Teutonic Metal: Effects of Place- and Mythology-based Labels on Record Production

Jan-Peter Herbst¹

Received: 10 March 2021 / Accepted: 25 March 2021 / Published online: 8 April 2021
© The Author(s) 2021

Abstract

Viking, Mesopotamian and Hellenic metal; place-based metal labels full of mythology are commonplace in metal music. Focusing on ‘Teutonic’ metal, this article analyses such labels through a collaboration with one of the genre’s primary record producers: Karl Bauerfeind. Reflection on sixteen selected album productions with German, British, Swedish and Brazilian bands suggests that imagined communities with symbolic boundaries and shared invented traditions not only shape fan and media discourse but have tangible effects and sonic signatures in record productions, as demonstrated by discussions between bands, producers and record companies. The findings suggest that place- or mythology-based labels evoke vivid, partly fictional, historical inspiration for artists and record producers, which are further negotiated in journalistic media and fan discourse. It is suggested that these imagined communities with respective sonic signatures are both meaningful for fans in their ‘communicative leisure’ practices and used by the music industry as ‘instrumental leisure’ in their marketing efforts.

Keywords Teutonic metal · Record production · Mythology · Imagined community · Place · Culture · Leisure

1 Introduction

Globalisation has led to tension between the global and the local, resulting in a perhaps surprising development in musical practice and research: Recourse to a ‘new traditionalism’ (Biddle & Knights, 2007: 5) that complements the global post-modern plurality with national, local or otherwise imagined communities (Anderson, 1994) to deal with the anonymity of globalisation. As Biddle and Knights (2007: 2) argue, this link between music and place has evoked ‘idealisation’ of geographically,

✉ Jan-Peter Herbst
j.herbst@hud.ac.uk

¹ Department of History, English, Linguistics and Music, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, UK

culturally or ideologically defined places that emphasise distinct, authentic or subversive qualities of their communities (see also Connell & Gibson, 2003).

Leisure operates across the local, national and global. Spracklen (2006, 2009, 2014) points out that for leisure to provide a stimulating ‘lifeworld’ (Habermas, 1984) for the individual, it must be ‘communicative’, which means that it is free of ‘instrumental’ interference from nation-states and other authorities of power. This dialectical power relationship makes leisure a potentially contested site of identity formation and instrumental exploitation or manipulation (Spracklen, 2009). Most leisure domains not only take place in local or niche communities influenced by national forces, but they are also global, relying on culture industries (Adorno, 1991) and functioning within international structures of capitalism. Popular music is one such leisure space that operates at local, national and global levels. It is, by definition, controlled by the instrumental logic of capitalism and the wider entertainment industry (see also Spracklen, 2014) and influenced by nation-states, regulatory bodies, record companies and journalists (O’Flynn, 2007). Artists depend on their music being distributed and sold, and listeners need to consume it, both of which happen through the culture industry, which in turn shapes norms and expectations (Spracklen, 2019: 270). Nevertheless, popular music is not purely instrumentally controlled leisure because people identify with, listening to, write about, practice and discuss the music and its culture in local and supralocal communities, which gives them agency (Spracklen, 2014, 2019). Therefore, popular music is of interest to sociologists of leisure because meaning is produced and negotiated through reference to and contestations with history, memory and identity (Spracklen, 2018: 139–140).

In the leisure space of metal music (Spracklen, 2006, 2019), meaning in a complex post-modern world can be negotiated through ‘country- or place-of-origin references’ (Karjalainen, 2018), which have a long tradition in the metal music discourse. In 1979, *Sounds* journalist Geoff Barton coined the term ‘New Wave of British Heavy Metal’ (NWOBHM) as a press label intending to boost magazine sales (Wiederholm, 2013: 93–95). Soon after, the term ‘Teutonic metal’ was born, referring to a German sound that differed from that of the longer-established British and US bands (Herbst, 2020a). Further culture-laden labels emerged throughout the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, such as Scandinavian ‘Viking metal’ pioneered by Swedish Bathory (Trafford, 2013) or the ‘Brasilidade metal’ of Brazilian Sepultura (Janotti, 2020). With the ‘Hellenic metal’ of Rotting Christ (Patterson, 2013), ‘Mesopotamian metal’ of Nile and Melechesh (Boyarin, 2019; Pichler, 2017) and the Dutch ‘Nederdeath’ (Berkers & Schaap, 2017), more labels followed.

In metal music, record production typically follows traditional patterns, with bands recording songs in commercial studios under the direction of a record producer, who may or may not perform the technical engineering in the recording, mixing and mastering stages of the music, and who mediates between artistic visions, record label requirements and fan expectations (Burgess, 2013). Despite such traditionalism, metal music production differs from other popular music in the sound aesthetics and the way technology is used to maximise extremity through hyper-real

performances and sounds for the sake of heaviness (Berger & Fales, 2005). The study of metal music production is a relatively new but growing field (see Herbst, 2017; Mynett, 2017; Reyes, 2008; Thomas, 2015; Turner, 2009; Williams, 2015), and the present article contributes by bringing a place- and mythology-based perspective to the predominantly global perspective in the existing literature.

Focusing on place-based labels and the mythologies surrounding them, this article examines 'Teutonic metal' from a record production perspective. With its unconventional method and data, it differs from previous studies that have drawn on metal magazines (Karjalainen, 2018), interviews with musicians (Dunn, 2004; Kahn-Harris, 2000), historical and mythological analyses (Boyarin, 2019; Helden, 2010; Manea, 2016; Pichler, 2017; Spracklen et al., 2014; Trafford, 2013), musical analyses (Avelar, 2003; Deeks, 2016; Hillier, 2018), statistical analysis of bands per metal subgenre (Berkers & Schaap, 2017) or scene analyses (Ekeroth, 2019; Kahn-Harris, 2007; Lucas et al., 2011; Purcell, 2003) to explain place-of-origin references. This study was undertaken in collaboration with one of the primary record producers of 'Teutonic metal', Karl 'Charlie' Bauerfeind, who has worked with some of Germany's best-known metal bands in his more than thirty-year-long career: Helloween, Gamma Ray, Running Wild, Blind Guardian, Rage and Primal Fear. He also produced international acts such as the British Saxon, Motörhead, Rob Halford, Venom (1997), the Swedish HammerFall and Brazilian Viper and Angra. German *Metal Hammer* described him as the 'most important metal producer of this time' (Mineur, 2000: 20), and *Rock Hard* considered him the 'new Michael Wagener' (Böhm, 2002: 28), a successful US-based German producer who worked with Metallica, Megadeth, Skid Row, Ozzy Osbourne and Alice Cooper. Rather than interviewing Bauerfeind, this research is based on discussions, workshops and collaborative writing. It is partly autoethnographic, but for academic reflection and allowing two authors, the text is written in the third person. By bringing together Bauerfeind's professional experience and Herbst's expertise as a rock music scholar, this article aims to explore whether musical characteristics in the production of a metal record distinguish metal genres classified by place-based or mythological labels, taking 'Teutonic metal' as an example. It examines how subjective and symbolically-rich interpretations of such labels influence the producer's conceptual approach during a record production and how they affect the interaction between producer and band in the production process. The findings suggest that mythologically inspired, imagined communities have a firm place in metal music and that the respective sound aesthetics affect those who produce the music and those who perceive it. Place-based metal labels are part of fans' 'communicative leisure' practices and are used by the recording industry as 'instrumental leisure' in their marketing efforts to afford the creation of niche music for its fans.

The article discusses place-based references ahead of exploring the relationship between scene and sound, focusing on selected metal labels relevant to Bauerfeind's production portfolio. With insight into Bauerfeind's concept of the 'Teutonic metal' label, sixteen album productions by German, Brazilian, Swedish and British bands are analysed, showing the role such labels play for those involved in metal music production.

2 Place-based References and Labels

Country- and place-based references have been prevalent from the beginning of metal music (Herbst, 2020a; Karjalainen, 2018). While college radio stations medially shaped the discourse in the USA, magazines were the primary means of communication in Europe (Herbst, 2020b). After the emergence of Dutch *Aardschok* (since 1980), some of the continent's main magazines followed: The British *Kerrang!* (since 1981) and *Metal Hammer* (since 1983) and the German *Rock Hard* (since 1983) and *Metal Hammer* (since 1983). From the outset, British magazines drew on place-based labels (Karjalainen, 2018), whereas German media avoided them until the 1990s (Herbst, 2019, 2020a). As per Karjalainen (2018: 4), British journalists did not use location language to address the traditionally dominant metal countries, the US and UK, but to highlight other countries as 'unusual, exotic and perhaps interesting'. German bands benefitted from such portrayals as long as British audiences preferred European alternatives to US metal, which turned by the late 1980s; tastes were becoming Americanised, resulting in pejorative language for 'Teutonic' bands (Herbst, 2020a). For other countries, especially from the Scandinavian region, positive exoticness largely remained (Karjalainen, 2018).

Studies analysing the discourse differ in the extent to which media coverage focused more on musical or extra-musical characteristics. 'Teutonic' bands were commonly rejected for musical reasons such as their stereotypically rigid sound, lack of feeling and conservative songwriting (Herbst, 2020a, b). In contrast, media coverage on Scandinavian bands positively highlighted 'country-specific characteristics and stereotypes, features of the local scenes and cultures, natural environments, geography and weather, cultural mentality, and other contextual portrayals' in the act of 'auxiliary storytelling' (Karjalainen, 2018: 5). These characteristics were extended to create musical associations with sound, song structures, lyrics and performance style (Karjalainen, 2018: 5). As Karjalainen (2018: 20) argues, it may be possible for the reader to perceive the music's sound in a stereotype-conforming way, but this perception is likely influenced by the symbolic discourse created by the media. Accordingly, O'Flynn (2007) suggests that there is no nation-specific sound without a surrounding mediating discourse.

Place-based language in music discourses is complex, given the variety of 'stakeholders' from artists, recording professionals, record companies, media outlets to fans who have different interests. Metal research accepts that regional, national or subgenre-based scenes can be understood as 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1994) that legitimise themselves through the invention of myths, values, symbols and traditions (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992), which draw on selective reference to history, geography, heritage and customs. Symbolic communities (Cohen, 1985) are places of belonging for their members, but since defined by reference to 'the Other' (Elias & Scotson, 1994), they are potentially exclusive. For example, the British media rejected 'Teutonic metal' for musical characteristics, broader cultural stereotypes and national rivalries such as football (Herbst,

2020a), possibly because nationalism is still a strong cultural expression of social identity in England (Spracklen & Henderson, 2013).

Imagined communities serve a purpose for their members (Spracklen, 2017: 407); in the case of metal, the entirety of metal fans and the various imagined communities organised by subgenre, location or other distinguishing variables. Location language can imply the nation with its characteristics and stereotypes, place-based sounds like Sweden's 'Gothenburg sound' (Hillier, 2018), historical references like 'Mesopotamian metal' (Boyarin, 2019; Pichler, 2017), or ideological and (false) ethnic references as in the case of Northernness and pagan metal (Spracklen et al., 2014). These references can be meaningful for fans as they help 'associate the band with a bigger cultural picture by rendering some generally recognized characteristics or peculiarities of the respective countries and areas' (Karjalainen, 2018: 3). Metal magazines convey rich information, aid fans in navigating the vast market and provide means of identification (Pichler, 2017; Spracklen et al., 2014). Therefore, they have historically been an important part of communicative leisure and 'culture-as-leisure' (Spracklen, 2011) in popular and metal music.

While imagined communities with location-based labels serve social and musical purposes, they also have a marketing value, used as 'instrumental leisure' (Spracklen, 2009) by the recording industry. In the global music industry, marketing the local sells through what Connell and Gibson (2003: 124) call 'strategic essentialism'. There seem to be at least three interrelated marketing principles. First, *diversity and exoticness* may be appealing to fans in a global music market characterised by increasingly homogenous sounds (O'Flynn, 2007: 29), also in metal (Herbst, 2020a). Shuker (1994: 68) argues that bands not from the dominant Anglo-American pop culture are well-advised to sell their 'localness', achieved through their name, local idioms in musical style and a noticeable vocal accent, rather than to simulate global pop norms. Brazilian Sepultura, meaning 'grave' in Portuguese, are an apt example of a band that produced their most successful albums in the early to mid-1990s by playing with otherness through 'Brazilianess' (Kahn-Harris, 2000). The band's US publicist explains their international success: 'Sepultura: they were exotic. They were from Brazil!' (Janotti, 2020: 160). Another example are German Rammstein, whose international success Nye (2012: 119) attributes to their conforming with proto-Nazi stereotypes for the Anglo-American's desire for an 'experience of exoticism and otherness', further describing it as promotionally effective 'Occidentalism within the Occident', taking the 'form of an exotic representation of German nationality or a German cultural product' (Nye, 2012: 117–118). In other cases, the record company is interested in creating an exotic but culturally and historically less contentious label. For example, Sweden's 'Gothenburg sound' in the 1990s, a more melodic form of death metal than such played in the US (Ekeröth, 2019), became successful because it was 'mythologized, romanticized, exoticized and as a result, "made"' (Dunn, 2004: 120). As Soilwork guitarist Peter Wichers states, the record 'label uses the term "Gothenburg Scene" for sales' (Dunn, 2004: 119–120).

The second marketing principle is *authenticity*. Connell and Gibson (2003: 111–113) argue that emphasising local characteristics in a globally operating music market secures the authenticity of local cultural products, highlights roots and thus demonstrates credibility. While bands may choose to stress their authenticity

in this way, primarily record companies operating in the internationalised recording industry mythologise the local. Incorporating specific places and associated names and sounds, including nationally branded styles, allows for niche marketing that proved more marketable than homogeneous mass-marketing (Connell & Gibson, 2003: 124). An example of imagined authenticity is Finnish metal, where a melancholic sound is attributed to the Finns' mental landscape, which is deterministically derived from nature and the weather (Karjalainen, 2016).

The third principle for the 'fetishization of localities' (Connell & Gibson, 2003: 110) is *branding*. Karjalainen (2018: 30) cites the 'country-of-origin effect' in marketing that sees products and countries as inextricably linked. For example, Rammstein built their international success on presenting themselves as a product 'made in Germany', making them the second most internationally successful German act after Kraftwerk, who equally sell their artificially staged Germanness (Adelt, 2012; Kahnke, 2013).

These three principles of location-based labels hold an economic perspective, yet cultural studies suggest that fans are not passive victims of marketing campaigns; instead, labels seem to be meaningful to them, which is why they adopt them in their own discourse and 'communicative leisure' practice (Spracklen, 2009).

3 Scene, Sound and (Trans-)national Metal Labels

How local conditions such as culture, history, landscape and musical infrastructure affect music-making and how they are reflected in the resulting musical product is difficult to determine. Connell and Gibson (2003) observe that deterministic relationships between place and culture remain common. Dismissing simplistic place-bound depictions, they nevertheless show many examples and reasons for how the local influences scenes and sounds. While they focus primarily on city sounds like Motown, they also discuss common notions of national sounds. Other scholars similarly argue for the continuing influence of national structures without rejecting the existence of imagined communities (Anderson, 1994). Not claiming that nations have a characteristic sound, O'Flynn (2007: 19–21) contends that the national identity stays relevant because of material conditions such as national media, charts and regulatory powers (see also Connell & Gibson, 2003: 124). Berkers and Schaap (2017: 68–69) demonstrate how Dutch metal became a global export success through targeted state support by subsidising venues and festivals and promoting vocational training in 'heavy metal music production'. Due to this support, the female-fronted symphonic metal of bands like The Gathering, Within Temptation, Epica and After Forever became 'distinctly Dutch in development, sound, and identity' (Berkers & Schaap, 2017: 70). Spracklen (2017), in another example of national identity, draws on what he calls a 'mythic milieu', describing how education and national narratives in the UK created nostalgia for the British Empire after WWII that inspired Iron Maiden's performance of Britishness on a global stage. Likewise, Karjalainen (2018: 24) suggests that Finnish metal musicians growing up in the 1970s may have unconsciously spread national narratives and stereotypes because Finland was still relatively homogenous back then.

Alongside nations, scenes form imagined communities to which a distinct sound is sometimes attributed. Much less controversial than a national sound are identifiable sounds of local scenes because they are more to be based on a particular group of musicians frequenting social venues and sharing rehearsal and performance spaces besides technical equipment (Connell & Gibson, 2003: 111–115; Karjalainen, 2018: 23). Music is created in specific socio-economic infrastructures, and often local sounds are based on a network of recording studios and record producers: In metal music, Stockholm's sound created by Tomas Skogsberg in Sunlight Studios, Gothenburg's sound by Fredrik Nordström at Studio Fredman, Florida's Tampa sound by Scott Burns at Morrisound, or the Hellenic metal produced in Athens' Storm Studios (Dunn, 2004; Hillier, 2018; Kahn-Harris, 2007; Patterson, 2013). However, it is important to note: 1) such local sounds usually have their heyday only for a short while (see Connell & Gibson, 2003: 105), 2) locally branded sounds generally emerged in the 1990s when metal music was not fully globalised yet (Herbst, 2020a; Weinstein, 2011). Moreover, as Dunn (2004: 120–121) argues, a sound does not equal a scene and vice versa. For him, a scene relies on local infrastructures of music production and consumption, while a scene's sound is a shared set of musical practices that are disseminated on the record and by journalistic media. By the example of the Gothenburg sound, Dunn describes that the scene could only take place in the city, but musicians played 'the sound' throughout Sweden. Also, bands outside Sweden gradually adopted this aesthetic (see also Hillier, 2018). Therefore, the Gothenburg sound is defined by stylistic attributes rather than a common geographic space (Dunn, 2004: 120–121).

Scholars rarely agree on the various metal labels as to whether musical or extra-musical factors determine the style. The New Wave Of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) has been claimed to have no musical commonality (Weinstein, 2000: 44; Wiederholm, 2013: 73–74), whereas other scholars state complex songwriting, chord-progression-based compositions, harmonisation in thirds, clean production styles, higher-register melodic bass playing, ubiquitous guitar solos and high-pitched vocals as characteristic features (Christie, 2003; Dunn, 2004; Hillier, 2018, 2020). More agreement exists on the lack of a coherent Scandinavian sound because, for example, Viking metal is defined thematically, ideologically or conceptually rather than by musical characteristics (Deeks, 2016; Helden, 2010; Manea, 2016). The few musical features comprise recorded nature sounds (Deeks, 2016: 140–141; Trafford, 2013), national language and folkloristic acoustic instruments adding otherness and authenticity (Deeks, 2016: 143–163).

As mentioned before, contrary to vague compositional features for the broad Viking metal label that hosts subgenres such as pagan and folk, death and black metal, cities like Stockholm and Gothenburg have more distinct sounds. Tomas Skogsberg created the blueprint of the Swedish metal sound in his Sunlight Studios in Stockholm in the early 1990s with bands like Entombed, Unleashed and Grave (Purcell, 2003: 22). Unlike the US 'Florida' death metal sound of the time (Kahn-Harris, 2007: 32), attributed to Scott Burns' productions at Morrisound in Tampa with bands such as Deicide, Obituary, Death and Cannibal Corpse featuring highly technical performances, a bass-heavy aesthetic and clean production (Dunn, 2004: 114), Skogsberg's Swedish metal sound was mid-frequency heavy and less

transparent due to the characteristic guitar sound based on an overdriven Boss HM-2 pedal (Matera, 2020). Sweden's Gothenburg sound developed in the mid-1990s as a deliberate act by bands like In Flames, At The Gates and Hypocrisy to set themselves apart from other Swedish scenes, including Stockholm (Hillier, 2018). The productions, made in Fredrik Nordström's Fredman Studio, differ in aesthetic but are still marked by a distinct sonic identity (Dunn, 2004; Hillier, 2018). While Stockholm's highly distorted sound made it difficult to hear the guitar parts clearly, Gothenburg productions have a dense yet clear production (Hillier, 2018: 12). Guitar playing also differed; where Stockholm's death metal separated rhythm and solo playing, the Gothenburg style became synonymous with melodic death metal that integrated lead into rhythm playing, blending death metal with NWOBHM elements (Dunn, 2004; Hillier, 2018). Other changes included occasional clean singing and the integration of acoustic instruments and folkloristic melodies (Hillier, 2018).

The discussed sounds are examples of local scenes developing distinct sounds, not least due to specific recording studios and producers. On the contrary, Brazilian Sepultura are an example of a band where the local production conditions played a relatively minor role. Their early in Brazil produced records are sonically less Brazilian than their later releases, produced in the US by Scott Burns, Andy Wallace and Ross Robinson (Kahn-Harris, 2000). Nevertheless, their music has always had Brazilian features (Avelar, 2003), suggesting cultural influences, even if one rejects deterministic relationships and essentialism. Among their Brazilian characteristics are: A noticeable vocal accent (Kahn-Harris, 2000: 17); language-based rhythmic accentuation (Avelar, 2003: 339); call and response patterns (Avelar, 2003: 339); "unmistakably Brazilian rhythms" (Avelar, 2003: 333; Janotti, 2020: 161); poly-rhythmic layers and syncopation (Avelar, 2003: 337–339); traditional samba rhythms (Avelar, 2003: 340; Janotti, 2020: 158); frequent use of toms and traditional percussion instruments (Avelar, 2003: 338; Janotti, 2020: 161; Kahn-Harris, 2000: 20–22). Growing up listening to Brazilian music, playing it and being members of a samba school (Kahn-Harris, 2000: 22) makes them 'unmistakably "Brazilian" musicians' (Avelar, 2003: 342; see also Janotti, 2020: 162–163).

In the following, Bauerfeind's reflections as a German producer on the 'Teutonic metal' label are analysed, beginning with his understanding of the label before discussing sixteen albums that have particularly helped him realise how place-based influences inform his professional practice. Throughout his career since 1989, Bauerfeind has recognised that bands hire him for his distinct 'Teutonic' production sound, a deliberate concept he developed over the years through insightful experiences with his clients during album productions.

4 Bauerfeind's Understanding of 'Teutonic' Heritage

As previously discussed, musical upbringing and socialisation can influence music creators, if only by providing a mythic milieu (Spracklen, 2017). Bauerfeind does not doubt that his upbringing has impacted his professional work, which became clear to him through intercultural experiences in early adulthood and album productions with domestic and foreign bands.

Born in 1963, Bauerfeind grew up in Bavaria as an offspring of a family having emigrated from Sudetenland, the German part of former Czechoslovakia. His parents mainly listened to Ernst Mosch and the Original Oberkrainer, typical Czechoslovakian folk music, highly influenced by marching rhythms, with an uplifting vibe. Other influences came from traditional Bavarian folk brass music ('oompah'), which also incorporates marching music elements. This listening repertoire, Bauerfeind believes, tuned his ears to preciseness in performance and musical arrangement. His fondness for preciseness, stereotypically German (Herbst, 2020a), grew through his appreciation of synthesised electronic music in the 1980s. Although a trained drummer, he began studying Music Production and Engineering at Berklee College of Music, USA, in 1987. This intercultural experience made him aware of cultural differences between his upbringing and the 'musical mentality' in the US. Berklee's curriculum was grounded in jazz music, a 'cultural shock' for Bauerfeind because jazz is not based on regular downbeats but the backbeat. The emphasis of the beats two and four in a 4/4 measure dominates this music (see also Herbst, 2020a). In contrast, all four downbeats are emphasised in what Bauerfeind regards as a 'Teutonic feeling'. One meaningful experience was a course assignment on Phil Collins' production style. By analysing his early discography, Bauerfeind learned that Collins' background was anchored in jazz and fusion music before joining Genesis and pursuing a solo pop music career. Already a 'preciseness geek' back then, Bauerfeind discovered an interesting phenomenon while analysing Collins' 'In the Air Tonight' (1981). Right before Collins' trademark drum break comes in, headphone noise is audible on the originally released version when listening on headphones. It revealed that the drums had been recorded to a backbeat click track (metronome only playing beats 2 and 4 in a 4/4 time) instead of a downbeat click (beats 1, 2, 3 and 4). If Collins had played or sung to a regular quarter-note click, the musical result would have been markedly different in Bauerfeind's opinion. This observation played a significant role in his slowly developing understanding of 'Teutonic attributes'.

In Bauerfeind's definition, 'Teutonic' territory and culture are not limited to Germany or the German-speaking countries, not least because the mythologies he associates with it predate modern nation-states (see Spracklen, 2018). Instead, he equates the Teutonic with Germanic, whose vaguely defined geography and mythology constantly changed in the two millennia since the Teutonic tribes were first recorded attacking the Roman Empire around 200 BC (Heesch, 2014; Herbst, 2020a). For Bauerfeind's concept, the German Empire (1871–1918), particularly its Prussian kingdom, offers the most tangible associations. Musically, he associates Prussia with marching music characteristic of battle sounds. He imagines Prussian battle music to differ from that of other cultural regions. While, for example, Scottish bagpipes and Scandinavian horns produced a sustained sound, Prussian marching music was based on drum instruments. By physical nature, drums are more precise, in keeping with Prussian music: exact, ordered and musically aligned to facilitate marching in lockstep (see also Nye, 2012; Reed, 2007). He still perceives the effects of musical heritage in modern metal styles, particularly in the different rhythmic feels. In contrast to Central Europe, American music is more influenced by blues and rock with Afro-American musical elements. The differences manifest in the diverging feeling of downbeat vs offbeat and micro-timing (see also Herbst, 2020a). When it comes

to micro-alignment in beats with a sixteenth-note subdivision, Bauerfeind made the experience that many American rock and metal drummers play the snare slightly behind the kick drum hit to create a loosely sustained ‘laid-back’ feel. By contrast, Central European or ‘Teutonic’ drummers would play the snare either precisely on the defined kick drum hit or even slightly ahead so as not to mask the all-important kick drum. These differences also show in production aesthetics. While many American metal productions feature the snare drum accentuating the backbeat, European productions commonly have a more pronounced kick drum that emphasises all downbeats (see Herbst, 2019).

The first aspects Bauerfeind identified as characteristic of Teutonic metal in his developing understanding of culturally influenced sounds were rhythmic attributes, ordered structures and precise execution (see also Nye, 2012; Reed, 2007). Other distinguishing features were lyrical content, vocal accent and use of technology such as nationally branded guitar amplifiers like Engl (Germany), Marshall and Orange (UK), or Mesa Boogie and Peavy (USA). However, these differences were subtle and not coherent enough across bands from the same culture, and so their influence was more of a ‘metaphorical icing’ on the significant rhythmic differences. Since most German metal bands sing in English and do not use folkloristic instruments, ‘Teutonic’ musical trademarks depend entirely on performative and production aspects.

From an academic viewpoint, some contextualising observations should be highlighted. While it is unclear how Bauerfeind’s upbringing and socialisation impacted his musical perception, he seems to have constructed an imagined symbolic community (Anderson, 1994; Cohen, 1985) with a value system and musical characteristics (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992) based on the mythic milieu (Spracklen, 2017) of his upbringing. That he is focusing on Prussia is perhaps not surprising, given the lack of clear national mythology in Germany. As Heesch (2014) points out, the appropriation of Nordic mythology as genuinely Germanic and German is historically incorrect. Consequently, few German artists, apart from folk and pagan metal bands, draw on Germanic mythology. Even mythology more authentic and recent, such as that created by the Brothers Grimm and Richard Wagner, is rare in mainstream German metal music (Heesch, 2014), with Grave Digger a rare exception. Playing with Weimar Republic aesthetics like Rammstein (Kahnke, 2013) is, due to their left-wing attitudes, neither an option for most metal bands nor Bauerfeind. Therefore, Prussia provides the mythic milieu (Spracklen, 2017) that corresponds to German stereotypes and war associations typical of metal, thus enabling exotic otherness for outsiders (Elias & Scotson, 1994; Nye, 2012) and a shared community for insiders (Cohen, 1985), without right-wing and Nazi associations.

5 Bauerfeind’s Realisation of the ‘Teutonic’ in His Discography

5.1 Running Wild – Teutonic to the Maximum

Upon returning to Germany and leaving the influence of American jazz music behind, Bauerfeind started producing metal bands such as Sieges Even (*Steps*, 1990;

A Sense of Change, 1991) and Heavens Gate (*More Hysteria*, 1991). Running Wild's acclaimed *Black Hand Inn* (1994) was his first major production with one of the oldest German heavy metal bands (since 1976). Never having tried to hide their heritage earned Running Wild mockery from all over the world (see Herbst, 2020a). In Germany, Running Wild are celebrated for their uncompromisingly 'German style' (Herbst, 2020b), and *Black Hand Inn* (1994) is considered one of the gems in the band's discography. The precise guitar playing and tight synchronisation with the drums were highly esteemed by German *Rock Hard* (Bittner, 2009: 74).

This impression did not come about by chance, according to Bauerfeind. The band with German drummer Jörg Michael recorded the drum tracks as precisely to a downbeat click as possible,¹ which has become standard practice in music production in the twenty-first century but was less common in the US and UK in the 1990s (see Herbst, 2020a). Unusual is that the band obsessively insisted that Bauerfeind keep checking alignment, the synchronisation of all drum instruments and snare timing to the kick drum. Worth noting is that due to an endorsement with manufacturer Digidesign beginning in 1993, Bauerfeind was one of the first producers in Europe to work with a Pro Tools digital audio workstation. Compared to the older analogue technology, this digital production system allowed for much more substantial rhythmic corrections. Initially, the system provided simultaneous playback of just four out of eight tracks, later 16 to 20 editable tracks. Still, it was sufficient to audition the main drum instruments of kick, snare and overheads, so Bauerfeind improved playing precision further through audio editing. This combination of skilled drummer, careful selection of recorded performances and effective editing resulted in immaculate timing and synchronisation that matched the concept of Prussian precision, even if it was not yet apparent to Bauerfeind.

The rhythm guitars were quadrupled, which was still uncommon for the time (Herbst, 2017). In contrast to recording two tracks, this technique risks losing definition (Mynett, 2017: 135). Guitarist Rolf Kasperek laid down one track precisely and then recorded the other three while listening only to the first track. Afterwards, Kasperek checked if all recorded tracks were aligned with the first guitar. Playing mainly downstrokes instead of alternating strokes ensured definition. For maximum precision, just one of the two guitarists recorded the rhythm tracks. Kasperek created a unique guitar sound that distinguished him from other German musicians of the time. He used an American Mesa Boogie Mark IV amplifier that did not create a characteristic Teutonic metal sound, but with his distinctive playing style and the amplifier running on a power line frequency of 50 Hz, he lent the setup more of a European sounding character. Bauerfeind is convinced that the same setup recorded in the US would have sounded noticeably different on a 60 Hz power line because it produces a distortion tone with higher fluctuation frequency. Some American producers use an electrical transformer called 'Variac', as do European producers when recording in the USA, to produce European-sounding distortion.

¹ Video footage of the recording sessions is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NA2PLrM4A>. Accessed 24 February, 2021.

Since Bauerfeind never owned a studio, he usually chose one from the several recording studios that supported the Prussian ‘war sound’ concept by their acoustics (see Herbst, 2019). *Black Hand Inn* (1994) was recorded at Vox Klangstudio in Bendestorf, an old movie theatre with a controlled reverberated sound. The kick drum was intended to sound like a cannon, a low fundamental frequency with a long decay, and the snare drum like a shotgun, also deep in sound. Such sounds can only be created if the room acoustics produce pressure points that shape the drums’ sound when the kit and microphones are placed correctly. Pondering the individual performances and sounds, Bauerfeind reasons few other albums feature Teutonic attributes as consistently as *Black Hand Inn* (1994).

5.2 Gamma Ray – Teutonic with a Rock’n’Roll Twist

One year later, Bauerfeind produced the album pivotal for Gamma Ray’s career, *Land of the Free* (1995). German *Metal Hammer* described it as a contender to take over Helloween’s *Keeper of the Seven Keys – Part I* (1987) prime position in German metal history (Mineur, 1995: 117). *Land of the Free* did not conform to a Teutonic metal production concept because it has more of a rock’n’roll feel like Helloween’s music. The drums were played more relaxed and less military-precise (see Reed, 2007), which allowed guitarist Kai Hansen to play slightly ahead without making the song sound too fast, a technique Rammstein use as well (Herbst, 2021). The signal the ear detects first is the most important one. While Running Wild’s drums were right on the click and the guitars precisely aligned to it, or slightly behind, Gamma Ray’s drum transients were after the guitars. Gamma Ray’s approach to rhythmic alignment once stirred a discussion between band leader Hansen and producer Bauerfeind. Hansen did not play the rhythm guitar according to Bauerfeind’s intended feel, and the overall result sounded hectic to Bauerfeind due to Hansen’s preferred ‘pushy feeling’. Playing the guitars in a more relaxed feel on the beat would have solved the problem, but Hansen rejected Bauerfeind’s advice. The only option left was deliberately contrasting the two feels by playing the drums even more relaxed and laid-back, which, according to Bauerfeind, works better than combining slightly different feels. Altogether, this guitar playing style, ahead of the drums combined with heavily overdriven Engl Straight blended with traditional Marshall amplifiers, gave the album production a raw rock’n’roll sound, which is less powerful and ‘Teutonic’ than Running Wild’s heavy metal approach.

Apart from the discussed performance characteristics, the drum sounds concurred with Bauerfeind’s notion of Teutonic metal. For Gamma Ray’s recordings, he chose RA.SH. Studios in Gelsenkirchen, which had smaller and less ambient live rooms than Vox Klangstudio. The stairways, though, provided a reflection chamber with pure ferroconcrete walls that produced a thundering drum sound characteristic of Teutonic metal bands, such as Gamma Ray, Rage, Axel Rudi Pell and Sodom (see Herbst, 2019).

5.3 Angra – South American Style with a Teutonic Approach

Owing to his work with Viper (*Evolution*, 1992; *Vipera Sapiens*, 1993), Brazilian Angra approached Bauerfeind, asking him to help them achieve a more Teutonic sound like the German bands that inspired them. *Angels Cry* (1993) was their first production, and Bauerfeind admitted that establishing a Teutonic feel with Angra was another challenge than with Gamma Ray. Due to their cultural background in samba music and carnival, similar to those noted for Sepultura (Avelar, 2003; Janotti, 2020; Kahn-Harris, 2000), Angra's ears were tuned differently from his own. Unlike marching music from his upbringing, carnival music is not rigidly aligned to a fixed tempo but looser and more improvised in its rhythmic realisation. At first, the musicians did not understand Bauerfeind's intentions. Over time, they became aware of the cultural differences, yet it did not feel natural to them to perform with a 'Teutonic feel'. Time-consuming guidance eventually brought the desired playing precision. During the production, drummer Marco Antunes broke his hand, so Alex Holzwarth, studio drummer of German progressive metal band Sieges Even, was hired. According to Bauerfeind, Holzwarth plays very precisely, almost 'sterile' with highly developed technical abilities. Engaging Holzwarth helped significantly to bring Teutonic qualities into the production. The mixture of different feels, as per Bauerfeind, gave the music distinctiveness. Even though the Brazilian musicians learned to perform with a 'Teutonic feeling', Bauerfeind believes that they still played differently than musicians who have this feeling naturally because it is rooted in their upbringing. The sound may be similar but not identical, so the result is likely to be unique. Holzwarth's ultra-precise drum performance combined with a Brazilian interpretation of Teutonic features made the band stand out, making the record popular, especially in Japan.

The album was recorded at Hansen Studios in Hamburg, where the prospect of achieving the intended drum aesthetic was best. Located in an old World War II bunker, it had acoustics contributing to the production's 'military atmosphere'. The mix was done at Horus Sound Studio in Hanover. However, from Bauerfeind's experience, the studio used for mixing has comparatively less impact on the resulting aesthetic than that used for the recording. The first versions sent to the Japanese record label JVC prompted reactions to the 'Teutonic' production aesthetic, or rather the lack thereof. The head artist and repertoire manager disliked the kick drum sound, expressing indignation via fax to Bauerfeind: 'Japanese kids love the sound of bass drums. Therefore, we would appreciate that this Angra production has a bass drum sounding more like the Teutonic bass drum on the last Gamma Ray album (*Insanity & Genius*, 1993)', a record Bauerfeind had also mixed and produced. At that time, Teutonic productions were internationally renowned for loud kick drum sounds; a sound JVC was keen to adopt.

On their second album *Holy Land* (1996), Angra explored their South American musical heritage while keeping Teutonic elements under Bauerfeind's guidance. Brazilian rhythms, played by their new drummer Ricardo Confessori and percussionist Tuto Ferraz, were blended with foreign musical elements

like Japanese Taiko loop rhythms. Classical elements were also incorporated, which was a challenging task, according to Bauerfeind, as it meant blending various musical styles with diverging concepts and traditions. However, combining Teutonic precision with different cultural influences proved successful, as evidenced by the record's popularity, especially in Japan. The album was recorded and produced at several German studios: Hansen Studios in Hamburg, Big House Studios in Hanover, HG Studio in Wolfsburg and Vox Klangstudio in Bendestorf. Only the Brazilian percussion parts were recorded in Brazil at Djembe Studio São Paulo.

5.4 Saxon – NWOBHM gets a Teutonic Make-over

In 1999, Bauerfeind produced his first album with NWOBHM icon Saxon. Titled *Metalhead* (1999), Bauerfeind was engaged to 'metallise' Saxon's traditional rock'n'roll sound. The band's typical rock feel shows in the solo parts and melodic guitar overdubs, consisting of phrasing with expressive string bending and vibrato. Bauerfeind only became aware of these subtle differences later when working with HammerFall from Sweden, who lack this kind of expressive phrasing.

Saxon's guitar sound, characteristic of a British band, was based on Marshall amplifiers. Bauerfeind layered their guitar sounds with German Engl Savage tones to achieve a more pronounced metal aesthetic and add his Teutonic signature. In the 1990s, Engl manufactured guitar amplifiers capable of producing more distortion than most other companies, and with their distinct sound, they differed noticeably from amplifiers from the UK and USA.

The track '[Conquistador](#)' is particularly worth discussing because of its South American lyrical theme. As Bauerfeind suggests, these songs are often based on triplet subdivisions for a lighter feel, but he acknowledges that this may only be how many European bands stereotypically imagine this sound aesthetic. Such rhythms would challenge many European drummers because ternary divisions with a back-beat emphasis resemble American jazz and swing music much more than the binary Central European feel. For this record, German drummer Fritz Randow replaced Saxon's Nigel Glockler. Randow's unique Teutonic metal-based drum style, which he developed through many record productions, contributed much to the Teutonic signature of the *Metalhead* album. Five years later, Bauerfeind produced Saxon's *Lionheart* (2004) album, but this time, Randow was replaced by German drummer Jörg Michael who lent the record a still more Teutonic feel, representing the precise Prussian-inspired metal aesthetic. As per Bauerfeind, Michael is the most-recorded Teutonic metal drummer, having worked with many influential bands: Rage, Axel Rudi Pell, Grave Digger, Running Wild, Stratovarius. For Bauerfeind-produced *Inner Sanctum* (2007), Nigel Glockler re-joined the band, marking the return to their original looser rock'n'roll style. In Bauerfeind's opinion, Glockler's feel and playing style create the most homogenous sound that best fits the British band's rock'n'roll style.

Regarding *Metalhead* (1999), the album was recorded at one of the main German metal studios of the 1980s and 1990s, Karo Musikstudio in Brackel (Blind Guardian,

Grave Digger, Gamma Ray, Iron Savior, Freedom Call, Destruction). Traditional NWOBHM played with Teutonic-infused drum performances and guitar tones lent the production a unique aesthetic. Saxon's website described the collaboration similarly: 'Charlie Bauerfeind was in charge of the driving sound, keeping the typical Saxon elements of each song to incorporate them in a contemporary production'. Intending to return to their roots, Saxon later hired British producer Andy Sneap for their *Sacrifice* (2013) album. Bandleader Biff Byford explained the decision on their website: 'From the songs to the production, I wanted to focus on the raw aspects which made us great in the first place'. This aesthetic is the opposite of the precise and all-controlled Teutonic production concept with its inherent precision that Byford considered too sterile for his rock'n'roll-inspired NWOBHM sound.

5.5 Venom – British Band Clashes with Teutonic Production Concept

In 1997, Bauerfeind was asked to mix British proto-black metal band Venom's reunion record *Cast in Stone* (1997). Like Saxon and Motörhead, they were signed with German label Steamhammer and booking agent Rainer Hänsel, both collaborating with Bauerfeind. The band did not desire a Teutonic signature in their sound, which Bauerfeind accepted. Nevertheless, he quantised one song's drum performance for a more precise Teutonic feel, believing it would sound better. The label and agent, all Germans, supported this decision, but the band vehemently opposed it. Ultimately, Bauerfeind had to undo all 'preciseness work' to meet the artist's will for whom those changes did not match their innate feeling. They argued that the 'sloppy drum performances' were exactly meant as recorded to create the intended feel. This incident made Bauerfeind realise that his perception and views might fundamentally differ from those of a band. Deviating aesthetic views, determined by mythic milieu (Spracklen, 2017) and genre conventions (Reyes, 2013), likely caused the clash. Bauerfeind's Teutonic concept, which he developed with melodic speed metal and power metal artists, did not fit with a British interpretation of black and thrash metal. It was effective in 'metallising' Saxon's NWOBHM rock'n'roll sound, but it did not work with the proto-black metal band Venom. The result, not nearly a Teutonic production, pleased the band after all. This experience taught Bauerfeind that a producer must be aware of Teutonic features to know when to apply or avoid them.

5.6 HammerFall – The Swedish Way of Interpreting Teutonic Metal

HammerFall make no secret of being hugely inspired by German metal pioneers Accept (Schäfer, 1998). For their third studio album, *Renegade* (2000), they engaged former Accept producer Michael Wagener. Bauerfeind produced their fourth album *Crimson Thunder* (2002), recorded at several studios used by Teutonic metal bands, such as the Dutch Wisseloord, Blind Guardian's Twilight Hall in Greifrath, Germany, and Helloween's Andi Deris' Mi Sueño in Tenerife, for an even more pronounced Teutonic aesthetic.

Bauerfeind believes that Swedish musicians are Americanised due to their upbringing, partly because American movies were shown untranslated on TV for

a long time. His impression matches studies suggesting that Sweden's music industry has a global profile, giving the music a placeless and 'culturally anonymous' sound (Connell & Gibson, 2003: 124–125; Kahn-Harris, 2007: 108). Accordingly, Bauerfeind is convinced that Swedish bands tend not to have a Teutonic sound. An exception are HammerFall, whose guitar player Oscar Dronjak is the greatest Teutonic metal fan Bauerfeind has ever met. His ears are so tuned to the genre's details that even his guitar solos lack most of the blues and rock feel characteristic of American rock music. Dronjak cherished working with Bauerfeind as he expressed in a *Rock Hard* interview: 'The first time I worked with Charlie – I love Charlie! – I wanted to kill him because he is so German: "This sounds like shit – do it again!"' (Bittner, 2011: 39). HammerFall's appreciation of precision and 'Teutonic phrasing' increased over time, which Bauerfeind noticed during the *No Sacrifice, No Victory* (2009) production. This record was recorded directly after Saxon's *Into the Labyrinth* (2009). Inspired by Saxon's blues- and rock-influenced NWOBHM style, Bauerfeind was intrigued to give HammerFall's solo guitar work a rock feel by encouraging phrasing like string bending. As this idea opposed Dronjak's intended Teutonic aesthetic, he started an argument. He insisted on playing controlled and precise, and therefore most solos on this record like '[Any Means Necessary](#)' lack blues articulation, resembling Wolf Hoffmann's guitar playing on Accept records. For Bauerfeind, HammerFall are the 'most Teutonic' metal band outside German-speaking countries besides American Manowar. These two bands are evidence that a sound is not limited to a place or local scene but can be appropriated as a set of stylistic conventions regardless of location (Dunn, 2004).

5.7 Halford, Helloween and Rage – Validating the Theory of Rhythmic Feels

In the early 2000s, Bauerfeind made several experiences that helped him validate previous observations and fully develop a concept of culturally characteristic feels. He was working on British Rob Halford's solo album *Resurrection* (2000) while also producing German Helloween's *The Dark Ride* (2000), which allowed for direct comparison between a Teutonic and American production. American producer Roy Z, who was involved in Helloween's production, asked Bauerfeind to refine Halford's mixes recorded in the USA. In so doing, Bauerfeind realised that their overall production concept did not conform to Teutonic precision, especially in the drums. These were performed by Bobby Jarzombek, one of the most accomplished American progressive metal drummers, best known for his work with Watchtower and Fates Warning. The alignment of snare and kick was laid-back, which Bauerfeind believes to be characteristic of American drummers.

A similar experience as with Rob Halford's *Resurrection* (2000) production Bauerfeind made with Rage. During the drum recording for the album *Unity* (2002), he was hired by the record company to give the German band a more defined Teutonic signature. Due to his loose fusion-influenced playing style, Rage's American drummer Mike Terrana needed considerable guidance to achieve the intended Teutonic feel, which performance-wise was an essential part of the record. On the band's previous, self-produced album *Welcome to the Other Side* (2001), Terrana had

performed in his loose style. Upon gaining awareness of how to create the required Teutonic feel, Terrana convincingly performed this style on *Unity* (2002).

Mikkey Dee (Motörhead, Don Dokken, King Diamond, Scorpions) is one of the few drummers Bauerfeind has worked with who precisely knows the different feel between Teutonic and non-Teutonic drum styles. As a Swede with Greek roots and having lived in the US, Dee has absorbed different cultures. When he was called in as a session drummer for Helloween's *Rabbit Don't Come Easy* (2003), he instantly asked Bauerfeind what alignment was requested. Dee began playing in the laid-back and unaligned American style and gradually transitioned to the precise Teutonic way of playing. That was an astounding observation for Bauerfeind because never had these differences been so clearly demonstrated to him. Before, his concept of a Teutonic sound was grounded in experiences of working with various artists. Seeing one drummer able to play the different feels finally confirmed his working theory.

5.8 Helloween – Exploring Variations of the Teutonic Feel

With all these observations over the years, Bauerfeind decided to take his Teutonic approach further and develop new concepts involving Teutonic trademarks. Inspired by marching associations that Rammstein used on their single 'Links 2, 3, 4' (2001), he started blending boot sounds with the drums on Helloween's 'The Smile of the Sun' on *7 Sinners* (Helloween, 2010). Not knowing about these audio samples, an ordinary listener is unlikely to hear the marching sounds even though they subconsciously affect the music's perception. This technique has a long tradition in German metal, already heard in Accept's 'Balls to the Wall' (1983). Devotees of German metal have copied this approach, as American power metal band Kamelot did in 'March of Mephisto' (2005).

In his continuing exploration, Bauerfeind took yet another approach by incorporating South American elements into Helloween's productions. In 'Nabataea' (2013), he added several layers of percussion loops from Heavyocity Media's 'Damage' pack. Those are frequently used in movies and TV-series because such rhythms allow controlling tension and release. The effect is a 'pushier' and more syncopated feel, almost like a South American groove. However, the loops' low volumes relative to the drums mainly imply a feel and add 'psychoacoustic dirt' to the band's sound. Furthermore, Bauerfeind experimented with separating the quantised precision concept from the precise alignment concept in Helloween's productions. The drummer Daniel Löble, not playing to a click track but performing freely, creates what is called a 'floating beat map'. Even though the tempo varies throughout the performance, he maintains the drum instruments' internal alignment for a Teutonic feel. A challenging task, yet combining Teutonic precise alignment and loose, expressive performances without a metronome produces remarkable results. Bauerfeind's experiments convinced him that it is worthwhile to incorporate other elements into a Teutonic metal sound, just as it worked vice versa when Angra appropriated Teutonic elements. On an academic note, Bauerfeind's statements sometimes touch on essentialism, but his experience that musicians can adopt other playing styles and musical traditions can be mixed is

consistent with the arbitrary and constructed nature of imagined symbolic communities (Anderson, 1994; Cohen, 1985; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992).

6 Discussion and Conclusion

Genre labels are an interesting phenomenon because they shape the discourse among fans and communication between record companies and listeners. To what extent genre labels affect those involved in a music's production is not yet well understood. Record producers serve as a valuable source for academic study because they mediate between the artists' intentions, record companies' demands and audiences' expectations. Bauerfeind learned about the significance of genre labels in his career because record companies sign artists with a concrete expectation that they can market respectively (see Connell & Gibson, 2003; Dunn, 2004; Karjalainen, 2018; O'Flynn, 2007). With a band like Gamma Ray, they have in mind a Teutonic metal band, even though they might not necessarily think about specific sound qualities in as much detail as producer Bauerfeind. Conscious that fan expectations are often more concrete than their own, record companies expect producers to satisfy fans, which will satisfy the company. It is the producer's responsibility to find a sound aesthetic that meets fan expectations and suits the artist. Whether or not the band agrees with the concept is a different matter.

In Bauerfeind's experience, record companies rarely explicitly discuss genre labels with producers and bands if records are successful; if not, they analyse what has caused audience dissatisfaction. The production aesthetic will be questioned, and the producer asked to explain the concept, often followed by a change of the production team. Rage's self-produced *Welcome to the Other Side* (2001) is such an example. Fans criticised it for not conforming to Teutonic metal aesthetics, so Bauerfeind was hired to produce their next album, *Unity* (2002). HammerFall is another example. Until *No Sacrifice, No Victory* (2009), they strived to succeed proto-Teutonic metal band Accept, which they successfully approached with a coherent concept, consisting of production aesthetic, imaginary world and lyrics. Then they exchanged German Wagener and Bauerfeind for Los Angeles-based rock producer James Michael for their *Infected* (2011) album. Other changes include replacing heroic power metal lyrics with zombie stories and dropping band mascot Hector on the artwork for the first time in band history (Robson, 2011). Chart positions for *Infected* (2011) remained unchanged, yet Bauerfeind-produced album *No Sacrifice, No Victory* (2009), realised with a coherent concept, won gold status. Rehiring their first producer, Swedish Fredrik Nordström, for their programmatically titled album (*r*)*Evolution* (2014) was a wise move in Bauerfeind's opinion because it meant returning to a coherent production concept and their old style – an important step, given that metal fans tend to dislike change or 'selling out' (see Spracklen, 2019). Nordström representing the Gothenburg sound (Dunn, 2004; Hillier, 2018) fits well in fan perception because, according to Bauerfeind, a Swedish band with a Swedish producer is in line with their imagined community with shared myths, values, symbols and traditions (Anderson, 1994; Cohen, 1985; Hobsbawm & Ranger,

1992). Furthermore, Scandinavia shares mythologies and geographical location with Germanic culture (Heesch, 2014; Herbst, 2020a), making these imagined communities easily compatible. For European metal, whether Teutonic or Viking metal or NWOBHM, the Other (Elias & Scotson, 1994) is not confined to America but could imply any other continent, country or culture. Bauerfeind claims that top-level producers can deliver any aesthetic desired, but their heritage and the media discourse affect how their work is perceived (see Karjalainen, 2018), regardless of what they create. Therefore, production concept and personnel play a role in the audience's perception, as do further contextual factors like infrastructure (Connell & Gibson 2003).

Do distinct performative, technological and acoustic characteristics in a metal music production justify the label 'Teutonic metal'? From a production perspective, it is not easy to find commonality between bands from one geographical area playing the same genre or even sub-genre, in line with research on other labels like 'Viking metal' (Deeks, 2016; Helden, 2010; Manea, 2016). There can be more similarity between bands from Europe and America than between bands from the same location. Imagined communities are not defined by physical location but by shared values and traditions (Anderson, 1994; Cohen, 1985; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992), and musically, sounds are not fixed to locations but stylistic conventions (Dunn, 2004). Metal labels result from a mediating discourse and symbolism (Karjalainen, 2018; O'Flynn, 2007) in a reciprocal relationship with musical aesthetics. While it is easy to explain labels by journalistic storytelling, artwork, live performances and costumes, musical influences resulting from socialisation and production infrastructures cannot be disregarded completely (see also Connell & Gibson, 2003; O'Flynn, 2007). Bauerfeind's experience suggests that imagined communities and corresponding aesthetic traditions influence the perception of fans, bands, producers and record companies and have an impact on record production. He is convinced that world-class producers consider artistic concepts grounded in specific cultures or otherwise constructed imagined communities. Bauerfeind develops concepts of a Teutonic sound fitting a band, and he reflects how listeners might perceive his decisions. It goes way beyond a mere 'precision approach', involving choosing studios and equipment, taking editing and processing decisions and finding suitable performance characteristics and recording approaches. These options allow deliberate choice from a variety of 'Teutonic sound features', for example, blending different rock styles with Teutonic metal attributes (Gamma Ray, Saxon) or mixing culturally or symbolically rich elements (Angra, Helloween). Few listeners will entirely comprehend the production concept with its symbolic, ambiguous signifiers in the music, imagery and mediating discourse when listening to a record. However, discussions will have taken place between producer, band and record company for the quality of an album and enjoyment of its audience. Whether the concept is conveyed musically, media-wise, or both is secondary if it fulfils its purpose of being a meaningful cultural product that fans can use in their 'communicative leisure' practices (Spracklen, 2009) or that is employed by the music industry as 'instrumental leisure' in their marketing efforts, enabling artists, producers and record company employees to earn a living and continue to release music.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Accept. (1983). *Balls to the wall*. New York: RCA.
- Adelt, U. (2012). Machines with a heart: German identity in the music of can and kraftwerk. *Popular Music & Society*, 35(3), 359–374.
- Adorno, T. (1991). *The culture industry*. London: Routledge.
- Anderson, B. (1994). *Imagined communities*. London: Verso.
- Angra. (1993). *Angels cry*. Yokohama: JVC.
- Angra. (1996). *Holy land*. Yokohama: JVC.
- Avelar, I. (2003). Heavy metal music in postdictatorial Brazil: Sepultura and the coding of nationality in sound. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 12(3), 329–346.
- Berger, H. M., & Fales, C. (2005). Heaviness in the perception of heavy metal guitar timbres: The Match of perceptual and acoustic features over time. In P. D. Greene & T. Porcello (Eds.), *Wired for sound*. (pp. 181–197). Wesleyan University Press.
- Berkers, P., & Schaap, J. (2017). From thrash to cash. Forging and legitimizing Dutch metal. In L. Mutsaers & G. Keunen (Eds.), *Made in the low countries* (pp. 61–71). London: Routledge.
- Biddle, I., & Knights, V. (2007). Introduction. In I. Biddle & V. Knights (Eds.), *Music, national identity and the politics of location*. (pp. 1–16). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Bittner, R. (2009). *Running Wild*. *Rock Hard*, 7, 74–75.
- Bittner, R. (2011). *Hammerfall*. *Hector ist müde*. *Rock Hard*, 6, 38–39.
- Böhm, D. (2002). *Hammerfall: Mehr Fett!* *Rock Hard*, 9, 28.
- Boyarin, S. (2019). The new metal medievalism: Alexander the Great, Islamic historiography and Nile's 'Iskander Dhul Kharnon.' In R. Barratt-Peacock & R. Hagen (Eds.), *Medievalism and metal music studies*. (pp. 104–115). Bingley: Bingley.
- Burgess, R. J. (2013). *The art of music production*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Christie, I. (2003). *Sound of the beast*. London: Harper Collins.
- Cohen, A. (1985). *The symbolic construction of community*. London: Travistock.
- Collins, P. (1981). *'In the air tonight', Face value*. Los Angeles: Atlantic.
- Connell, J., & Gibson, C. (2003). *Sound tracks*. London: Routledge.
- Deeks, M. (2016). *National identity in Northern and Eastern European heavy metal* (PhD thesis). University of Leeds, Leeds.
- Dunn, S. (2004). Lands of fire and ice: An exploration of death metal scenes. *New Localities*, 29, 107–125.
- Ekeröth, D. (2019). *Swedish death metal*. New York: Bazillion Points Books.
- Elias, N., & Scotson, J. (1994). *The established and the outsiders*. London: Sage.
- Gamma, R. (1993). *Insanity and genius*. Berlin: Noise.
- Gamma, R. (1995). *Land of the free*. Berlin: Noise.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action, volume one: Reason and the rationalization of society*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Halford, R. (2000). *Resurrection*. London: Metal-is Records.
- HammerFall. (2000). *Renegade*. Donzdorf: Nuclear Blast.
- HammerFall. (2002). *Crimson thunder*. Donzdorf: Nuclear Blast.
- HammerFall. (2009). *'Any means necessary, no sacrifice', No victory*. Donzdorf: Nuclear Blast.
- HammerFall. (2009). *No sacrifice, no victory*. Donzdorf: Nuclear Blast.

- HammerFall. (2011). *Infected*. Donzdorf: Nuclear Blast.
- HammerFall. (2014). *(r)Evolution*. Donzdorf: Nuclear Blast.
- Heaven, G. (1991). *More hysteria*. Steamhammer.
- Heesch, F. (2014). Nordisch – Germanisch – Deutsch?: Zur Mythenrezeption im heavy metal. In D. Helms & T. Phleps (Eds.), *Typisch deutsch?* (pp. 127–151). Bielefeld: transcript.
- von Helden, I. (2010). Barbarians and literature: Viking metal and its links to old Norse mythology. In N. Scott & I. von Helden (Eds.), *The metal void*. (pp. 257–264). Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- Helloween. (1987). *Keeper of the seven keys – Part I*. Berlin: Noise.
- Helloween. (2000). *The dark ride*. Donzdorf: Nuclear Blast.
- Helloween. (2003). *Rabbit don't come easy*. Donzdorf: Nuclear Blast.
- Helloween. (2010). *'The smile of the sun', 7 sinners*. New York: Sony Music.
- Helloween. (2013). *'Nabataea', Straight out of hell*. New York: Sony Music.
- Herbst, J. P. (2017). Historical development, sound aesthetics and production techniques of the distorted electric guitar in metal music. *Metal Music Studies*, 3(1), 24–46.
- Herbst, J. P. (2019). The formation of the west German power metal scene and the question of a 'Teutonic' sound. *Metal Music Studies*, 5(2), 201–223.
- Herbst, J. P. (2020a). From bach to helloween: 'Teutonic' stereotypes in the history of popular music. *Metal Music Studies*, 6(1), 87–108.
- Herbst, J. P. (2020b). German metal attack: Power metal in and from Germany. In O. Seibt, M. Ringsmut, & D.-E. Wickström (Eds.), *Made in Germany*. (pp. 81–89). London: Routledge.
- Herbst, J.P. (2021). The politics of Rammstein's sound: Decoding a production aesthetic. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 33(2). (forthcoming).
- Hillier, B. (2018). The aesthetic-sonic shift of melodic death metal. *Metal Music Studies*, 4(1), 5–23.
- Hillier, B. (2020). Considering genre in metal music. *Metal Music Studies*, 6(1), 5–26.
- Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (Eds.). (1992). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Janotti, J. S. (2020). Música pesada brasileira: Sepultura and the reinvention of Brazilian sound. In D. Treece (Ed.), *Music scenes and migrations*. (pp. 155–163). Anthem Press.
- Kahn-Harris, K. (2000). 'Roots?': The relationship between the global and the local within the extreme metal scene. *Popular Music*, 19(1), 13–30.
- Kahn-Harris, K. (2007). *Extreme metal*. Oxford: Berg.
- Kahnke, C. (2013). Transnationale teutonen: Rammstein representing the Berlin Republic. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 25(2), 185–197.
- Kamelot. (2005). 'March of Mephisto,' Black Halo. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Karjalainen, T. M. (2016). Tunes from the land of the thousand lakes. In A. R. Brown, K. Spracklen, K. Kahn-Harris, & N. Scott (Eds.), *Global metal music and culture* (pp. 209–226). London: Routledge.
- Karjalainen, T. M. (2018). Tales from the north and beyond: Sounds of origin as narrative discourses. In T. M. Karjalainen (Ed.), *Sounds of origin in heavy metal music*. (pp. 1–40). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lucas, C., Deeks, M., & Spracklen, K. (2011). Grim up north: Northern England, Northern Europe and black metal. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 15(3), 279–295.
- Manea, I. M. (2016). Norse myth and identity in Swedish viking metal: Imagining heritage and a leisure community. *Sociology and Anthropology*, 4(2), 82–91.
- Matera, J. (2020). How entombed and sunlight studios gave birth to death-metal guitar tone. *Guitar World*. Retrieved February 24, 2021, from <https://www.guitarworld.com/features/how-entombed-and-sunlight-studios-gave-birth-to-death-metal-guitar-tone>.
- Mineur, M. (1995). *Gamma ray*. *Rock hard*, 4, 117.
- Mineur, M. (2000). Helloween 2000. *Metal Hammer*, 7, 20–21.
- Mynett, M. (2017). *Metal music manual*. Bielefeld: Routledge.
- Nye, S. (2012). What is Teutonic?: An update on the German question. In K. Wisotzki & S. Falke (Eds.), *Böse macht musik*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- O'Flynn, J. (2007). National identity and music in transition: Issues of authenticity in a global setting. In I. Biddle & V. Knights (Eds.), *Music, national identity and the politics of location*. (pp. 19–38). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Patterson, D. (2013). *Black metal: Evolution of the cult*. New York: Feral House.

- Pichler, P. (2017). The power of the imagination of historical distance: Melechesh' 'mesopotamian metal' as a musical attempt of solving cultural conflicts in the twenty-first century. *Metal Music Studies*, 3(1), 97–112.
- Purcell, N. J. (2003). *Death metal music*. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Rage. (2001). *Welcome to the other side*. Bochum: Gun Records.
- Rage. (2002). *Unity*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Rammstein. (2001). 'Links 2, 3, 4', mutter. Berlin: Motor Music.
- Reed, S. A. (2007). 'Coolifying' Germany's past and present: Reading the U.S. popularity of rammstein's 'Du Hast'. Retrieved February 24, 2021, from <http://salexanderreed.com/coolifying-germanys-past-and-present>.
- Reyes, I. (2008). *Sound, technology, and the interpretation in subcultures of heavy music production* (PhD thesis). Pittsburgh University, Pittsburgh.
- Reyes, I. (2013). Blacker than death: Recollecting the "Black Turn" in metal aesthetics. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 25, 240–257.
- Robson, C. (2011). *Hammerfall singer doesn't understand how biohazard could copyright biological hazard symbol*. Blabbermouth. Retrieved February 24, 2021, from <https://www.blabbermouth.net/news/hammerfall-singer-doesn-t-understand-how-biohazard-could-copyright-biological-hazard-symbol>.
- Wild, R. (1994). *Black hand inn*. Munich: Electrola.
- Saxon. (1999). *'Conquistador'*, *Metalhead*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Saxon. (1999). *Metalhead*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Saxon. (2004). *Lionheart*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Saxon. (2007). *Inner sanctum*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Saxon. (2009). *Into the labyrinth*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Saxon. (2013). *Sacrifice*. Husum: UDR.
- Schäfer, W. (1998). Hammerfall: A tribute to german heavy metal. *Rock Hard*, 10, 20–22.
- Shuker, R. (1994). *Understanding popular music*. London: Routledge.
- Sieges, E. (1990). *Steps*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Sieges, E. (1991). *A sense of change*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Spracklen, K. (2006). Leisure, consumption and a blaze in the northern sky: Developing an understanding of leisure at the end of modernity through the habermasian framework of communicative and instrumental rationality. *World Leisure Journal*, 48(3), 33–44.
- Spracklen, K. (2009). *The meaning and purpose of leisure*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Spracklen, K. (2011). *Constructing leisure: Historical and philosophical debates*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Spracklen, K. (2014). There is (almost) no alternative: The slow 'heat death' of music subcultures and the instrumentalization of contemporary leisure. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 17(3), 252–266.
- Spracklen, K. (2017). 'Yours is the earth and everything that's in it, and – which is more – you'll be a man, my son': Myths of a British masculinity and britishness in the construction and reception of iron maiden. *Metal Music Studies*, 3(3), 405–419.
- Spracklen, K. (2018). Leisure, popular culture and memory: The invention of dark age britain, wales, England, and middle-earth in the songs of led zeppelin. *International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure*, 1, 139–152.
- Spracklen, K. (2019). Opeth not metal: Making sense of the symbolic boundary work in the leisure spaces of musicians and fans. *International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure*, 2, 267–284.
- Spracklen, K., & Henderson, S. (2013). "Oh! What a tangled web we weave": Englishness, communicative leisure, identity work and the cultural web of the english folk morris dance scene. *Leisure/Loisir*, 37(3), 233–249.
- Spracklen, K., Lucas, C., & Deeks, M. (2014). The construction of heavy metal identity through heritage narratives: A case study of extreme metal bands in the north of England. *Popular Music & Society*, 37(1), 48–64.
- Thomas, N. (2015). *The development of technology and its influence on recorded heavy metal music 1969–2015* (PhD thesis). University of Hull, Hull.
- Trafford, S. (2013). Blood, fire, death: Bathory and the birth of viking metal. In M. Goodall (Ed.), *Gathering of the tribe*. (pp. 302–308). London: Headpress.
- Turner, D. (2009). Outlining the fundamental production aesthetics of commercial heavy metal music utilising systematic empirical analysis. *Art of Record Production Conference*. Retrieved March 24, 2021, from <https://www.artofrecordproduction.com/aorpjoom/symposiums/21-arp-2009/117-turner-2009>

- Venom. (1997). *Cast in stone*. Hanover: Steamhammer.
- Viper. (1992). *Evolution*. Abstatt: Massacre Records.
- Viper. (1993). *Vipera sapiens*. Abstatt: Massacre Records.
- Weinstein, D. (2000). *Heavy metal*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press.
- Weinstein, D. (2011). The globalization of metal. In J. Wallach, H. M. Berger, & P. D. Greene (Eds.), *Metal rules the globe* (pp. 34–59). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wiederholm, J. (2013). *Louder than hell*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Williams, D. (2015). Tracking timbral changes in metal production from 1990 to 2013. *Metal Music Studies*, 1(1), 39–68.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.