

= Heavy metal music =

Heavy metal (or simply metal) is a genre of rock music that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s , largely in the United Kingdom and the United States . With roots in blues rock and psychedelic rock , the bands that created heavy metal developed a thick , massive sound , characterized by highly amplified distortion , extended guitar solos , emphatic beats , and overall loudness . Heavy metal lyrics and performance styles are sometimes associated with masculinity , aggression , and machismo .

The first heavy metal bands such as Led Zeppelin , Black Sabbath and Deep Purple attracted large audiences , though they were often derided by critics , a status common throughout the history of the genre . During the mid @-@ 1970s , Judas Priest helped spur the genre 's evolution by discarding much of its blues influence ; Motörhead introduced a punk rock sensibility and an increasing emphasis on speed . Beginning in the late 1970s , bands in the new wave of British heavy metal such as Iron Maiden and Saxon followed in a similar vein . Before the end of the decade , heavy metal fans became known as " metalheads " or " headbangers " .

During the 1980s , glam metal became a commercial force with groups such as Mötley Crüe and Poison . Underground scenes produced an array of more aggressive styles : thrash metal broke into the mainstream with bands such as Metallica , Megadeth , Slayer , and Anthrax , while other extreme subgenres of metal such as death metal and black metal remain subcultural phenomena . Since the mid @-@ 1990s popular styles have further expanded the definition of the genre . These include groove metal (with bands such as Pantera) and nu metal (with bands such as Slipknot , Korn and Linkin Park) , the latter of which often incorporates elements of grunge and hip hop .

= = Characteristics = =

Heavy metal is traditionally characterized by loud distorted guitars , emphatic rhythms , dense bass @-@ and @-@ drum sound , and vigorous vocals . Metal subgenres variously emphasize , alter , or omit one or more of these attributes . New York Times critic Jon Pareles writes , " In the taxonomy of popular music , heavy metal is a major subspecies of hard @-@ rock ? the breed with less syncopation , less blues , more showmanship and more brute force . " The typical band lineup includes a drummer , a bassist , a rhythm guitarist , a lead guitarist , and a singer , who may or may not be an instrumentalist . Keyboard instruments are sometimes used to enhance the fullness of the sound .

The electric guitar and the sonic power that it projects through amplification has historically been the key element in heavy metal . The heavy metal guitar sound comes from a combined use of high volumes and heavy distortion . Guitar solos are " ... an essential element of the heavy metal code ... that underscores the significance of the guitar " to the genre . Most heavy metal songs " ... featur [e] at least one guitar solo " , which is " ... a primary means through which the heavy metal performer expresses virtuosity . " One exception is nu metal bands , which tend to omit guitar solos . With rhythm guitar parts , the " heavy crunch sound in heavy metal ... [is created by] palm muting " the strings with the picking hand and using distortion . Palm muting creates a tighter , more precise sound and it emphasizes the low end .

The lead role of the guitar in heavy metal often collides with the traditional " frontman " or bandleader role of the vocalist , creating a musical tension as the two " contend for dominance " in a spirit of " affectionate rivalry " . Heavy metal " demands the subordination of the voice " to the overall sound of the band . Reflecting metal 's roots in the 1960s counterculture , an " explicit display of emotion " is required from the vocals as a sign of authenticity . Critic Simon Frith claims that the metal singer 's " tone of voice " is more important than the lyrics .

The prominent role of the bass is also key to the metal sound , and the interplay of bass and guitar is a central element . The bass guitar provides the low @-@ end sound crucial to making the music " heavy " . The bass plays a " ... more important role in heavy metal than in any other genre of rock . " Metal basslines vary widely in complexity , from holding down a low pedal point as a foundation to doubling complex riffs and licks along with the lead and / or rhythm guitars . Some bands feature the

bass as a lead instrument , an approach popularized by Metallica 's Cliff Burton with his heavy emphasis on bass guitar solos and use of chords while playing bass in the early 1980s .

The essence of metal drumming is creating a loud , constant beat for the band using the " trifecta of speed , power , and precision " . Metal drumming " requires an exceptional amount of endurance " , and drummers have to develop " considerable speed , coordination , and dexterity ... to play the intricate patterns " used in metal . A characteristic metal drumming technique is the cymbal choke , which consists of striking a cymbal and then immediately silencing it by grabbing it with the other hand (or , in some cases , the same striking hand) , producing a burst of sound . The metal drum setup is generally much larger than those employed in other forms of rock music . Black metal , death metal and some " mainstream metal " bands " ... all depend upon double @-@ kicks and blast beats . "

In live performance , loudness ? an " onslaught of sound , " in sociologist Deena Weinstein 's description ? is considered vital . In his book Metalheads , psychologist Jeffrey Arnett refers to heavy metal concerts as " the sensory equivalent of war . " Following the lead set by Jimi Hendrix , Cream and The Who , early heavy metal acts such as Blue Cheer set new benchmarks for volume . As Blue Cheer 's Dick Peterson put it , " All we knew was we wanted more power . " A 1977 review of a Motörhead concert noted how " excessive volume in particular figured into the band 's impact . " Weinstein makes the case that in the same way that melody is the main element of pop and rhythm is the main focus of house music , powerful sound , timbre , and volume are the key elements of metal . She argues that the loudness is designed to " sweep the listener into the sound " and to provide a " shot of youthful vitality . "

In relation to the gender composition of heavy metal bands , it has been said that " [h] eavy metal performers are almost exclusively male " " ... [a] t least until the mid @-@ 1980s " apart from " ... exceptions such as Girlschool . " However , " ... now [in the 2010s] maybe more than ever ? strong metal women have put up their dukes and got down to it " , " carv [ing] out a considerable place for [them] selves . "

= = = Musical language = = =

= = = Rhythm and tempo = = =

The rhythm in metal songs is emphatic , with deliberate stresses . Weinstein observes that the wide array of sonic effects available to metal drummers enables the " rhythmic pattern to take on a complexity within its elemental drive and insistency " . In many heavy metal songs , the main groove is characterized by short , two @-@ note or three @-@ note rhythmic figures ? generally made up of 8th or 16th notes . These rhythmic figures are usually performed with a staccato attack created by using a palm @-@ muted technique on the rhythm guitar .