC took issue with the way "the band members proceed to beat up daddy, who will not let them rock."[388] Their use of the word "daddy" evokes images of a kind benevolent father, being abused by his rebellious son. The video clearly characterizes the father as dominant, overbearing, and at times irrational and

[387] Twisted Sister, "We're Not Gonna Take it," *Stay Hungry,* Atlantic, 1984.
[388] *Contents of Music and the Lyrics of Records: Hearing Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation*, 99th Congress, 1st Session, (1985).

the violence is a rejection of this version of masculinity. But the violence shown in the video, none of which causes real physical harm, is an expression of dominance, similar to that of the father. Two different versions of masculinity are portrayed as fighting one another, but if the makeup and costumes are stripped away, their behaviors aren't really all that different. Furthermore, the type of violence depicted in this video is all ultimately unfulfilled. Like the Roadrunner cartoons Snider looked to for inspiration when scripting the video, all of the characters survive, and both versions of masculinity remain relatively unharmed at the end of the video.[389] Thus, rather than being a narrative solely focused on encouraging young men to rebel against their parents, as the PMRC claimed, the video actually reinforces the maintenance of patriarchal dominance and control under a new set of androgynous visual signifiers.

The prevailing narrative in Van Halen's *Hot For Teacher* clearly asserts androgyny and masculine appropriation of feminine gender for misogynistic purposes.[390] Like Twisted Sister front man Dee Snider, Van Halen solidified their image around a dynamic front man, David lee Roth, whose appearance garnered the most attention. The video for *Hot For Teacher,* which was released on MTV in 1984, was co-directed by Roth. The video opens with a black and white shot of a mother and her son, Waldo. This shot sequence begins with a medium shot that frames the mother in front of a domestic dwelling, linking the female image to traditional female gender roles. The mother's clothing, hair, and glasses are a retro-pastiche of conservative styles of earlier decades. The mother's physical appearance, the black and white film, and the references

[389] Snider makes this point in his testimony at the September 1985 Senate hearing. A more thorough discussion is available in his memoir: Snider, *Shut Up and Give me the Mic,* 289.
[390] VHTelevision, "Van Halen- 'Hot For Teacher' (Official Music Video)," *YouTube Video*, (accessed September 28, 2016).

to domesticity allude to 1950s sitcoms like *Ozzie and Harriet* or *Leave it to Beaver* where women are passive and non-threatening because they are confined to the domestic sphere.

This image of domesticity is abruptly interrupted when Waldo's mother lets out several pleasure filled moans while she bends over to move closer to the camera, which takes on Waldo's point of view. Immediately, the idea of the wholesome matriarch is sexualized and drawn into the Oedipal overtones of the video. Extra-diegetic sounds of tires screeching and horrified screaming are masterfully paired with the mother's facial expressions, denying this woman even the most basic position afforded to women, that of loving mother. When the camera rotates to an over the shoulder shot of Waldo, the viewer begins to understand the overdubbed noises not as extra-diegetic, but rather as manifestations of Waldo's inner thoughts. The screams signify Waldo's anxieties about women, sexuality, and rebellion, which in typical Freudian analysis are linked to the Oedipal complex. The link between the overdubbed sound and Waldo's inner thoughts is strengthened when he replies to his mother "Oh mom, you know I'm not like other guys. I'm nervous and my socks are too loose." The viewer hears a voice, but Waldo's character says only the first two words. His mouth remains visible and closed for the remainder of the lines and the voice which we hear is quite clearly not Waldo's speaking voice, but rather the voice of a man – linking the boyish version of Waldo to actual adult fears and anxieties that the threat of female power over male sexual desires presents to patriarchal control. The viewer's initial understanding of Waldo's character is that he is "not like other guys" because he does not participate in the youthful rebellion symbolized by the rowdy bus full of children; however, as the video progresses it becomes clear that what really separates Waldo from the "other guys" is his anxiety about sexuality, his inability to usurp and control female accesses to power, and his inability to perform hypermasculinity like his rebellious androgynous

classmates. This scene, up to the point where Waldo gets on the bus and Alex Van Halen's famous drum solo starts, is unique to the video. Listeners unfamiliar with the video might interpret the lyrics in a number of different ways; however, the video offers a framing device – the story of Waldo who is "not like other guys."

The music articulates the difference between Waldo and the other students in class. When the video switches to pairing adult members of the band with younger hair metal rebellious boys in the classroom, the melody turns from the fast paced nervous excitement of the opening drum and guitar shredding to a loud menacing sounding guitar riff coupled with bass which when presented with visual representation of glam androgyny codes these boys and their adult counterparts as decidedly masculine. Each of the boys, despite their teased hair and feminized accessories, adopts the masculine posturings of cock rock. Eddie Van Halen's younger self imitates the real Eddie's hold of the guitar, resting it across his lap accentuating the phallic masculinity the guitar symbolizes. The other boys mimic their older role models in overtly macho posturings. The elements of their physique that might be read as gender ambiguous are interpreted as part of the formation of this uniquely 1980s masculine glam metal image. On a larger scale, this coding of feminine appearances as masculine reaffirms male control in a society where feminism has weakened patriarchal constructions of power. When Waldo reoccurs in the video he is typically foiled by images of the band members as younger androgynous bad boys. This contrast highlights one possible reading of Waldo as a symbolic representation of men who do not learn to adopt and control feminine accesses to power and are therefore emasculated by their own anxieties. The other boys appear relaxed nonchalant and at times even bored. Their ability to adopt feminine constructions of physical beauty and pair them with masculine

posturings relieves anxieties about female authority by allowing them access to the artifices that construct feminine power.

The shots of Waldo alone in the classroom further emphasize his anxieties and inability to be like the other boys in class. When the video cuts to shots of Waldo alone in the classroom the music echoes his separation with a syncopated guitar riff that remains unaccompanied by other instruments. This theme is revisited later in the song when Waldo is alone with the adult band members in the lunchroom. Again, the divide between the Van Halen image of masculinity as androgynous and yet still menacing and the isolation and anxiety this menacing presence causes for Waldo is made visually evident in the video and is also echoed in the lone guitar riff. If the chorus signifies "the approval or participation of the larger social world," the solitary guitar that accompanies these scenes of Waldo's isolation can be interpreted as a symbolic reference of Waldo's status as an outsider.[391] Therefore, the lone guitar part in these scenes only further emphasizes the fact that Waldo is "not like other guys." The spoken dialogue between other boys (again here they are men's voices) that plays over the guitar riff in this section reveals the source of Waldo's anxiety. The boys ask "What do you think the teachers gonna look like this year?" This dialogue is not meant to play out like the overdubbed voice in the opening scene. It serves to emphasize the fact Waldo feels alone, but in reality is still in the classroom with other students. The editing of these shots and the dialogue offer the suggestion that Waldo's isolation is an imagined result of his own anxieties. The video clearly shows Waldo in the classroom as one of many students, a part of the crowd, but when his anxieties are revealed by the conversation of the classmates around him, he is shown as isolated. The camera alternates between close ups which reveal Waldo's anxious facial expression and shots at a greater distance

[391] Walser, *Running With the Devil,* 45.

which augment the feeling of isolation by exaggerating the emptiness of the classroom around him.

The same guitar riff continues into the next scene, however here it is given texture and support by including the other instruments in the same rhythmic and melodic pattern. This musical complexity suggests a broader communal participation in the themes presented in this section of the song.[392] The video shifts from black and white to color as the four school aged band members jump out of their seats. The classroom is transformed into a strip club where a scantily clad teacher dances on the desks wearing a Miss America style sash bearing the double entendre "Chemistry." Like the image of Waldo's mother presented at the opening of the video, the teacher is immediately sexualized and submitted to the male gaze. The audience is of mixed gender; however their androgyny has already been coded as masculine allowing this spectacle, like the cock rock concert, to be offered up for male consumption. Waldo's character is not pictured once the video switches to color. This furthers the separation between Waldo's version of masculinity that is undermined by female sexuality, and the hyper-masculine performativity of the androgynous boys who control feminine power and recode it as part of masculine identity.

The video uses the shredding guitar solo's transgressive power along with the phallic association of the guitar to further Waldo's emasculation. The guitar solo, already part of a masculine iconography of transgressive rebellion, is performed on the library tables. The quiet library environment presided over by an unseen librarian, presumably female, is disrupted by this break in the musical format. As Eddie Van Halen moves closer to the camera, the guitar is thrust at the camera in phallic gestures that reassert his masculinity. At the close of the second run down the table the camera reveals that the audience is not the intended recipient of Eddie's

[392] Walser, *Running With the Devil,* 45.

macho guitar thrusts. Instead, Waldo sits at the end of the table, his hair now standing on end with anxiety. He is the recipient of these overt displays of masculinity. Here the typical heavy metal code where the guitar solo signifies masculine transgression and rebellion and the guitars phallic symbolism merge to reinforce the divide established earlier in the video between Waldo and his peers.

The end of video shows an adult version of Waldo as a playboy type figure. The women who flaunt their sexuality at his whim are symbolic of his triumph over the anxieties of his youth. He is confident and successful because he has learned to control and subordinate women to gain and maintain masculine power. This affirmation of masculinity is a necessary part of resolving the earlier established narrative. Waldo's childhood anxieties left open the possibilities for femininity to undermine patriarchal control. Once Waldo adopts the ways of his Van Halen role models, his sexual anxieties disappear and he is able to perform hyper-masculinity. At the end of the video, Waldo's role as a playboy/pimp resolves the possibilities of feminine sexuality undermining masculine control, thereby reaffirming patriarchal dominance.

The rebellious nature of the song is given new meaning when the authority being rebelled against is gendered female. The teacher strip show is a place where hyper-masculinity is performed at the expense of the teacher's position of authority. Even prior to second wave feminism teaching was one of the first occupations outside the domestic sphere where women were accepted as an authority figure. The lyrics alone, however, do not undermine female authority. In fact, the teacher is presented through the lyrics as attempting to assert her authority. In the first stanza the lyrics read:

> T-Teacher stop that screamin'
> Teacher don't you see?
> Don't wanna be no uptown fool
> Maybe I should go to hell

But I am doing well
Teacher needs to see me after school

Here the teacher is not implicated in the sexual overtones of the song. She is "screamin'" presumably to discipline the students, an affirmation of her authority. To become an "uptown fool" references becoming educated, and if the teacher is responsible for the delivery of this knowledge, the listener can infer she is educated as well. And finally, to see a child after school is a disciplinary action that further reinforces her position of authority. A sense of youthful male rebellion is created in the ironic contrast between the listener's understanding of the discourse of public education, and the singer's clear disregard for that same social institution. It is only in the addition of the video, where intentional images accompany these lines, that the message reasserts masculine authority by allowing the teachers to play into this rebellion by sacrificing their own authority in favor of objectifying their bodies. These teachers are never introduced as respectable figures. They are not seen as authoritarian, and no attempt at any kind of real education is ever posited within the videos narrative. The first teacher enters the scene wearing a bikini already performing her sexuality as the object of the male gaze. The second teacher rips off her modest style dress, a visual marker of her authority as a teacher, to once again present her physicality as sexualized and objectified. She too wears a beauty pageant style sash which labels her as "Phys-Ed", implying that her type of education is physical and obviously sexual.

It would be easy to dismiss the song and even the video as a narrative that attempts to play out a boyish pre-pubescent fantasy where components of the oedipal complex, are projected onto another female figure, the teacher. The argument for this type of innocent fantasy is much easier to make when the video is excluded. This video reasserts a new form of 1980s maleness where femininity is further subordinated through the male control of feminine appearance and markers of female sexuality. This video does not present the teacher strip show as a fantasy.

The narrative is not framed as a dream sequence - in other words no one falls asleep at the beginning or wakes up at the end to alert viewers that this is all imagined. Therefore we can only assume that what is offered here is some type of alternate reality where maleness can be reasserted at the expense of female authority. When David Lee Roth acts out feminine gestures and modifies his appearance to look more feminine in Van Halen's real concert settings, it is a perversion of this type of spectacle that he is consciously performing. It is difficult to see how women might find this sort of performance as a way of accessing male power as performed in the rock concert spectacle. This video clearly exemplifies the issues many feminists had with media representations of women that articulated male power at the expense of female authority and autonomy.

When men participating in forms of the cock rock spectacle, live or through music videos, appropriate signifiers of feminine power it appears as a parody, as if to point out that the position of power may appear androgynous or even feminine, but the message in the end is that ultimately it's what's in the spandex pants that really matters. This reasserts maleness as superior and something that is entirely unattainable for women thereby allowing men to attain control over the aspects of femininity that make men insecure and threaten their sense of patriarchal control. In her analysis of gender and the gaze in music videos Ann Kaplan writes "If I possess the feminine myself, it [gender bending] seems to say, then I no longer need to satisfy the desire for woman *outside* myself, thus avoiding the terror of so doing."[393] Both videos assert a new type of masculinity that rejects earlier signifiers of masculinity without rejecting the gendered power dynamics that sustain it.

[393] E. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock,* 93.

Same ol' Situation: Reaffirming Patriarchal Power

The cultural form of hair metal offered a new masculine aesthetic that merged the surface elements of female beauty with masculine posturings that were either aggressive and dominating or hyper-masculine and misogynistic. Hair metal blatantly disregarded the visual signifiers of older traditional notions of masculinity, which gave these bands, and the entire cultural form more generally, a reputation as being both transgressive and subversive; however, a close examination of the genre – the music, videos, musicians, and fan culture – reveals that hair metal was simply a new means of asserting traditional ideas about gender – that men are dominant and powerful, and that women are subordinate and limited to roles that reduce them to sexual objects. Thus, hair metal might *look* fundamentally anti-conservative; however, underneath the veil of eyeliner, Aquanet, and spandex hair metal worked to reinscribe traditional, and fundamentally conservative, ideas about gender.

Chapter Five

Standin' on Top of the World:

The Transnational Influence of American Hair Metal

In early August of 1989, Alexander Bulaev spent nearly twelve hours waiting in a long line outside Moscow's Central Lenin Stadium (now Luzhniki Stadium). He wasn't waiting for government services or rations, as was common in the Soviet-era. Rather, Bulaev waited in line that night to seize one of the new opportunities wrought by *glasnost*: the chance to buy tickets to The Moscow Music Peace Festival (MMPF), an international rock concert of epic proportions. As Bulaev, a nineteen-year-old soldier in the Soviet Army stationed in Moscow, later recalled "my destiny gave me the chance to watch real metal monsters. Me, a simple boy from the Urals."[394] Bulaev's recollection echoes the sentiments of thousands of other young men and women who saw the concert as an opportunity to gain experiences that communist isolation had previously denied them. Who were the "monsters" Bulaev eagerly waited to see? A motley crew of American exceptionalists that took the form of transgressive eighties hair metal bands, including Skid Row, Cinderella, Bon Jovi, and others.

A number of political and diplomatic historians have taken the end of the Cold War as their subject. These historians have done well to demonstrate the complexities of political debates between Reagan and Gorbachev and the ways that new Soviet policies of perestroika and

[394] Alexander Bulaev, Email message to author, December 6, 2014.

glasnost helped to foster a receptive climate for Western ideals in the USSR.[395] This emphasis on formal politics, however, has obscured historical inquiry into acts of cultural diplomacy that shaped public response to the end of the Cold War in both the United States and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, looking only at political achievements has concealed the ways that the United States, and its citizens, continued to wage a Cold War in other terrains – particularly culture – hoping to gain a more clear cut victory for American ideology.

Most historians who have looked at acts of cultural diplomacy in the Cold War have focused on the early Cold War – specifically the years between 1954 and the early 1970s, when the U.S. government officially sponsored tours for jazz musicians and other performers throughout Europe and Latin America.[396] Penny Von Eschen's *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War,* offers a prime example of this vein of scholarly inquiry. Von Eschen identifies the State department's selection of jazz musicians as a "pivotal cultural weapon of the Cold War," used to spread American democratic ideals internationally.[397] As an art form that rivaled Soviet and European classical music, jazz not only demonstrated the merits of American culture, it also helped to obscure racial tensions and promote a vision of the United

[395] See: Beth A. Fischer *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997); Jim Mann, (*The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War*, (New York: Viking, 2009); Jack F. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*, (New York: Random House, 2004).
[396] For historical monographs that specifically examine music as an instrument of cultural diplomacy see: Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy,* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Also, the special forum on musical diplomacy in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 36 no.1 (2012).
[397] Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up The World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 18.

States as a color-blind democracy. Thus, as jazz musicians gained popularity in international contexts, they helped to reinforce and legitimize the United States as the rightful arbiter of democratic ideals. Because the State Department ceased funding for cultural diplomacy in the 1970s, scholars examining the role of cultural imperialism at end of the Cold War must broaden their frame of analysis to include acts of public diplomacy, which Kenneth Osgood defines as actions taken by common citizens and non-governmental organizations that involve "the cultivation of public opinion to achieve the desired geopolitical aims of the sponsor."[398]

For Soviet and American citizens alike, the MMPF was a powerfully symbolic event. People on both sides of the ideological divide recognized that heavy metal music, once referred to as "ideological AIDS" by a prominent member of the Communist Party, would soon reverberate from inside a stadium that bore the name of the USSR's founding father, Vladimir Lenin.[399] Without question, the concert helped to shape perceptions of the tenor of U.S.-Soviet relations in final months of the Cold War. The ongoing ideological battle between the United States and the Soviet Union coupled with the philanthropic purpose of the concert – to raise money to end drug abuse and addiction in both nations – ensured that the MMPF received a significant amount of coverage tasked with demonstrating the triumphs of democracy and capitalism to foreign ears. Heavy metal, and in particular the new subgenre of American hair metal that emerged in the 1980s was, however, the product of an ongoing transnational exchange – an import and export of sonic and ideological influences – that stretched back to the 1960s. The

[398] Kenneth Osgood, *The United States and Public Diplomacy: New Directions in Cultural and International History*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 12.
[399] Stephen F. Cohen and Katrina Vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost: Interviews with Gorbachev's Reformers*, (New York: Norton, 1989); Bill Keller, "Leather Rockers Take Moscow: A New Market for West's Fringes," *New York Times*, August 13, 1989, 11.

MMPF was merely one of many transnational cultural exchanges that engaged heavy metal as a conduit for bringing the world to America and America to the world.

Hello America: Hair Metal and Transnational Exchange

Among musicians and fans, hair metal was widely understood as a uniquely American cultural product. In both its overt embrace of excess and its underlying conservative subtext, hair metal was fundamentally a product of the political, social, and economic climate of eighties America; however, hair metal did not spontaneously emerge as a unique or wholly American form of music at the beginning of the decade. In fact, hair metal's popularity in the 1980s was the direct result of an ongoing transnational exchange that influenced the development of heavy metal music in the sixties and seventies. In *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*, sociologist Deena Weinstein traces the roots of the heavy metal genre to two British bands – Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath – both of which increasingly gained popularity in the United States over the course of the seventies. In addition to Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, most of the other early innovators of heavy metal– from Deep Purple to Judas Priest – hailed from Great Britain as well. The development of a specifically American form of metal music, which arguably had its origins in the 1980s as the subgenre of hair metal, was deeply indebted to the transnational influence of these British rockers. Throughout the sixties and seventies many American bands experimented with the sound and look of these British metal pioneers, which resulted in the development of American hard rock, exemplified by bands like KISS and Aerosmith.

It was not until the late 1970s, amidst the continued import of heavy metal sounds from across the Atlantic, that bands like Van Halen and Quiet Riot emerged and were recognized as two of the first American metal bands. As historian Gregory Renoff argues in *Van Halen Rising,* it was the quintessential California party band, Van Halen, that almost single handedly saved

heavy metal from extinction at the hands of punk and disco in the United States.[400] Although Van Halen and other early hair metal pioneers played a significant role, American hair metal bands were undeniably indebted to the influence of British metal, which is particularly evident in the sonic dimensions of hair metal music. And yet, in both their unique look and sound, American bands clearly offered something different in the 1980s – something many fans and musicians came to view as fundamentally American in origin. As Ratt front man Stephen Pearcy recalled in his memoir, "We were recording artists of the Reagan era, crafting power chords, *American* music, earning platinum albums and untold millions of dollars. We were flailing around like Godzillas, whipping our immense tails and destroying everything in our path."[401] As Pearcy's recollection suggests, many hair metal musicians undoubtedly thought of themselves as exemplars of the superiority of American ideals.

Successful U.S. tour dates were a huge milestone for hair metal bands; however, many bands looked beyond America's borders to international tours as true markers of their success, and by extension the success of American ideals. Hair bands set their sights on booking concerts in locations that spanned the globe, from Latin America to Asia and everywhere in-between. As they traveled to foreign spaces their displays of excess reinforced the triumphs of American capitalism and democracy. In addition to headlining their own world tours, throughout the 1980s hair metal bands were included in the line-ups of large international rock festivals with increasing frequency. Initially the popular Monsters of Rock festival, held annually at Castle Donnington, England, beginning in 1980, featured only British and European metal bands. However, the growing international appeal of American hair metal was evidenced by the

[400] Renoff, *Van Halen Rising.*
[401] Pearcy and Sam, *Sex, Drugs, Ratt & Roll,* 15.

festival's gradual inclusion of American bands, beginning with Twisted Sister and Dio in 1983. The subsequent Monsters of Rock festivals held throughout the remainder of the decade included many of America's most successful hair metal bands, such as Van Halen, Mötley Crüe, Ratt, Bon Jovi, W.A.S.P., Cinderella, Guns N' Roses, and Poison.

As hair metal's popularity surged globally American music magazines received letters from metal fans hoped their favorite bands would consider playing a show near them. "Heavy metal bands as great as Mötley Crüe… should tour more countries," a young woman from Costa Rica wrote in her letter to *Hit Parader*, "People here worship all those guys and would sell their souls to see them live."[402] Letters like this one assert that bands like Mötley Crüe had a large fan bases outside the United States that would make international tours a profitable endeavor. When Ratt and Mötley Crüe announced concert dates in the United Kingdom, rock critic Mick Wall, could hardly contain his excitement:

> So guess what? Guess who finally made it over to England? Yeah…the ones the kids luv the most: Mötley Crüe and Ratt…In England, all anybody knows about Ratt and Mötley Crüe are what the rock commix tell us. We've got the albums, and there's no denying that both *Theatre of Pain* and *Invasion Of Your Privacy* are fine pop-metal albums, but they've never toured [England] before…Meantime, they're all I ever see plastered across the pages of U.S. rock mags…and I ask myself why? …we are about to discover the truth….Mötley Crüe kick off their UK tour at the Manchester Apollo in February '86, and Ratt are opening the shows on Ozzy's first UK tour in over two and a half years. [403]

Even in Great Britain, where homegrown heavy metal bands were wildly popular, the hunger for American hair metal was insatiable.

Over the course of the 1980s hair metal bands made an indelible mark in the minds of many fans in the United States, who infused both Americanocentrism and American exceptionalism into their fandom. "I think your magazine is really great," one fan wrote in his

[402] Ana Cristina, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* August 1988, 24.
[403] Mick Wall, "British Beat," *Faces Rocks,* April 1986, 60.

letter to *Hit Parader,* "but I wasn't too wild about your Eurobeat issue and I bet other people will agree. As a matter of fact, I bet everyone will agree that they'd rather read about great American groups."[404] Another fan expressed similar sentiments, "I'm getting a little sick of hearing about how advanced the British music scene is," this *Creem* reader wrote, "I, for one, don't give a damn because I don't happen to live there."[405] In both letters, these fans expressed Americanocentric attitudes toward heavy metal music. Though well aware of the global dimensions of the genre, as American fans they only want to read about American bands. Other fans clearly viewed American hair metal as superior to similar music from bands outside the United States: "Send those trashy, cheap imports like Europe, Loudness and Iron Maiden to the furnace. Listening to Loudness is as bad as listening to the Russian government. America shall rule!"[406]

Letters from American metal fans living abroad were frequently printed in the mail sections of fan magazines. These letters often lamented the lack of access in non-U.S. locales, thereby positioning America's prolific metal scene as a product of American freedom and a successful capitalistic economy:

> We are currently serving in the United States Army in South Korea. We have been rock fans since birth and are also avid readers of Hit Parader. We really enjoy all the info on the concerts and rock groups, even though we are not permitted to go to the shows. Lately we have been listening to Guns N' Roses…Vixen, Poison, and Joan Jet. Staying in touch with today's bands is very hard since we are halfway around the world from any. Most of the music we get is through illegally copied tapes. Rock groups rarely appear here in the Republic of Korea. [407]

[404] Frank Slate, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, February 1980, 10.
[405] "Mail," *Creem*, March 1981, 7.
[406] "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, August 1987, 19.
[407] "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* December 1989, 25.

> Dear Fellow American Rockers,
> You don't know how much you miss something till you don't have it anymore. I've been rockless in Paris for over three months. All my tapes were stolen and French stores don't even carry Bon Jovi. I was lucky enough to find a Hit Parader in Holland. I was so glad to read about all those groups I love so much at home. I'm writing a plea to CRANK that metal rock as loud as you can so I can hear some real music here.[408]

From interviews to vivid descriptions of concerts, fan magazines allowed U.S. citizens living abroad to feel connected to American culture via heavy metal. Furthermore, they reinforced the inherent superiority of American values for readers at home, where democracy and free market capitalism allowed hair metal to flourish.

Americanocentrism and American exceptionalism were built into the format of many fan magazines. These magazines tended to disproportionately focus their content on the most popular American bands, frequently showing bias in their coverage of bands from outside the United States, especially those who had not yet broken into the American metal scene. After reading a particularly shallow article about the Russian band Autograph (Avtograf), one fan wrote *Hit Parader* to express his disdain: "I couldn't believe how John Shelton Ivany could criticize the group Avtograf just because they are from Russia…your article never even told about the band, their concerts, how they came to America for success and so on." [409] Though this fan was clearly writing to point out the biased focus of the *Hit Parader* article on Autograph, his letter revealed deeply entrenched notions of American exceptionalism – namely, the idea that a Russian band could only find success by coming to the United States.

In the case of *Creem,* a widely read rock music magazine that took on a predominantly heavy metal focus in the eighties, America's assumed superiority was built into the very framework of the magazine. *Creem,* which was known for its sarcastic tone, most frequently

[408] Jennifer, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* December 1988, 24.
[409] Donee M. Stewart, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* March 1989, 26.

mocked Canada and Canadians. While this mockery was likely intended to be an ongoing joke, it occurred with such frequency that many Canadian readers took offense. As one young woman from Canada explained, "I've had just about enough of your insulting remarks. You creeps are constantly putting us down. We Canadians, that is…on every other page of your goddamned sleazy rag there is a put down."[410] The editor's response to this letter only offered further sarcastic insulting commentary that relied heavily on symbolic representations of American culture: "Where is this 'Canada," anyway? And why do we keep getting letters from it? …Do they speak English there? Do they have…hotdogs? Hamburgers? TV? Please let us know, won't you? Thanks – Ed." Another Canadian reader remarked "I have deduced that you Americans are, in fact, experiencing an Inferiority Complex. You brag and go on but it is only an attempt (a weak one at that) to cover up your inadequate feelings about yourselves."[411]

By consistently making Canada, Canadian fans, and Canadian musicians the brunt of their jokes, *Creem* reiterated notions of American superiority that resonated with their American readers, who in turn adopted a similar attitude regarding all things Canadian. "After having to endure the endless criticisms by our northern neighbors and others in general, I feel like I have to make a statement," one disgruntled American reader wrote,

> Life in Birmingham [Michigan] is so far superior to spending one's entire existence in a down jacket that no other comments are needed…Anyone who doesn't think Eddie Van Halen is the GREATEST rock guitarist is obviously the same type who don't believe the USA landed on the moon.[412]

Not only does this particular reader directly assert American superiority, he ties it directly to American heavy metal– via his Van Halen reference. Other readers took a more hostile tone, "It

[410] "Mail," *Creem*, August 1980, 64.
[411] Heather Love, "Mail," *Creem*, March 1981, 10.
[412] "Mail," *Creem*, April 1981, 8.

is one of our constitutional rights to freedom of speech as is freedom of the press," one young woman asserted in her rebuttal to a letter written by Canadian fans, "Now I would like to take…advantage of those rights, and just say "FUCK OFF!"[413]

Throughout the 1980s, American hair metal gained notoriety and found commercial success around the globe. Like their American counterparts, fans in a variety of international contexts saw U.S. metal bands as symbols of American exceptionalism and frequently defended the merits of hair metal. One metal fan from Mexico was particularly appalled that the Scorpions, a German metal band, insulted Twisted Sister during an interview:

> I read a Scorpions interview in a Mexican magazine called *Sondido* (Sound) when they came to Mexico City. A guy asked them their opinion on Twisted Sister. The Scorpions answered that T.S. are like a circus, too much show and bad music, and when their fans grow up, they would realize they were deceived. I just don't understand what those idiots are up to; giving Twisted Sister a bad reputation? Hey Scorpions, I don't even like your music.[414]

If the Scorpions were trying to draw distinctions between "real metal" and the heavily commercialized sub genre of American hair metal in their interview, this fan clearly found the latter to be a superior influence. For many international fans, hair metal was a powerful and influential expression of American values and ideals. As one Italian fan wrote, in "America, you have the fortune of having super bands like Van Halen…Rock forever is my faith."[415] Fans often discussed hair metal as a product of American freedom, drawing distinctions between cultural expressions in the United States and those in their own country:

> I'm writing from Buenos Aires where there are too many bands and only a few good ones…Radio here doesn't play heavy metal and our one video program plays only one or

[413] "Mail," *Creem,* July 1981, 10, 64.
[414] J.P.M. & R.L.F., "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, March 1985, 11.
[415] Mark Ginex, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* October 1981, 13.

> two heavy metal songs in a week, which is nothing. I think your publication [*Hit Parader*] is excellent. My favorite groups are…Twisted Sister and Bon Jovi.[416]

Many fans outside the United States considered their fandom as a marker of their own Americanization. "In Colombia heavy metal is a passion," one fan wrote in a letter to *Creem* magazine, "and groups like Ratt, Mötley Crüe, Accept, Judas Priest, and AC/DC are worshipped. Hey! That's not different than [the] USA."[417] Fan magazines frequently received letters like these from readers across the globe praising the likes of Van Halen, Bon Jovi, Mötley Crüe, and other American metal bands.

The commercial success of American bands in international contexts undeniably contributed to a globalized resurgence in heavy metal's popularity. During the 1980s, new metal bands emerged in Latin America, Japan, Canada, and in a number of European countries, helping to solidify heavy metal as a musical force to be reckoned with. Though many American fans continued to favor domestic bands, others saw heavy metal's newfound global popularity as a positive sign of the genre's staying power amidst other new forms of music. As one metal fan noted "Just as it seemed new wave might take over, a renaissance of rock occurred on the music scene; an explosion of heavy metal from all over the world, including Germany, Canada, Switzerland, the United States, and especially Great Britain. It's great to hear ear-shattering, heart-pounding music again. I thought it died in the 70s."[418]

Though hair metal was largely understood as an American innovation, there were bands from outside the United States that had a profound influence on the development of the genre – most notably Hanoi Rocks, a Finnish band formed in Helsinki in 1980 by singer Michael Monroe

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[416] Diego Saroka, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader*, December 1986, 19.
[417] Martin Diaz, "Mail," *Creem*, March 1985, 8.
[418] Scott H. Honess, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* May 1984, 8.

(Matti Fagerholm) and guitarist Andy McCoy (Antti Hulkko). By 1983 Hanoi Rocks reached the top of the Finnish charts and had played several successful international concerts in Europe and in Japan; however, American music critics remained skeptical about their potential for success in the United States. As music critic Lee Sherman noted "being big in Finland is not quite the same as knocking 'em dead in…the U.S." [419] Hanoi Rocks certainly saw the United States as a land of opportunity, and they set their sights on expanding their fan base to include American audiences. Though Hanoi Rocks already looked and sounded much like their American hair metal counterparts, they knew that breaking into the Los Angeles metal scene would be a challenge. At the last minute the band decided to include a cover of the popular song "Up Around the Bend," by the American rock band Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR) on their upcoming U.S. album *Two Steps from the Move.* This cover song was the first Hanoi Rocks single released off the album, and was therefore the first exposure many American metal fans had to the band. In an interview shortly after the album hit U.S. shelves, Monroe reported that he felt the album was doing well among U.S. audiences, having sold approximately 44,000 copies in just under two weeks. "That's good," Monroe noted," because we haven't toured here yet. This is the first time we've come around to your clubs."[420]

By the end of 1984 Hanoi Rocks was poised for success in the American market. As music critic Lisa Lampugnale noted,

> Hanoi Rocks is out to get America and it seems to be working. They're getting fair-to-good crowds at their shows – they're playing 32 American dates – and two HR [Hanoi

[419] Lee Sherman, "Hanoi Rocks: Glamorous Tatters and Rave-up Rock 'n'roll, *Faces Rocks*, September 1985, 20-21.
[420] Lisa Lampugnale, "Hanoi Rocks: Five flashy Finns out to glam slam America," *Faces Rocks*, April 1985, 53.

> Rocks] videos, "Million Miles Away," and "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," were premiered in December on MTV.[421]

Hanoi Rocks' influence on the American metal scene, however, never reached its full potential. In December of 1984, during a short break in their American tour, Hanoi Rocks drummer Razzle (Nicholas Dingley) was killed when a car driven by Mötley Crüe singer Vince Neil spun out of control and crashed into another vehicle. Though they disbanded after Razzle's death, Hanoi Rocks' short tenure in the American hair metal scene was influential. In a 2008 press conference for the Sweden Rock Festival, Def Leppard front man Joe Elliot praised Hanoi Rocks noting that "the only band who really did both [image and musical substance] was Hanoi Rocks. I thought Hanoi Rocks were a good band, and Michael Monroe was one of the best…so much better the Mötley Crüe or Poison or any of those bands."[422] Hanoi Rocks influenced many American glam-metal bands, most notably Guns N' Roses, who paid homage to the band with their hit song "Welcome to the Jungle," which was a lyric from the Hanoi Rocks song "Underwater World." In fact, Guns N' Roses front man Axl Rose felt his band was so deeply indebted to the influence of Hanoi Rocks that he told an interviewer "if Hanoi Rocks had reached the success they should have, no one ever would have heard of Guns N' Roses."[423]

Though it is tempting to view hair metal's influence as a unilateral transmission of American ideals, the genre of heavy metal and subsequently the sub-genre of hair metal, continued to be part of a transnational cultural exchange throughout the 1980s. At the same time

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[421] Lampugnale, "Hanoi Rocks: Five flashy Finns out to glam slam America," 53.
[422] Thegalliard, "Def Leppard and Poison's Fight @ Sweden Rock Fest," *YouTube Video*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6mFJqhKIVY (accessed October 2, 2016).
[423] Neil Shah, "Guns N' Roses Can Agree on at Least One Thing: This Finnish Saxophonist Rocks," *The Wall Street Journal*, http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304587704577333813382925678 (accessed October 1, 2016).

that heavy metal was experiencing a rebirth in the United States in the late seventies and early eighties, a parallel renaissance was taking place across the Atlantic in Great Britain. A burst of new metal bands, influenced by seventies British metal pioneers Black Sabbath and Judas Priest, took the United Kingdom by storm. By the early 1980s this New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM), a term coined by Geoff Barton editor of the popular British music magazine *Sounds*, had gained international acclaim. The rebirth of heavy metal in England and America in the early 1980s fostered a transnational exchange that shaped the development of heavy metal sub cultures in both locales. American bands eagerly set their sights on Europe where they hoped that, thanks to the popularity of the NWOBHM, they would find receptive audiences and previously untapped consumer markets. Likewise, bands from England and other European countries looked to the thriving consumer driven economy in the United States – which was instrumental in the overwhelming success of hair metal - as a way of growing their fan base and achieving international acclaim.

Though heavy metal was witnessing a rebirth on both sides of the Atlantic, there were noticeable visual differences between the NWOBHM and American hair metal. The metal scene in England in the early eighties was far less flamboyant and glam oriented than the metal aesthetic emerging out of the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles. In February of 1983, as part of an upcoming feature in *Creem* magazine, American music critic Dave DiMartino traveled to England to attend a concert headlined by the popular NWOBHM band Def Leppard. DiMartino found the scene inside the Marquee club in London to be markedly different from his experiences at heavy metal concerts in the United States. "As I roam around," Di Martino explained,

> my mental image of the club is getting drastically shaken…At the Marquee… there's a visible *commitment* to a style of dress…black leathers left 'n' right, hair so long and

> greasy even Motorhead would cringe, denim jackets, denim pants and probably denim *underwear* if anyone looked. Stranger still was the patch phenomenon: these Brits were walking *billboards* – KISS, AC/DC/ SCORPIONS, JUDAS PRIEST, all sewn into their denim uniforms…these were Leppard fans, too. [424]

DiMartino drew sharp contrasts between what he described as the "British thugs who wanted to leave the Marquee by walking on as many horizontal bodies as possible," and his experiences with American metal fans who "looked happy, healthy and well fed – menaces to no one but themselves."[425] These differences that DiMartino noticed informed the way that NWOBHM bands thought of themselves and subsequently their place within the culture of American hair metal.

Like the broader genre of heavy metal in America, which encompassed a wide variety of sub genres that ranged from the heavier sounds of speed/thrash metal to the pop infused sounds of hair metal, NOWBHM had both heavier and more melodically focused bands. Although many NWOBHM bands – including Motorhead, Iron Maiden, Whitesnake, and Saxon– achieved notoriety in the United States, none of these bands came close to matching Def Leppard's unparalleled commercial success in America in the 1980s. After rising to success in England with their self-recorded EP *Getcha Rocks Off,* which sold over 24,000 copies, Def Leppard signed a deal with the international record label PolyGram Records. In 1980 Def Leppard released their debut album, *On through the Night*, which received immediate airplay on U.S. radio.[426] Based almost solely on the popularity of that album, which was nearly all American fans knew of the band, Def Leppard was voted "best new band," in *Circus* magazine's 1980

[424] Dave Di Martino, "Spot Checking Def Leppard: Metal Youths who Shriek in Shorthand," *Creem*, May 1983, 37.
[425] Di Martino, "Spot Checking Def Leppard: Metal Youths who Shriek in Shorthand," 37.
[426] John Swenson, "Def Leppard takes off the training wheels," *Circus,* September 1981, 40.

reader's poll.[427] In 1981 they released their second album *High 'n' Dry*, which peaked at number 38 on the Billboard 200 chart.[428] But it was their third album, *Pyromania*, that solidified Def Leppard's place in the American hair metal scene. The album, released in January of 1983, was an immediate success in the United States. Just four months after its release, *Pyromania* earned a platinum certification from the RIAA for selling 1,000,000 copies. By September of 1983 music critic John Swenson predicted that *Pyromania* was poised to become "the biggest selling non-soundtrack LP in PolyGram Records' history."[429] In the early 1980s it seemed as though second British invasion was taking place – a heavy metal infiltration with Def Leppard at the helm.

Def Leppard tapped into the same consumer market as American hair metal bands like Mötley Crüe and Poison; yet despite their success among hair metal fans, Def Leppard self-consciously resisted inclusion in the hair metal genre. This resistance was largely an effort to avoid many of the negative stereotypes circulating in American culture about hair metal by positioning themselves as part of what they saw as the more substance driven New Wave of *British* Heavy Metal. In his highly visible role as front man, Elliot openly displayed the band's national identity by proudly wearing a Union Jack shirt in the band's *Photograph* music video and at many a concert in the eighties. This shirt, which never bore the band's name or anything other than an image of the British flag, became so closely associated with the band's identity that it became one of the top selling merchandise items at their shows.[430] When asked about Def Leppard's role in the rebirth of heavy metal, Elliot proclaimed, "Def Leppard were the chicken

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[427] Toby Goldstein, "Photo Journal," *Circus*, February 1988, 110.
[428] "Billboard Artists – Def Leppard," Billboard, http://www.billboard.com/artist/300687/def-leppard/chart?page=1&f=305 (accessed October 4, 2016).
[429] Lou O'Neill Jr., "Back Pages," *Circus*, August 1983, 90.
[430] "Joe Elliot of Def Leppard on Vinyl Craze," Metal Sludge, http://metalsludge.tv/pour-some-vinyl-on-me-joe-elliot-on-the-vinyl-craze-says-whats-it-sound-like-in-the-car/ (accessed October 4, 2016).

that laid the egg that was The New Wave of Heavy Metal," clearly asserting their importance to the British, rather than American, metal scene.[431]

The most obvious way that Def Leppard differed from American hair metal bands was through their image. Throughout the eighties, Def Leppard maintained a more straightforwardly heavy metal look, utilizing varying combinations of long hair, leather, and denim but eschewing the teased coifs, spandex, and make-up of their American counterparts; thus, they never *looked* like American hair metal musicians. For Def Leppard front man Joe Elliot, however, the obvious visual differences between Def Leppard and American hair metal bands were a product of what he understood as fundamental difference of musical quality. "If you actually look at the way that the glam bands, if you want to call them that, from Los Angeles dressed themselves up, they totally missed the point," Elliot recalled, "We were never driven to do the mascara thing, or you know what ever these bands did. They didn't have any substance musically, I don't think, in comparison to us. So, we didn't feel we needed to do it." Def Leppard also attempted to differentiate themselves from their American hair metal rivals in their music videos. In an interview drummer Rick Allen, noted that Def Leppard consciously avoided including images that replicated the visual iconography of hair metal – " the bimbos and the Ferrari." Allen continued, "I get the impression, when you use that combination," that there isn't as much thought going into a video as there could be."[432] Again, as with their choice to not adopt a glam metal aesthetic, the choice to avoid shots of women and cars, was both an effort to provide a more substance oriented narrative, and an effort to differentiate themselves from the conspicuous consumption and sexism that characterized American hair metal.

[431] Di Martino, "Spot Checking Def Leppard: Metal Youths who Shriek in Shorthand," 38.
[432] Toby Goldstein, "Photo Journal," *Circus*, February 1988, 110.

Though Def Leppard frequently drew distinctions between themselves and popular American hair metal bands, their success in the United States was heavily indebted to the immense popularity of hair metal in America. For Def Leppard, achieving commercial success in America was about more than just gaining notoriety – it was a monetary necessity. "America is definitely important," Elliot explained, "That's where the money comes from , to pay for the show, to pay for the lights for the European tour. That's how it works."[433] Elliot understood that in order for Def Leppard to continue touring in Europe, where concerts frequently yielded huge losses rather than profits, the band needed to be successful in the United States, where profits were almost guaranteed.

As much as they openly resisted being labeled as hair metal, Def Leppard did make significant changes in their sound and style – the "substance" of their music – in order to ensure success in the United States. When *On through the Night* was released in 1980, British music critics immediately lamented that Def Leppard's sound, in comparison to their self-produced EP, was "too American."[434] Given the immediate airplay *On through the Night* received in the United States, it seems entirely plausible that these changes were intentionally made in order to help the band transition into the American market." Over the course of the next three years, Def Leppard's sound evolved even further. In the years leading up to the release of *Pyromania* in 1983, the band gradually adopted a less heavy metal and more pop infused sound. As their tour manager Robert Allen explained in an interview, "Def Leppard isn't a hard-core metal band anymore. We're crossing over a lot more now." This crossing over – what lead singer Joe Elliot described as a mix of melody with "raunchy" guitar – closely resembled the sonic dimensions of

[433] George Arthur, "Def Leppard set a hard rock fire," *Circus,* February 1983, 45.
[434] John Swenson, "Def Leppard takes off the training wheels," *Circus,* September 1981, 41.

hair metal that was popular in the United States at the time.[435] This transition in sound, fully realized on their *Pyromania* album, helped Def Leppard to become what was arguably the most popular hair metal band from outside the United States. In 1984, when drummer Rick Allen lost his arm in a car accident causing the band to take a three year hiatus from recording and touring, Def Leppard's popularity among American fans never waned. In 1987 they returned to the studio to record *Hysteria.* The album was released in the United States on August third; by November it had already gone double platinum (2,000,000 copies sold) – a true testament to their firm foothold in the American metal scene. When questioned about how fans in England perceived Def Leppard's unbelievable success in the United States, Elliot responded: "I should think the average British heavy-metal fan sees us as rich, arrogant bastards who ought to go back to America."[436] Ultimately, even Joe Elliot had to admit that Def Leppard had been influenced by forces of American capitalism.

Several other international bands achieved varying levels of success among American fans in the 1980s. The immense popularity of American and British heavy metal in the early eighties fueled the development of new bands across Europe, and eventually in areas as remote as the South Pacific. Most of these bands achieved notoriety in their own countries; however, for many international bands, popularity in the American market remained the ultimate sign of success. Throughout the 1980s a number of international metal bands from Canada, Germany, Sweden, Japan and the USSR came to America and rode the waves of hair metal's success, hoping to make it big. International acts were frequently billed as openers for popular American metal bands with well-established fan bases. This offered American audiences some limited

[435] Jeff Tamarkin, "Def Leppard Meet the Price of Success," *Circus,* November 1983, 39.
[436] Steve Gett, "What Makes Leppard Run," *Circus,* September 1983, 56.

exposure to new foreign bands, which helped these bands build a fan base within the United States. The management teams of successful U.S. bands also helped many international acts break into the American music scene, though, for the most part, their success was predicated on adopting the sound, and often the look, of American hair metal.

Most international bands found that adopting an Americanized sound and image was necessary in order to achieve success in the United States. A comparison of two German bands – The Scorpions and Accept – who adopted divergent strategies when faced with the pressures of Americanization demonstrates how central the hair metal model was to success in the United States. Having already garnered international acclaim in the 1970s, the Scorpions set their sights on conquering the U.S. market in the early Eighties. In 1979, the band released *Lovedrive*, which despite good reviews overseas, was not well received by U.S. critics. In a review of the album for *Creem* magazine one critic wrote: "*Lovedrive* is a particularly unlistenable lot of retread heavy metal," amounting to an "atypically bad…imitation of metalloid ancestry."[437] Scorpions drummer Herman Rarebell recalled, in " '79 we came to America and we couldn't even get a record contract. Everybody told us 'heavy metal is dated, that's over, you guys forget it.'" [438] After being recently reenergized by the short song format, strong melodic emphasis and catchy pop-infused riffs used by bands like Van Halen, American hair metal had a new unique sound, while the Scorpions still sounded like the old tired metal of the seventies. On their next two albums, *Animal Magnetism* released in 1980 and *Blackout* released in 1982, the Scorpions gradually changed their sound incorporating many of the stylistic characteristics of American hair metal. In describing their song "The Zoo," from the *Animal Magnetism* album, Singer Klaus

[437] Gregg Turner, "Records," *Creem*, January 1980, 65.
[438] Annene Kaye, "Sex and Schnapps and Rock 'N' Roll: Scorpions Shock Horror," *Creem*, October 1985, 30.

Meine noted "It's very American."[439] Meine certainly understood that the band's evolution owed partially to an Americanization of their sound, and therefore saw the new type of music the Scorpions were playing as particularly American expression – one deeply indebted to the masculine power hair metal conveyed. "It's got the balls, it's got the power, it's got the melodies, the rhythm, the feel," Meine noted, adding, "Especially over here in America." He then continued, "When you hear a heavy metal song in America it *sounds* much different than when you hear it in Europe...It fits perfect [in America]."[440] By 1982 when *Blackout* hit the shelves, the Scorpions had fine tuned their sound for success in the United States. By April of 1982, just four months after it's release, *Blackout* received a Gold Certification from the RIAA for selling half-a-million copies – a feat that took *Lovedrive* nearly seven years to match.[441] Though Scorpions guitarist Rudolf Schenker later claimed "We're really not here [the United States] only for profit," the Scorpions made significant changes between 1979 and 1982 that ensured their commercial success in America.[442]

The path taken by Accept, who managed to build a modest fan base in the United States, sharply contrasted that of their fellow countrymen the Scorpions. For most of the eighties, Accept resisted the Americanized influence of hair metal, staying true to their European heavy metal roots. Accept initially opened for hair metal bands like Quiet Riot, but their heavier sound and leather-clad look drew sharp distinctions from their American counterparts.[443] In the mid-1980s Accept eventually found a niche amongst some of the heavier sounding American hair

[439] Kaye, "Sex and Schnapps and Rock 'N' Roll: Scorpions Shock Horror," 30.
[440] Kaye, "Sex and Schnapps and Rock 'N' Roll: Scorpions Shock Horror," 30.
[441] Recording Industry Association of America, "Gold & Platinum – Scorpions," http://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=Scorpions#search_section (accessed October 14, 2016).
[442] Polly Graham, "The sting of Scorpions," *Circus*, September 1982, 48.
[443] Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal,* 48.

metal bands like Black 'N' Blue, allowing them to build a modest fan base; however, even those heavier sounding American bands struggled to compete with hair metal's radio-ready ballads and anthems. Loyal Accept fans in the United States recognized that the band didn't fit the mold of American hair metal. One fan lamented, "If somebody doesn't sign them [Accept] soon, I'm moving to West Germany."[444] Ultimately, Accept wound up being less commercially successful in the mainstream market than fellow German rockers the Scorpions, due largely to their unwillingness to adapt to the sound and look of American hair metal. Despite releasing a new album nearly every year from 1979 through 1986, Accept never broke into the top 50 on the Billboard chart, and their most popular album of the decade - *Balls to the Wall* released in 1984 – did not achieve Gold Certification until 1990. By the end of the decade Accept decided to give in go glam. In 1989 the band released *Eat the Heat*, which featured American singer, David Reece, and a new hair metal look and sound.[445]

Though many bands, like Def Leppard and the Scorpions, gradually adopted the hair metal format, there were international bands who purposefully replicated both the look and sound of American hair metal prior to coming to the United States. Loudness, a Japanese hair metal band that appropriated a glam-grotesque image akin to that of popular American bands at the time, first hit the U.S. club scene in 1983 following the release of their *Disillusion* album, which was recorded in both English and Japanese. Having achieved acclaim in their homeland, guitarist Akira Takasaki noted that "we really conquer America and the rest of the world."[446] The

[444] Jane R. Potts, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* September 1987, 20.
[445] Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal,* 72, 170.
[446] Ian Blair, "Loudness: Heavy Metal Rockers are Japans Hottest Musical Export," *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 1985, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-05-05/entertainment/8501270748_1_loudness-japanese-minoru-niihara (accessed October 12, 2016).

success of the small scale U.S. tour in 1983 prompted the band to record a second English album, *Thunder in the East,* and to launch more extensive U.S. tour in 1985. Based on the success of that tour, Loudness was asked to Open for Mötley Crüe at their August 14th 1985 concert at Madison Square Garden in New York City. [447] One fan who attended a concert during the *Thunder in the East* tour was particularly impressed with Loudness' performance, which opened her eyes to the transnational dimensions of heavy metal music:

> Recently, my best friend and I went to see the Thunder in the East concert with Loudness and Keel, and talk about a job well done! Loudness was fantastic! Akira Takasaki has got to be one of the best guitarists around, and Minoru Niihara's performing abilities had the crowd on its feet for the entire show. Loudness sure did impress these two rockers. Just goes to show rock and roll is an international language.[448]

Loudness' subsequent album, *Lightning Strikes*, spent sixteen weeks on the Billboard 200 chart, peaking at number sixty-four in 1986.[449] Though their popularity in the United States never reached that of American hair metal bands, Loudness' appropriation of the hair metal look and sound did help them achieve notoriety and make an impact in the United States.

This Ain't Glasnost, It's ROCK-nost!: Heavy Metal Diplomacy in the USSR

Rock and roll had long been one of many western cultural forms the Soviet government viewed as ideologically threatening. The Soviet government was well aware of the rock and roll's long standing reputation as the soundtrack of teenage rebellion, because they had experienced its damaging effects in the sixties when Beetlemania swept through the USSR. The immense popular appeal of the Beatles in the mid-sixties played a pivotal role in popularizing the sound,

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[447] "History," Loudness, http://www.loudnessjp.com/en/history/index.html (accessed October 3, 2016).
[448] Denise C. & Gina D., "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* November 1985, 9-10.
[449] "Billboard Chart History - Loudness," Billboard, http://www.billboard.com/artist/308275/loudness/chart (accessed October 3, 2016).

and subsequently the rebellious message, of rock and roll amongst Soviet youth. As Russian rock musician Artemy Troitsky explained:

> The Beatles' happy, harmonious vocal choir proved to be just the voice for which our confused generation was waiting, but was unable to create for itself…The cherished and fostered 'commonality' of cultural identity suddenly started breaking up. Now it was not just an isolated gang of hipsters, but an enormous mass of the 'children' who said goodbye to arias and operettas, athletic marches, tearjerker romances and other formalistic popular music and surrendered to the power of alien electric rhythms.[450]

In the subsequent decades both punk and heavy metal would place further stress on the tenuous ties that young people had to both traditional cultural practices and the ideology they sought to uphold.

From the late 1960s onward the Soviet government's official youth organization, the *Komsomol*, tried to mitigate rock and roll's damaging potential by supporting a handful of "legal" Soviet rock bands while placing clear prohibitions on foreign and domestic albums, songs, and artists deemed incongruent with communist ideology.[451] Though some Western bands were permitted, the *Komsomol* made clear, through official bulletins, that "foreign music groups and artists whose repertoires contain[ed] ideologically harmful compositions."[452] Though the *Komsomol's* official intention was undeniably to steer Soviet youth away from the westernizing influence of rock and roll, their actions ultimately fostered interest in the globalized sounds – and messages – of rock and roll among Soviet youth. As Alexi Yurchak argues in his study of the last Soviet generation, *Everything Was Forever, Until it Was No More*, the

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[450] Artemy Troitsky, *Back in the USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia,* (Boston: Faber and Faber Inc., 1988), 23.
[451] For more information on the development of rock and roll inside the Soviet Union see: Troitsky, *Back in the USSR;* Timothy W. Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[452] List of ideologically harmful compositions reprinted in: Alexi Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 214-215.

Komsomol's approach toward rock and roll revealed "a familiar paradox of Soviet cultural policy," which often "attempt[ed] to do two things at once – allow cultural innovation and creativity but contain their unwanted results." Yurchak notes that Soviet cultural policy toward rock and roll in particular was

> not only highly ineffective but also circular. The measures…proposed to curb the spread of Western music, helped to create the conditions that enabled its further expansion. The very fact that there was a limited list of foreign names implied that only some Western bands were problematic, which others, including dozens of bands that were not listed but whose music circulated in tape recorded copies, were not. Furthermore, the fact that the "harmful ideas" associated with Western music were described in very narrow and precise terms simultaneously suggested to Komsomol activists that the Western music that did not seem to represent these ideas was ideologically acceptable[453]

The necessity for and frequency of the Soviet government's efforts to limit the influence Western music throughout the seventies and early eighties suggests that Western cultural influences – in particular rock and roll – were already pervasive in Soviet society long before *perestroika* began.

Rock and roll's westernizing influence was also evident in the ever-expanding proto-capitalistic black market through which Soviet fans were exposed to the sounds of new forms of music, like hard rock and heavy metal. This black market for Western music expanded exponentially in the decades prior to *perestroika*. By the late seventies Soviet rock fans could purchase more than just illegally copied "bootleg" albums; fan magazines, posters, and band merchandise were all available for a price. As the variety of goods expanded, this underground consumer market became increasingly capitalistic –relying heavily on the laws of supply and demand that were not subject to any regulation, which meant goods were often priced exorbitantly high. As Adam Ligiecki, a heavy metal fan in Poland explained in his letter to *Hit Parader*, "A black-market album costs about the same as the average citizen's two weeks pay.

[453] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, 213-216.

One good magazine costs at least half a week's pay. There are two worlds in this world."[454] Though it was likely difficult to perceive at the time, the two worlds this young man described were more similar than anyone on either side of the ideological divide expected. Rock music, and in particular heavy metal, helped both sides find common ground, contributing to a realization that they shared more than divided them.

Though many Soviet citizens saw both *perestroika* and *glasnost* as necessary steps toward improving life in the Soviet Union, reception of Gorbachev's policies within the Soviet Union was hardly unanimous.[455] As anthropologist Nancy Ries noted in her ethnographic study *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation in Perestroika*,

> although people were enjoying ever-expanding freedom of expression and access to information, the unrestrained delegitimation of the social ideals and practices under which they had always lived was disorienting. Even more disorienting, perhaps, was to have to face the future with no clear idea of what that future would resemble or whether it would bring increasing prosperity for all or civil war in the streets.[456]

While average citizens grappled with the social and material changes wrought by *perestroika*, Gorbachev's policies were met with both hesitation and resistance from within the Communist Party. One of the major changes that took place in the early years of reform was the liberalizing of the press, which had previously functioned as a powerful authoritarian arm of the Soviet propaganda machine. Editorial changes at several prominent Soviet publications were made to help foster and reinforce the new spirit of openness under glasnost. In 1986 Vitaly Korotich, a journalist who had openly criticized the Soviet government's handling of the Chernobyl disaster,

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[454] Adam Ligiecki, "We Read Your Mail," *Hit Parader,* November 1986, 15.
[455] For a sense of how Soviet citizens responded to the changes wrought by perestroika and glasnost see: Jim Riordan and Sue Bridger, *Dear Comrade Editor: Readers' letters to the Soviet Press under Perestroika*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).
[456] Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation in Perestroika,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) 16-17.

was appointed as the new editor-in-chief of *Ogonyok,* one of the nation's leading picture propaganda magazines. Through his position within the Soviet press, Korotich became involved in organizing a "Rock Against Drugs Festival."[457] Before publicizing such an event in *Ogonyok,* Korotich approached his superior, Soviet Propaganda Chief Alexander Yakovlev, about the concert. Korotich recalled their interaction: " About two weeks before the concert, Yakovlev asked me if I was going. I said, 'I don't like rock music." He said, 'Nor do I, but it's a good cause! Let the others enjoy it!' Two days later the Minister of Culture called, and I was told that the rock festival was banned." Conservative forces inside the Politburo were attempting to shut down the concert. As Party Second Secretary Yegor Ligachev told his comrades, "rock and roll against drugs is like prostitution against V.D. [venereal disease]."[458] Despite considerable opposition from conservative forces within the Politburo, *Ogonyok,* under Korotich's supervision, began to take a more decisively "pro-American and pro-capitalist position," that helped to legitimize rock and roll's westernizing influence and pave the way for acts of cultural diplomacy like the MMPF in the coming years.[459]

By the end of the 1980s, *glasnost* and *perestroika* had brought to light a host of social problems plaguing the USSR– from housing and food shortages to substance abuse problems that contributed to increasing mortality rates – that communist leaders had denied and covered up

[457] It is not possible to tell from Korotich's interview if the concert he discusses was an early iteration of the Moscow Music Peace Festival, or an entirely separate concert effort.
[458] Brian Lapping Associates, Discovery Channel, British Broadcasting Corporation, and Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, *The Second Russian Revolution: The Battle for Glasnost*, VHS, (Northbrook: Coronet Film & Video, 1991).
[459] David M. Kotz & Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 65.

for decades.[460] While America engaged in a domestic "war on drugs" throughout the 1980s, it was not until the end of the decade that the Soviet media, operating with greater transparency under glasnost, openly acknowledged substance abuse – alcoholism in particular – as a serious problem that required increased public awareness. Cold War tensions between the two superpowers had certainly "thawed" substantially by this point, but most of the efforts to find common ground happened in the arena of formal politics. Social issues like substance abuse seemed slated to remain wholly separate domestic concerns.

That all changed on April 25, 1988 – the day high profile American music producer Doc McGhee was convicted on drug smuggling charges in a North Carolina court. McGhee was spared the harsher sentence of 20 years in prison, but was required to do community service specifically aimed at helping with the fight against drug abuse – an interesting task for the manager of many of America's most commercially celebrated junkies. With the help of one of his star clients, Jon Bon Jovi, McGhee formed the Make a Difference Foundation and began planning the organization's flagship event – an international rock festival to promote drug and alcohol abuse awareness. In order to ensure his efforts satisfied the terms of his probation, McGhee set his sights on the Soviet Union, where a rock concert would certainly attract significant media attention. Bon Jovi recalled that "In America, people aren't as impressed by cause concerts anymore, because of Live Aid and Amnesty. It's like 'Oh yeah. Another big event.' In Russia the impact would be greater."[461]

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[460] For a sense of how Perestroika helped to open communication about the problems plaguing society amongst Soviet citizens see: Riordan and Bridger, *Dear Comrade Editor: Readers'* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[461] Jon Bon Jovi, "Let Freedom Ring," *Spin*, November 1989, 58.

The logistics of planning a large-scale rock and roll festival in the USSR necessitated transnational cooperation. Fortunately for McGhee, Bon Jovi had recently befriended Russian rockers Gorky Park, which subsequently brought McGhee into contact with Russian producer Stas Namin. Over the course of the next year, McGhee and Namin worked together to plan the Moscow Music Peace Festival. McGhee realized that bringing any rock bands to the USSR – let alone some of the country's most notorious bad boys – would likely be met with some opposition from the Soviet government. McGhee planned for the most popular metal bands he managed – Bon Jovi, Mötley Crüe, Cinderella, Skid Row, the Scorpions, and Ozzy Osbourne – to play the show, even though he was fully aware that "they were putting people in jail (in Russia) for listening to this kind of music." If given the choice, McGhee later recalled, he might have chosen a set of more diplomatic musicians, but "Those acts were all I had. I didn't have Billy Joel or Elton John who can walk in like kings and queens and play piano and sing songs. Like an idiot, I had bands that made great rock music"[462] Even with a strong anti-drug message underpinning the event, getting the Soviet government to approve a heavy metal concert proved a difficult task. McGhee made nine trips to the USSR during the sixteen months spent planning the event.[463] Ultimately, Namin proved instrumental in getting clearance for the concert. As the grandson of a former high-ranking member of the Communist Party and a rock musician who managed to stay in good favor with the Soviet government, Namin used his political connections

[462]Larry LeBlanc, "Industry Profile: Doc McGhee," Celebrity Access Eventwire, http://www.celebrityaccess.com/members/profile.html?id=516&PHPSESSID= (accessed October 12, 2016).
[463] Robert Hilburn, "U.S. Hard Rock Ready to Roll in the U.S.S.R., *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-08-11/entertainment/ca-262_1_rock-band (accessed October 12, 2016).

and leveraged his reputation to convince the Minister Culture and the Minister of Peace that the benefit concert was a good idea.[464]

Despite the greater transparency under *glasnost*, McGhee had some concerns that censorship might prevent the festival from receiving adequate news coverage in the United States. Ultimately, McGhee wound up recruiting local reporter George Mallet, who worked for WTVD, the ABC affiliate station in Raleigh-Durham where McGhee's trial was held. Mallet recalled:

> The only way the Federal judge would know of the event's success would be if there was local coverage. Doc McGhee's lawyer recruited us to join them on the trip and cover the event…We had an InTourist agent assigned to us. That is another word for KGB…We managed to courier our tapes from Moscow to the ABC bureau in London and then they were fed back from London by satellite. That's how we got around censorship…the KGB, though, was very interested in keeping an eye on our coverage.[465]

As it turned out, the idea of a heavy metal concert in the Soviet Union didn't need much help attracting the attention of the U.S. media. In addition to the footage recorded by Mallet's team, which played first on WTVD but was later syndicated through the ABC network nation wide, MTV sent Video Jockey Kurt Loder to cover the event for their network as well. The concert was also sold as a live pay-per-view event, which allowed American audiences to vicariously experience their heavy metal ambassadors at work in the Soviet Union.

Even as the concert was marketed globally as an international festival to raise awareness about drug and alcohol addiction, the line up of bands featured some of the eighties most notorious drug users – an irony that was glaringly obvious to both American and Soviet audiences. As Maria, a young woman who attended the concert recalled, in the Soviet Union, "the concert was widely announced as an act of 'rock against alcoholism and drugs,' which was

[464] Jon Bon Jovi, "Let Freedom Ring," *Spin*, November 1989, 58.
[465] George Mallet, Email message to author, April 15, 2014.

already really funny - Ozzy and Mötley Crüe against alcohol and drugs? It's like bees acting against honey."[466] Though heavy metal fans around the world likely saw the selection of musicians for an anti-drug concert as peculiar, the extent to which the Soviet government was aware of the musicians' debaucherous reputations is unclear. Keeping in line with the official purpose of the concert the Soviet Minister of Peace offered the following opening remarks: "Man should live in a sober and beautiful world…I would like to thank these outstanding musicians who chose as their slogan 'No alcohol! No drugs!'"[467] What actually happened, at least behind the scenes, was anything but sober. Rob Affuso, the drummer for Skid Row recalled "We [the musicians] were told specifically while boarding the plane that no alcohol or 'illicit' drugs were allowed…as you can imagine, the various bands smirked and nodded respectfully as our carry on bags clattered noisily stuffed with our favorite bottles!"[468]

When interviewed about the concert, many of the musicians framed their trip to Moscow as a form of cultural diplomacy, though their ideas about the purpose of the concert and their roles as performers varied significantly. Skid Row drummer Rob Affuso felt that "our roles were as ambassadors of good will. To show the Russian youth that the youth of America (and Europe) were no different than they were…we all had the same love of life, friends, family, music and most importantly peace."[469] In an article for *Spin* magazine Jon Bon Jovi highlighted the potential political significance of the concert: "Throughout our lives we've been told that we can't go to the Soviet Union, that the bad guys live there. So in Russia, a show like this would bypass all the seemingly insurmountable political and cultural differences. And the proceeds

[466] Maria K., Email message to author, November 17, 2014.
[467] Wayne Isham, *Moscow Music Peace Festival.*
[468] Rob Affuso, Email message to author, October 21, 2016.
[469] Rob Affuso, Email message to author, October 21, 2016.

would go to combat drug and alcohol abuse, which is at least one thing the two superpowers have in common."[470] While they were certainly not government-sanctioned diplomats, these musicians thought of themselves as ambassadors – cultural diplomats tasked with using rock and roll to achieve what politicians could not.[471] As Skid Row front man Sebastian Bach cleverly put it, "This ain't *glasnost*, it's ROCK-nost!"[472]

Some musicians felt that the MMPF provided a type of cross-cultural exchange that would, as Bon Jovi guitarist Richie Sambora claimed, "show people all over the world that Russians can enjoy our music and we can enjoy theirs." [473] Though Sambora's remarks highlighted the concert's potential as a site for reciprocity, the line up of bands certainly suggested otherwise. With the exception of Gorky Park, the bands included in the concert line up were from outside the USSR.[474] The Scorpions and Ozzy Osbourne were the only two bands that were not "American," but they certainly owed much of their incredible popularity in the eighties to the American hair metal scene and its expansive fan base. Given the nature of the line up, the concert functioned as an almost unilateral delivery of American culture. Tommy Lee's assertion, "We're breaking down the walls between East and West and bringing rock to Russia," is a better reflection of the overall tone of the concert –to break down barriers and bring the

[470] Bon Jovi, "Let Freedom Ring," 58.
[471] This is taken from a statement made by an unidentified musician in the MMPF documentary. This only goes to show how completely disconnected from politics they were – obviously politicians had succeeded somewhat in bringing the two sides together. Reagan and Gorbachev developed a good working relationship during Reagan's second term, and Gorbachev's glasnost policy was the very reason that the MMPF could take place at all.
[472] *Moscow Music Peace Festival*, directed by Wayne Isham, TV Special, 130 minutes, 1989.
[473] Wayne Isham, *Moscow Music Peace Festival*.
[474] There were two completely unknown bands, Nuance and Brigada-S, that performed as opening acts; however, they are not listed in the official line up for the festival.

American ideals heavy metal represented – freedom and capitalism – to the USSR. By and large the performances by American bands at the concert reinforced this sentiment.

Many of the American rockers made no attempt to censor their behaviors or to adapt their on stage antics to suit the more conservative social climate in the USSR. For example, Skid Row front man Sebastian Bach, opened their set with a loud and resounding "What's up motherfuckers?" Mötley Crüe front man Vince Neil took the stage flaunting the stars and stripes of the American flag on his red, white, and blue leather jacket. Midway through their set Neil incited the crowd, "You all ready to shout? Let me hear you shout FUCK YEAH!" He then engaged the crowd in a sort of call and response where he repeatedly invited the crowd to engage in this display of uncensored free speech. By the end of the set, the entire crowd in Moscow was screaming in unison, "CRUE, CRUE, CRUE!" just like so many American audiences had done before them. These onstage antics took place against a blue background with white stars – an homage to the American flag that symbolically linked the performers' unbridled displays of personal freedom to American democracy. When Bon Jovi entered the arena as the concert's grand finale, he strutted down the center aisle of the stadium dressed in the regalia of a Soviet Soldier. As he approached the stage he shed the uniform coat and hat to reveal his stage clothes adorned with a variety of heavy metal signs and symbols. Midway through the set he reappeared in a leather jacket with a large American flag at the back. His changing wardrobe foreshadowed the evolution from communism to democracy in stunningly clear visual form.

As he boarded the plane headed for Moscow, Ozzy Osbourne told reporters "I only hope that through our music and through our efforts…um…that we can open a little door somewhere,

and also open a lot of hearts."[475] What Osbourne may not have realized was exactly how important the MMPF would be in not only opening hearts, but in winning the hearts and minds of Soviet Youth. Though musicians and the media frequently framed concert as an international festival of peace and the performances as acts of cultural reciprocity – it was, in reality, a unilateral delivery of Western ideals. The development of an underground rock scene in the USSR prior to perestroika had exposed Soviet listeners to the sounds and images of heavy metal, thereby laying the groundwork for the MMPF. The repressive socio-cultural climate under communism, however, never fostered the growth of a specifically Soviet heavy metal scene. Thus, heavy metal, like rock and roll more generally, had long been equated with the freedoms created by democracy and capitalism in the West. As one of the concert attendees later recalled, "Rock bands that did not come from Socialist (East-European countries), which could come to Moscow and play their sets – that meant freedom."[476] For Soviet and American citizens alike, the concert suggested that the USSR was bending to the will of Western influences – and in many ways it was. From television promos and advertisements leading up to the event to ticket sales and concert merchandising, the philanthropic framework of the concert pressured the Soviet government to embrace commercialism and consumerism in new and fundamentally American ways.

Soviet youth responded to the MMPF with incredible enthusiasm. All 150,000 tickets for the event sold out almost immediately, and as one reporter noted "hundreds of youths," who did not have tickets, "milled around outside the stadium."[477] Though some of the American musicians were unsure of how they would be received in the Soviet Union, the reaction from the

[475] Wayne Isham, *Moscow Music Peace Festival.*
[476] Maria K., Email message to author, November 17, 2014.
[477] "Just Say Nyet," *Daily News*, Bowling Green KY, August 15 1989, page 7-A

crowd quickly put their minds at ease. As Skid Row drummer Rob Affuso recalled, "We were certainly nervous, but that quickly dissipated once we hit the stage to 100,000 screaming Soviets! The best way to describe the fan reaction there was 'RABID!' It was amazing!"[478] Throughout the two day festival the crowd enthusiastically threw their fists in the air, made the iconic sign of the horns with their hands, and banged their heads to the rhythms of American freedom.

Both inside and outside the concert venue signs of American influence abounded. Soviet fans in the crowd mirrored the actions and attitudes of their American counterparts throughout the two day festival. "The crowds loved the heavy metal bands," a reporter from the United States who traveled to Moscow to cover the event noted, and "The concert was characterized by complete rock and roll lunacy. There were lots of women stripping off their tops and sitting up on their boyfriend's shoulders during the shows…[they] absolutely behaved like American audiences."[479] As one of the Soviet concert attendees explained, "The fans were just out of their minds, that's for sure…I saw many people putting-off their t-shirts and other clothes and just waving them in the air."[480] During the concert audience members held up signs with their favorite bands' logos and several daring fans even waved huge American flags over their heads.[481] At one point young man on roller-skates zipped through the crowd wearing a denim vest emblazoned across the back with a large Coca-Cola logo – a prominent symbol of American free market capitalism.[482] As the sounds of heavy metal reverberated in the streets

[478] Rob Affuso, Email message to author, October 21, 2016.
[479] George Mallet, Email message to author, April 15, 2014.
[480] Maria K., Email message to author, November 17, 2014.
[481] Wayne Isham, *Moscow Music Peace Festival.*
[482] Robert Hilburn, "U.S. Hard Rock Ready to Roll in the U.S.S.R., *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-08-11/entertainment/ca-262_1_rock-band (accessed October 12, 2016).

outside the stadium, groups of motorcycle gangs – a rare sighting in Moscow – gathered to listen and "showed off tattoos, brass knuckles, and flags of the American Confederacy."[483]

The symbolic display of American triumphalism presented at the Moscow Music Peace Festival undoubtedly had a profound effect on Soviet perceptions of the United States and the West more generally.[484] After the first day of the festival Canadian reporter Matthew Fisher interviewed two young men outside Lenin Stadium. Fisher's article, published in the Canadian *Globe & Mail,* offers a glimpse into how young men in the Soviet Union viewed American culture. Fisher wrote:

> Speaking in English, Alexander, a bleary-eyed 16-year-old Moscow student with a safety pin through an infected ear, shabby clothing and military boots with large holes in the soles, said: "this is my version of punk. Although I'm not a metallic fan, I do like Ozzy Osbourne. I want to grow up to be a man with power and money, so for me it has to be the USA." His friend, Phillip Rukavishnikov, also 16, said it was because of rock music that he learned English. " I don't listen to any of my lessons at school except English because that's all I need to live in your country."[485]

Both young men articulate different ways that American culture, particularly rock music, shaped their worldviews. Alexander links heavy metal, a genre that appeared self-consciously apolitical in domestic contexts, to punk rock – a genre known for its highly charged political messages. This reference suggests that the recipients of American cultural exports created their own meanings and interpretations – ones that often differed significantly from those created by American fans and by the musicians themselves. For Alexander, heavy metal music, which

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[483] Just Say Nyet," 7-A.
[484] For historical perspectives on American Triumphalism see: Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (New York: Free Press, 2006); Ellen Schrecker, *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism*, (New York: New Press, 2004)
[485] "Gorbachev credited for playing big part in 'amazing' concert." *Globe & Mail* [Toronto, Canada] August 14, 1989, D7.

many American fans believed carried very little if any political meaning, was political – as political as punk rock. Furthermore, Alexander's comments say a great deal about how heavy metal music helped to create an understanding of masculinity and power intrinsically linked to capitalism and the United States. The only way to become wealthy and powerful – to become a man – was through a full embrace of American culture. Similarly, the only aspect of Soviet education Philip found useful is learning English, because it will help him assimilate in the United States.

The festival was broadcast in the United States as a live pay-per-view television event. When it aired on August 12th and 13th, its popularity shocked even industry professionals. The program broke records for pay-per-view concert sales, doubling and sometimes tripling the buy-rate for similar events. If sales were any indication, a decent portion of the American public was interested in watching how the West's bad boys of rock and roll were received in the USSR. As the concert unfolded in Moscow thousands of Americans participated vicariously in the displays of American exceptionalism via one of more than more than 70 different cable networks across the United States that aired the event.[486] Due it its immense popularity, the festival was formatted into a two-volume documentary that spliced concert footage with interviews and shots of the bands' experiences in Moscow.

The opening moments of the documentary provide a clear comparison of Soviet and U.S. ideology that lays bare auspices of American exceptionalism that underpin the remainder of the footage. The first thirty seconds of the documentary takes the form of a video montage, paired with an instrumental version of the *Hymn of the USSR,* that depicts an antiquated Soviet

[486] Salmas, Eileen Becker. "Moscow music: festival a hit." *Cable Television Business,* September 15, 1989, 16.

Union plagued by suffering and poverty. A woman's voice reading instructions in Russian for constructing a steel and glass structure – an American style skyscraper – interrupts the hymn. This black and white montage dissolves into color footage of the American rock festival at Woodstock, as the sound transitions from static to a rock and roll version of the U.S. national anthem. This brief introduction, which encompasses less than one minute of the ninety minute segment, offers a condensed history of the Cold War – one in which American ideology emerges as the victorious model for a restructuring Soviet Union.

The documentary provided evidence of the musicians' exceptionalist attitudes through the inclusion of segments that showcased the various antics performed by many of the musicians during their weeklong stay in the USSR. These segments further undermine the notion of the festival as a site for cultural exchange. Footage of Sebastian Bach, front man for Skid Row, filmed inside Lenin Stadium on one of the days preceding the show, offers one compelling example of just how little the Western musicians knew, or were interested in learning, about their Soviet hosts. As Bach and a camera man, approach three Russian women sitting on a bench, Bach leans into the camera and says "Hey Stop…This is a tour. These are my three friends. This is Helga, Babushka, and Kishka."[487] It is evident that Bach doesn't not really know these women and has simply typecast them with generic Russian sounding names, which discloses how little he knows, or cares to learn, about Russian culture. The women do not speak English, and while they initially shake hands and smile at Bach and guitarist Scotti Hill, when the conversation and camera are directed at them they become noticeably uncomfortable and attempt to go back to what they were doing before Bach arrived. Clearly they are not interested in engaging with Bach or being filmed, yet Bach doesn't seem to care. He continues to talk directly into the camera

[487] Wayne Isham, *Moscow Music Peace Festival*.

while he sits down next to them. At this point he declares "This is the Russian chapter of the Skid Row crew."[488] He then asks the women " What do you think of Ozzy Osbourne – you dig Ozzy?" When the women don't answer, Hill interjects " I mean ya, she says 'mmm humm.'"

This scene appears as a mockery. Bach and Hill make fun of these women precisely because they look and act Russian. Unlike attendees at the concert, many of whom carried American flags, made posters professing their adoration of particular bands, and looked very much like American fans, these women were not at all Americanized. Their appearance is conservative, even traditional – and their inability to understand English is both a marker that they are clearly *not* American, and ultimately the reason Bach and Hill continue heckling the women beyond the initial exchange. Since these women don't appear to understand what Bach and Hill are saying they are ideal "subjects" for this Skid Row mockery. Bach's final line in this scene reveals the intended audience for the display. Bach asks the cameraman "Is this for the home video footage?"[489] Bach clearly knew the answer to this question – this performance of American exceptionalism at the expense of these Russian women would be part of the footage played for American audiences. Footage like this helped to articulate a power relationship between the musicians and the Soviet people. When viewed at home those dynamics were writ large and underpinned the popular view, championed by Ronald Reagan of American superiority

The American media echoed the musicians' sentiments, framing the MMPF both as a display of American exceptionalism and an act of cultural diplomacy. An article titled "Leather Rockers take Moscow: New Market for West's Fringes," published in the *New York Times* on the

[488] Wayne Isham, *Moscow Music Peace Festival*.
[489] Wayne Isham, *Moscow Music Peace Festival*.

last day of the MMPF, suggested that heavy metal, "long reviled by American music critics, Soviet ideologists and parents everywhere," was not only helping to promote "peace and temperance," but also capitalism in the USSR.[490] Another newspaper headline asserted "Rock Stars to Descend on Moscow for 'Heavy-Metal Summit.'"[491] Articles like these employ diplomatic rhetoric in an effort to summarize the concert's potential meaning, thereby framing the MMPF as an "invasion" of Western culture and politics. An article that appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* on August 19th, just days after the concert, explicitly connected the cultural and political ramifications of the event, suggesting that the goodwill generated by the MMPF might extend into the arena of formal politics:

> Even the Soviets acknowledge they have a drug problem That's one reason the Moscow rock concert was promoted as part of the fight against drugs. Buttons were handed out that said: "Just Say Nyet"…For years, U.S. officials have been reluctant to pressure countries that deal in drugs for fear they will side with the Soviet Union or its surrogates if we get tough with them. But if the Russians and Americans cooperate, progress might be made. George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev are bound to meet in the not-too-distant future. An agreement to be allies in the war on drugs might not be as exciting to the big thinkers as a deal on conventional or nuclear arms. But it might mean just as much to the people of both countries if the Soviets and Americans just said "No" together.[492]

Without knowing what the final months of 1989 would bring, the musicians, the media, and many American citizens saw the goodwill generated by the MMPF as foreshadowing the dynamics of U.S.-Soviet relations in the future.

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[490] Bill Keller, "Leather Rockers Take Moscow: A New Market for West's Fringes," *New York Times*, August 13, 1989, 11.
[491] Mary Campbell, "Rock Stars to Descend on Moscow for 'Heavy-Metal Summit,'" *Mail and Globe*, August 8, 1989, A19.
[492] "Rock and Drugs Know No Ideology," *Chicago Tribune,* August 19, 1989. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1989-08-19/news/8901050872_1_drug-problem-rock-concert-woodstock-music (accessed October 20, 2016).

Rock[ed] You Like a Hurricane: Conclusion

It is, perhaps, strange to think of hair metal, a musical genre that was self-consciously apolitical and seemed to want 'Nothin' but a Good Time," as contributing to one of the most important political developments of the twentieth century – the end of the Cold War. The MMPF was one of many displays of Western culture welcomed to the Soviet Union under Gorbachev's new policies. In August of 1989 alone, the Soviet Union hosted two American Congressional delegations in addition to a number unsanctioned acts of diplomacy (a marathon runners for hunger relief benefit, a disabled kayakers for unity benefit, performances by pop musicians Leon Russell and La Toya Jackson, a visit from the North American team of the World Arm Wrestling Federation, and a live performance by comedian Billy Crystal). None, however, matched the symbolic power of the MMPF, which deployed heavy metal musicians to the USSR in an act of philanthropy that simultaneously demonstrated the triumphs of capitalism and democracy.

Though the Moscow Music Peace Festival was not an officially sanctioned act of soft power, the concert served as a site of cultural exchange that shaped perceptions of the end of the Cold War in both the Soviet Union and the United States. As previous chapters have demonstrated, hair metal was branded as hedonistic and frivolous – an expression of unadulterated overindulgence that appeared to have little overt political meaning beyond youthful transgressive rebellion. Additionally, at least on the surface, hair metal seemed to have very little to do with the conservative ideology of Reaganized America. And yet, it was precisely these perceptions of hair metal that made it an ideal vehicle for public diplomacy in the USSR. The globalized resurgence of heavy metal throughout 1980s positioned American hair metal as an instrument of cultural imperialism. Through the export of a rowdy lot of

debaucherous diplomats who sang the praises of democracy and capitalism in arenas around the world, hair metal played an important role in globalizing the successes of American ideology.

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