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1. Heavy metal and punk rock are arguably the two popular music genres that most represent the paths followed by rock music after 1970. Often considered in opposition to one another, metal and punk have crossed into one another as often as they have been starkly differentiated. In the 1980s, exchange between the two genres occurred with such consistency that a “crossover” subgenre emerged that was built upon stylistic hybridization. Although metal/punk crossover is typically considered a distinctly 1980s phenomenon, bands that fused elements of the two genres were, if not plentiful, certainly in evidence in the preceding decade. Even early protopunk bands such as the New York Dolls or the Stooges can be considered to have significantly mixed generic elements in both music and the broader meanings that circulated around them, and such bands have often been accorded a place of prominence in written accounts of both metal and punk. By the mid-1970s, the period widely recognized as the moment of punk’s preeminence, a number of bands straddled the metal/punk divide even as punk was becoming defined as a more discretely bounded—and at times ideologically stringent—phenomenon. Foremost among these was the British band Motörhead, led by a refugee from the psychedelic era whose given name of Ian Kilmister had been supplanted by the single-word moniker Lemmy.
2. Motörhead played along the fault lines of late 1970s British rock culture as did few others. The band exhibited a commitment to stripped-down rock and roll song structures that was arguably surpassed only by the Ramones, though their models were hard-edged 1950s

rockabilly and R&B rather than the early 1960s pop favored by their New York counterparts. Motörhead's sound had a few more frills than the Ramones', particularly in the guitar solo department, where the psychedelic residue of the band seemed most to reside. Even at their most ornate, Motörhead was a unit that emphasized rhythmic drive and overall sonic force above the sort of virtuosic exhibitionism that held sway in the heavy metal of the time. The band was also notable for their connection to a string of independent labels—Stiff, Chiswick, and Bronze—at a time when independent releases were beginning to assume not only logistical but also ideological importance within the value system of British punk and new wave. At first roundly dismissed by critics who were taken with the mounting punk surge of 1976, Motörhead commanded increasing attention as they drew around themselves an audience notable for its intense loyalty and its mixed character. By the end of the 1970s, the band was widely perceived to have split the difference between metal and punk both in sound and in the scope of their appeal, and they led the way towards a broader synthesis between the two genres that would take British metal into the 1980s.

3. Generic crossover has figured very little in the relatively small scholarly literature on popular music genres.¹ Most genre scholarship in popular music studies concentrates on a single genre in isolation, or else is dedicated to positing the mechanisms through which musical genres work in more broadly theoretical terms. In the midst of one such essay of the latter type, Italian scholar Franco Fabbri put forth a valuable formulation that has remained unexamined, at least in English-language research: “genres offer an extremely useful instrument for the researcher’s analysis—just as they do for the practice of the singer and the songwriter—precisely when they are tested along the boundaries and in the intersections of a misty no man’s land that exists between one genre and another” (137). In the case of heavy metal and punk, the very proximity of the two genres makes the matter of boundaries and intersections especially charged in some instances. The era of metal/punk crossover in the 1980s was immediately preceded, and to some extent accompanied by considerable animosity between fans of the two forms, particularly in the United States. As Donna Gaines described in her now-classic *Teenage Wasteland*: “Wherever hardcore kids and metalheads congregated, the scene became an instantly contested terrain” (200). Contestation at the level of subculture had little inhibiting effect upon the musical cross-fertilization that occurred, however; if anything, it gave such boundary crossing an added edge, an air of transgression into forbidden terrain that became part of the thrill.
4. The 1970s saw less direct physical conflict between the two subcultural camps but there was considerable conflict at the level of discourse, especially among journalistic advocates of punk for whom heavy metal represented a bastion of old-guard tendencies in the face of punk’s vanguard momentum. For such commentators, metal’s persistence was a mystery in itself, the dimensions of which were compounded by the incursion of metal into zones demarcated as punk. Others found this occurrence less befuddling. Indeed, in the case of Motörhead, a small camp of critical voices celebrated the band precisely because they were combining generic signals and thus paving the way for a nascent crossover aesthetic that would only gain momentum over time. Significantly, one begins to find record of such attitudes as early as 1977, the year that marked the release of the

first Motörhead album, and that also has been identified as the pivotal year in the growth of the punk phenomenon.

5. Few eras have been invested with as much weight in the larger sweep of rock history as has the punk explosion that had the years 1976–77 at its epicenter. For Greil Marcus, one of the most influential commentators on punk, the occurrences of the mid- to late 1970s were equaled in significance only by the earliest stirrings of rock and roll in the mid-1950s and the impact of the Beatles in the years 1964–66. Drawing a line from Elvis Presley to the Sex Pistols in his book *Lipstick Traces*, Marcus posited that Presley had struck a particular balance that maintained “the negative as the principle of tension, of friction, which always gave the yes of rock ‘n’ roll its kick—and that was the history of rock ‘n’ roll, up to October 1977, when the Sex Pistols happened upon the impulse to destruction coded in the form, turned that impulse back upon the form, and blew it up” (16). Although more extreme than most, Marcus’ pronouncement is emblematic of the ways in which the rise and diffusion of punk is thought to have had a largely divisive impact upon the existing terms of rock. 1977, in this narrative of rock history, is a year that marks a clear distinction between “before” and “after,” in the wake of which rock could never quite mean the same thing as it had before. Such central elements of rock culture as the mystique of the rock and roll star, the value placed upon virtuosity in rock performance (especially as centered around the electric guitar), and the sense that the rock audience could be construed as a unified community were effectively demystified by the punk assault, which brought to rock a new degree of self-consciousness and an unprecedented impulse to reconstruct the dominant premises of the music from within.
6. There is much that is compelling in this version of punk and its place in rock history. Yet it is ultimately too sweeping, too decisive in its acknowledgment of punk’s powers of negation. In this light, my concern with Motörhead and the interplay between metal and punk in the late 1970s has less to do with the mechanics of generic crossover and is motivated more by an observation made by Simon Frith in his book *Performing Rites*. Considering the relationship between musical genre and social life, Frith posits that “genre analysis must be, by aesthetic necessity, narrative analysis. It must refer to an implied community, to an implied romance, to an implied plot” (90–1). For Frith, the narrative qualities of genre are most importantly connected to matters of everyday sociability, to the sort of ordinary pleasures and person-to-person social bonds that popular music makes possible. I think his insight also has significant value for assessing the historical narratives that are constructed around popular music, and for rethinking historiographic assumptions about the music and its development. A particular conception of punk has figured prominently in the formulation of the late 1970s as a major turning point in rock history. Recasting the narrative of the punk moment as a story of metal and punk in dialogue is, in turn, a way of challenging the effects of that moment upon the subsequent development of rock and of questioning the extent to which it constituted a point of rupture in the broader rock narrative.
7. When the first version of Motörhead was formed in 1975, Lemmy had been making his way in the British rock scene for a decade. He had joined his first band of note, the Rocking Vicars, in 1965, at the height of the British beat music phenomenon. In the years

that followed, he played for a more psychedelically oriented ensemble headed by a southeast Asian figure named Sam Gopal, and had a fabled tenure working on the Jimi Hendrix road crew. During these years, his involvement with London's drug culture deepened. Although he had an appreciation for LSD, Lemmy became one of the most visible speed users on the scene. He also became part of an extended circle of freaks occupying London's west side, where a more hard-bitten version of the counterculture had taken root. Mick Farren, a writer and musician who headed one of the more confrontational British bands of the late 1960s, the Deviants, was another part of this circle; Farren would go on to co-write a handful of songs with Lemmy during the latter's tenure with Hawkwind and with Motörhead. Out of the ashes of the Deviants, in turn, would arise the Pink Fairies, a band that began life as the "Pink Fairies Motorcycle Gang and Drinking Club," dedicated by Farren's account to "the most raucous after-hours fun we could devise" (250).

8. In 1971, Lemmy was invited to join Hawkwind through his connection with Dikmik, a member of the band who specialized in generating unusual sound effects with a range of electronic instruments. Like Lemmy, Dikmik was into speed, and the two had bonded in their mutual affinity for sleep deprivation before Lemmy had joined the band. Previously a guitarist, Lemmy only began to play bass when he entered the Hawkwind fold, a fact that no doubt accounts for his extroverted approach to the instrument. During the next four years, Lemmy would figure prominently in Hawkwind as the group's own fortunes rose significantly. Known as a group who would never pass up a chance to play at a free festival or underground political event, Hawkwind nonetheless carried their odd mix of science fiction lyrics, electronic effects and heavy metal textures into the British charts and also developed one of the most extravagant stage shows then running. Lemmy offers a rich description of a Hawkwind concert in his autobiography:

Hawkwind wasn't one of those hippie-drippy, peace-and-love outfits—we were a black nightmare! Although we had all these intense, coloured lights, the band was mostly in darkness. Above us we had a huge light show—eighteen screens showing things like melting oil, war and political scenes, odd mottoes, animation. The music would just come blaring out, with dancers writhing around onstage and Dikmik shaking up the audience with the audio generator. (81-2)

Out of this maelstrom of sound and image, Lemmy began to attract attention as one of the band's key personalities, which may well have contributed to his dismissal as intra-band power dynamics solidified. A 1975 profile of the bassist in *New Musical Express*, printed just prior to his departure from Hawkwind, presented Lemmy as a figure who dedicated his energy to personifying a stereotype of the rock and roll outlaw. Journalist Tony Tyler was dubious of Lemmy's commitment to such an image, not because of any doubts regarding his conviction but because he deemed the image itself to be exhausted. By Tyler's account, Lemmy regarded the street outlaw as a "Romantic Figure—and you can tell RFs by the way they dress most of all. Hence the leathers and the Iron Cross and the long lank hair and the prized relationship with the Hell's Angels." Sure enough, the photograph accompanying the article pictured Lemmy in said leather outfit astride a Harley Davidson that, according to Tyler, was borrowed from a friend. Such were the

lengths to which Lemmy would go, said Tyler, to ensure that his image matched the romantic ideal to which he aspired.

9. In a sense, then, Lemmy was already considered a bit of a throwback before he had ever gotten around to forming Motörhead. His initial choice of bandmates did little to dispel such notions. Although Lucas Fox was an unknown quantity, Larry Wallis was a figure bound to ensure that Lemmy remained connected to his recent past. Wallis had previously spent two years as guitarist and singer for the Pink Fairies, in which band he had replaced Paul Rudolph—who, in 1975, was to replace Lemmy as the bassist for Hawkwind. Such musical chairs was hardly surprising given the tight relationship between the Fairies and the ‘Wind, which was succinctly described by British rock historian Pete Frame: “During the early seventies, both Hawkwind and the Pink Fairies developed their reputations as bona-fide hippie house bands. . . . When the two bands played regular gigs together there was invariably a Pinkwind set . . . a big din session at the end of the evening bashed out by those still able to stand up!” (25). As similar as the two bands were in performance, though, the Fairies had been a tighter unit on record, at least on the sole album they had made with Wallis on hand. *Kings of Oblivion* was a powerhouse album of early 1970s hard rock, with few psychedelic trappings. Driven by the guitar-bass-drums trio of Wallis, Duncan Sanderson and Russell Hunter, it was closer in sound and conception to what Motörhead would become than the bulk of the music that Lemmy had recorded with Hawkwind. One of its songs, “City Kids,” would become a key feature of Motörhead’s early playlist.
10. As integral as Wallis was to the early sound of the band, neither he nor Fox were long for the group. The first months of Motörhead’s existence, from late 1975 into the middle of 1976, were far from auspicious. On the live front, one of their earliest gigs opening for Blue Öyster Cult drew some resoundingly negative reviews and put a stamp on the band that lingered for some time to come. Picking the band as one to watch for 1976, *Sounds* writer Geoff Barton, who would become one of their most vocal champions, noted that Motörhead had been tagged “worst band in the world” on the basis of that show, though he tried to make the case that the band were not in fact that bad (“Picked to Click” 5). Briefly interviewed by Barton, Lemmy offered a provocative early description of the band as “a horribly mutated cross between the music of the MC5, Hawkwind and Grand Funk Railroad.” The Michigan brand of heavy rock was clearly a significant point of reference for his ambitions with the group. Getting their mutated sound on record proved for the time a challenge. Motörhead was quickly ushered into the studio by United Artists, the label for which Hawkwind had recorded. They recorded a full album’s worth of material under two producers, changing drummers in the midst of the sessions, with Phil Taylor replacing Lucas Fox. The resulting album was a stillborn affair, though. United Artists refused to release it, and Motörhead was left to spin its wheels. Shortly thereafter, Wallis would quit the band following an audition by guitarist Eddie Clarke, who was intended to join Wallis as a second guitarist. As Lemmy recalled the event, “we carried on as a three-piece until we found Eddie Clarke . . . and wound up carrying on as a three-piece anyhow” (Kilmister 109).

11. While the early career misfortune faced by Motörhead was far from encouraging, it did contribute to a key tenet of the band's mythology: its association with the archetypal "loser." In some ways an extension of Lemmy's fascination with the romanticism of the outlaw, the "loser" stood for the bassist as a terminal outsider, always at the bottom of the social hierarchy, always fighting against the odds for any success he might achieve. "Born to Lose" became a veritable motto for Motörhead from its earliest days, and the loser motif would reach a sort of apotheosis for the group with their 1980 release, *Ace of Spades*, the symbolism of which Lemmy explained by referring to "the loser thing again. Born to lose. It just defines us really—take something as a loser as your motif then it can't get any worse!" (Needs, "The Carnival Carnivore" 24). When British punk began its ascent to public consciousness in 1976, this predilection for losers was part of what brought Motörhead sympathy from some adherents of the music. Whereas so much heavy rock seemed enthralled with images of power and mastery, Motörhead's outlook was tempered by something almost like humility, or at the least a sense of the ordinary that made the band seem far more grounded than many of its contemporaries.
12. The hard-luck status of Motörhead also led the band to rely on the growing network of British independent labels to release their music for the first several years of the band's career. Given that the motivation for such reliance was a failed deal with the established United Artists label, it is safe to say that Motörhead went to the independents more out of opportunism than principle. When Lemmy and his bandmates finally signed a deal with Sony in 1990, there was little sense of compromise, only a sense that after fifteen years the band had moved a coveted notch higher on the music industry totem pole. Nonetheless, the group's early history of releases offers a snapshot of the function played by independent labels during the late 1970s, as well as the range of labels then working to produce new music.
13. Assessing the state of independently released rock music in 1979, Paul Morley and Adrian Thrills made a claim for the importance of the Buzzcocks and their first self-released EP of three years previous, *Spiral Scratch*. By their account, *Spiral Scratch* exerted a far more "practical" effect upon the shape of British rock than the more celebrated efforts of the Sex Pistols and the Clash, demonstrating not only that one could successfully promote and distribute a record through independent means, but also that "small" labels were the best vehicle for music on the leading edge of rock (23). Challenging the nostalgia that had already grown around the punk moment of 1976, the two writers called that earlier phase a "false start," and asserted almost dogmatically that "the true concerted, subversive revolution ... happened in late '78, early '79 ... and is still happening" (26). This "true" revolution involved the broadening of access to the means of musical production amongst figures who were as much involved with the passion and creativity behind the music as with the business of making records. It also involved the further demystification of the role played by record labels and their intermediaries and a diminishing belief amongst many adherents of punk that the larger corporate labels could be effectively used to further their own ends.
14. In 1976, few associated with punk would have put forth such a stringent statement in favor of independent companies. Of course, in 1976 there were also hardly any punk

records about which to be stringent, at least in England. American punk groups had not put particular stock in following an “independent” path where making records was concerned; bands such as the Dictators, Ramones, and Patti Smith may all have pursued artistic visions that highlighted their individuality, but they hoped to bring their visions into the wider marketplace with all the assistance they could gather. As has been widely noted, many of the early British punks felt similarly. Despite their often confrontational rhetoric, the Sex Pistols showed little hesitation in signing with the various labels under which they recorded, including corporate behemoth EMI.² The Clash, meanwhile, struck a deal with CBS Records that they would be driven to defend repeatedly as the matter of releasing records independently became a more politicized matter. Indeed, it was the example of the Clash that perhaps most figured, in a negative way, into the construction of an ideological framework that cast the independent label as a linchpin of punk praxis. For many, the band’s political vision, predicated on a strong critique of the British social and economic system, suggested a path of resistance to dominant structures that was partly undermined by their willingness to work under the auspices of a large corporate concern. Members of the Clash, in turn, argued that independent labels did not have sufficient reach, and that to record for one of the smaller labels that had emerged in connection with British punk would have been to limit their audience and their message to the already converted.³

15. While the two most prominent bands of British punk tested the prospects of working with larger, more established labels, it was left to the Damned to release the first full album associated with the genre in early 1977 on the independent Stiff. *Damned Damned Damned* was a raw if uneven burst of Stooges-inspired rock and roll, produced in a suitably close-to-the-bone fashion by Nick Lowe, formerly of the rootsy pub rock band Brinsley Schwarz. Seeking to get his own recording career back on track, Lowe would also become something of a house producer at Stiff, a role that would yield particular dividends in his work with another up-and-comer, Elvis Costello. Meanwhile, in the heady days of 1976 and 1977, Stiff was perhaps the most punk-identified label then running, as much due to the attitude with which they went about the business of making records as due to the music they issued. Typical of the Stiff approach was an advertisement run in the May 14, 1977 issue of *New Musical Express* promoting a series of shows by label artists the Damned and the Adverts. “The Damned can now play three chords,” proclaimed the copy, and “the Adverts can play one”—this latter bit an obvious reference to the Adverts song, “One Chord Wonders,” then available as a single from Stiff. Readers were encouraged to “hear all four of them [chords, that is]” by catching the two bands on tour (Stiff Records). Evoking the influential injunction first carried in punk fanzine *Sideburns*—“This is a chord. This is another. This is a third. Now form a band”—Stiff portrayed its groups’ lack of musical technique with humor but also with the conviction that this lack was an appealing feature marking punk’s departure from widely held ideas concerning the value of expertise in the sphere of rock performance (Savage, *England’s Dreaming* 280).
16. Stiff was the first label to release—as opposed to record—a record by Motörhead. “White Line Fever,” backed with a cover of the Holland-Dozier-Holland song “Leaving Here,” was issued as a single in the first months of 1977. “Fever” was also included on a

compilation assembled by the label, *A Bunch of Stiffs*, which brought the song and the band to wider notice and placed them alongside artists such as the aforementioned Costello and Lowe. Reviewed in *New Musical Express* by young punk scribe Tony Parsons, *A Bunch of Stiffs* served largely as an occasion for the writer to note changes that had taken hold at Stiff, which had recently signed a distribution deal with Island Records, thus impinging on the label's "independent" status. When he got around to commenting on the music, Parsons found it much to his satisfaction, and praised Motörhead's contribution as a "straight-ahead rocker ... with a great Lemmy production" and lyrics that played upon the ambiguity of "white lines" as a metaphor for both drug use and for being on the road. Further consolidating their connection to the punk side of Stiff's recording roster, Motörhead would also play a show with the Damned in April of that year, beginning a long-standing affiliation between the two groups that would at one point even involve Lemmy filling their bass position for a while (Kilmister 120).⁴

17. The association between Motörhead and the Damned would far outlast that between Motörhead and Stiff; they had only signed to the label to record a single. Another British independent, Chiswick, would take up the responsibility of releasing the first Motörhead album. Not quite as squarely identified with punk as Stiff, Chiswick was nonetheless one of the pathbreaking labels of the era. Started by record collector and record shop proprietor Ted Carroll and his partner, Roger Armstrong, Chiswick was initially formed to capitalize on the momentum of the British pub rock scene, which prefigured punk in its emphasis on high-energy rock and roll and small-scale live shows meant to encourage a tight bond between performer and audience. Among the first records produced by the label was a single by the 101ers, a key pub rock group fronted by Joe Strummer, soon of the Clash. Carroll was a dedicated maverick who perceived his operation to provide a much-needed alternative to major label channels, arguing in a 1976 interview that "the first shoe-string label to score a hit will scare the shit out of the majors. You see, we're straight off the streets and are more in touch with what's happening than all those expense-account A&R men" (Carr 27). Such convictions may have underestimated the capacity of the major labels to co-opt the efforts of their smaller counterparts, but they contributed to the aura of Chiswick as a label that took its independence seriously. The credibility of Chiswick can be gauged from the fact that the final issue of the pivotal punk fanzine, *Sniffin' Glue*, included a celebratory three-page survey of the label's release history by the zine's founder, Mark P (Perry).
18. That piece found the writer acclaiming Motörhead's eponymous album in unqualified terms: "The best 12 inch ever released and the most relevant ever released" (9), an opinion reiterated in less inflated terms by Danny Baker in the same issue: "*Motorhead* IS POWERFUL. Headshakig [*sic*] madness, heavy, loud, we all love Motorhead, don't we" (26).⁵ The Motörhead album released by Chiswick was effectively a reworking of the album they had recorded for United Artists. Roger Armstrong remembered that, "Lemmy had an acetate of the album that they had made with Dave Edmunds and that UA had decided not to release. He played it for Ted and then came over to the Soho market stall and played it to me. Ted and I agreed that UA were right" ("Punk '77"). Feeling that neither the production nor the performances on the UA tracks properly captured the group, Carroll and Armstrong arranged for two days of studio time with producer Speedy Keen, a

rock veteran who had earlier fronted Pete Townshend protégés Thunderclap Newman. Intended to produce a single, Motörhead instead tore through the backing tracks for eleven songs, and convinced Carroll that they should proceed with making a full album. The finished result largely duplicated the track listing of UA material, with three songs carried over from Lemmy's tenure with Hawkwind, most notably the band's namesake song.

19. In their vitriolic overview of punk, *The Boy Looked at Johnny*, Tony Parsons and his partner in crime Julie Burchill devote a chapter to the connection between drugs and rock music. Towards most drugs they have a wholly dismissive attitude, but one substance draws their approval: amphetamine, or speed, "the only drug that makes you sit up and ask questions rather than lie down and lap up answers." Speed was by their account a "useful" drug, a "threatening" drug, and above all an "essentially *proletarian* drug," as was evident by the central role it had played amongst Mods in the 1960s and amongst punks a decade later (72–3). "Motorhead," a song that Lemmy had written during the final phase of his tenure with Hawkwind and from which he had taken his new band's name, is perhaps the ultimate rock and roll ode to speed. Indeed, the very term is "American slang for speedfreak," as Lemmy has noted (Kilmister 99). Fittingly, it is the opening track of the Chiswick album and sets the pace for the music to come.
20. "Motorhead" opens with six bars of Lemmy playing unaccompanied bass, a gesture he would repeat many times over the course of his band's career. The tone of his instrument is brittle, harsh, and heavily distorted; former bandmate Bob Calvert's observation that Lemmy "played his bass like a rhythm guitar" is here very much in evidence (Frame 25). He strikes a musical figure that centers on the key of E, the booming note of the bass' bottom string alternating with its higher octave, which briefly gives way to a D–D-sharp–E sequence that adds a touch of tension but maintains the insistence and rapid tempo of the throbbing E. Phil Taylor's drums enter in bar 3 as light tapping but assume greater volume and presence up to the last bit of Lemmy's intro, at which point the two are joined by Eddie Clarke's guitar, which follows the pattern set by the bass and fills out the sound to even greater levels of distortion. Lemmy's use of a distorted bass tone in tandem with Clarke's overdriven guitar was a key to the band's distinctive sound; to a significant degree it effaced the sonic distinction between the two instruments and heightened the overall impact of their attack, making it seem as though the band was always operating at maximum output.
21. The verses of "Motorhead" relinquish the chromatic pattern of Lemmy's opening bass riff for a more basic two-chord shift between D and E. Another chromatic move occurs during the bridge, however, where the bass and guitar quickly move up the neck from C to B to B flat to A beneath two lines of lyric; a third line of the bridge cuts the sequence in half, involving only C and B; this third line sets the stage for the chorus, where the presiding E is reasserted. The bridge, where the song's harmonic structure is most unstable, is also where Lemmy's lyrics most address the effects of the amphetamine rush. For the first bridge, he "can't get enough/and you know it's righteous stuff," while in the second bridge he offers to "have another stick of gum," a reference to the teeth-grinding that so often accompanies a dose of speed. In the final bridge, he announces that "I should be tired, but all I am is wired"—this last word shouted forth—before concluding he "ain't felt

this good for an hour.” Between verses two and three, “Fast” Eddie Clarke issues a guitar solo that eschews elaborate melodic invention in favor of pentatonic runs that remain tightly hemmed in by the song’s compressed harmonic structure. Midway through the solo, Clarke strikes his low E string and then apparently scrapes the strings of his guitar against a microphone stand, creating an effect of sheer noise that carries into the rest of the solo, which is marked by thick chord textures and double-stops that are as much rhythmic as melodic devices. Through the combined effect of music and lyrics, “Motorhead” put forth an unrelenting torrent of sounds and verbal images that effectively captured the extreme psychic state of the song’s subject.

22. Reviewing *Motörhead* in *Sounds*, Pete Makowski not only raved but laid down the gauntlet in assessing the album’s significance. Calling the album “vinyl’s answer to the neutron bomb,” he further asserted that “THIS IS THE REAL THING,” a distillation of riffs and volume with no melodic subtleties or keyboards to get in the way. He continued: “Stripped away of all the frills, the band have that stance that people like Rotten are always talking about. Let’s face it, you couldn’t see Lemmy sitting behind a desk working regular hours, this guy’s a natural road clone.” This suggestion that Motörhead significantly overlapped with the punk phenomenon carried into a subsequent features on the band. Geoff Barton, whose penchant for heavy metal would figure prominently in reviving the genre’s fortunes later on, considered Motörhead primarily a representative of that genre. After all, not only did they have a pronounced affinity for volume and distortion, but the band’s members all sported long hair, leather and denim, clear stylistic markers of the metal crowd. “So howcum,” he asked, “they have a strong, fashion-conscious punk following?” (“Motörhead”).
23. The motley nature of Motörhead’s audience also caught the attention of Kris Needs, the *Zig Zag* editor who had turned the long-running zine’s attention away from the 1960s and towards the new wave. In the first of several profiles he would write on the band, Needs observed that “it isn’t really COOL to like Motörhead ... They ain’t Punk Rockers (Roxy stance definition) ... I s’pose if Heavy Metal Rock’s got a definition Motörhead play it—how it should be played (at head-bangin’ overkill level)” (“Motörhead” 20).⁶ For Needs, then, Motörhead was a quintessential heavy metal unit; like Makowski he is drawn to the way the band strips the genre down to its basic elements and plays those elements for all they’re worth. But like Barton, his perception slightly shifts when confronted with the composition of the group’s audience, which he terms a “veritable crossover.” Interviewed by Needs, Lemmy confirmed this sense that the band drew an unusually broad assortment of types to their shows: “We get everyone, disillusioned Hawkwind people in plimsolls [*sic*] and greatcoats, a few punks, ... it’s good you know. If somebody gets off I don’t care if he’s got a bald head and a bolt going through it” (21). Needs, in turn, affirmed Lemmy’s acceptance of stylistic heterogeneity, noting his own weariness with “punk gigs where everyone has to wear their little uniform and you get frowned on cos you ain’t got one too” (21). Writing in late 1977, at a time when punk style had become more rigorously codified in England than it had been at its inception, Needs viewed Motörhead as an antidote to the musical partisanship that seemed to have taken hold over the scene. They were a crossover, a band whose own stylistic premises were

more open than most.

24. Which is not to say that Motörhead was open to all comers. For one thing, Lemmy had in common with some involved in the punk scene one of the less savory qualities: an affinity for the swastika and other emblems of the Third Reich. Many interpretations have been offered for the punk appropriation of these symbols. In his now-classic analysis of punk, *Subculture*, Dick Hebdige argued that the swastika was “worn because it was guaranteed to shock,” further claiming that it “had been wilfully detached from the concept (Nazism) it conventionally signified” and used to “deceive” an uncomprehending public about the motives of the wearer (116–17). Updating Hebdige’s analysis, Jon Savage goes further in situating punk uses of the swastika within the divided racial politics of punk, which contained both racist and anti-racist factions, and also makes more of the symbol’s utility in questioning the innocence of England in the rise of fascism (*England’s Dreaming* 241–3).
25. How applicable these arguments might be to Lemmy is difficult to determine. His own affinity for the symbol was more than likely stimulated at least in part by its prevalence within the biker subculture that long preceded punk, where it was used as a marker of outsider status that also bespoke a fascination with the iconography of power. In his autobiography, he attributes it more to his fascination with World War II and its effects, which perhaps due to his age (he was born at the end of 1945) he perceived with an immediacy lacking in his younger counterparts (Kilmister 220). Interviewed by Chris Salewicz in *New Musical Express*, Lemmy spoke critically of the neo-fascist National Front and claimed that his display of Third Reich symbols was meant as a joke, adding that “if there were Nazis around today I’d be in the concentration camp immediately” (19). Yet there remained something unsettling about his stubborn insistence to continue sporting such emblems at a time when racism was very much on the rise in British political life. Like many of the punks who gravitated towards the swastika, Lemmy may well not have intended to convey racist beliefs. If he meant his use of it to be a joke, though, he had to have been either naive or insensitive to the fact that for many it was no laughing matter.
26. Ultimately more salient to Motörhead’s importance was another feature as likely to aggravate as to attract: the band’s aggressive use of noise, in the form of volume and distortion, the effects of which were heightened by the quickened tempos at which the band played. Anyone who has paid attention to the genres of heavy metal or punk knows how much both rely upon forms of sonic disturbance and how often that reliance has made them subject to bitter criticism for their deviation from certain received standards of “good music.”⁷ As generalized as these tendencies have been, Motörhead was a band uniquely subject to either devotion or derision on the basis of the noise they generated. Reviewing one of the group’s concerts in late 1977, Paul Sutcliffe captured something of the way in which excessive volume in particular figured into the band’s impact. Sutcliffe himself was overwhelmed by the sound of Motörhead to the point of discomfort. When the band began its set his first response was that “it was very loud;” and as the set progressed he noted that they continued to get louder with each song, to the point where he judged the band “as loud as the First World War if they’d crammed the whole thing together and held it in

a telephone booth. In fact,” he finally had to admit, “IT WAS TOO BLEEDIN’ LOUD!” For Sutcliffe, the volume obliterated all other features of the band’s music. Yet what he found truly confounding about the experience was the response of the audience, members of which routinely complained aloud that the music wasn’t loud enough, prompting Lemmy and company to continually increase the volume. Concluding his review, Sutcliffe stated his admiration for Lemmy’s “unpretentious” onstage manner and for the band’s capacity to energize a crowd, but was left to observe that “the vibe between Motörhead and their audience is all about being loud to the point where you wonder whether hearing aids just became this week’s chic.”

27. Similar perspectives on Motörhead were to surface repeatedly over the years, though the value attached to the band’s preoccupation with volume above all would fluctuate considerably from one commentator to the next. Representative of the negative side was Deanne Pearson’s 1979 review of a Motörhead show, in which she described the band as “three heavies who pulverise their instruments with the volume full-up trying to disguise that they’re ... regurgitating meaningless, empty guitar hammering and drum-bashing.” Meanwhile, reviewing a show some months earlier, in late 1978, Neil Norman assessed Motörhead with an ambivalence more in keeping with the views of Paul Sutcliffe. For Norman, a Motörhead concert was a sort of showdown between what he termed “Everyponter” and the band, who shared a penchant for long hair and denim but were separated by the latter’s capacity for using decibels to devastating effect. Breaking into their namesake song was termed a “below the belt” gesture for the critic, who observed that “After that there is no contest. The audience, which has doubled by now is quickly brought to its knees and finally stomped over.” Such sonic excess was clearly not to Norman’s taste, but he is moved to acknowledge a grudging respect for the band’s approach: “Nothing can stop them and for that at least I admire them. Dinosaurs they may be, but right now they’re unique, they know it and they’re not going to go away.” The musical extremes that Motörhead pursued were for Norman thus representative of the band’s tenaciousness; almost like cockroaches, they were built to weather whatever resistance they faced from critics or audiences and to continue playing as loudly as possible.
28. Volume was no doubt the main musical reason that Motörhead was so readily classified as heavy metal. One might recall Robert Duncan’s claims regarding the “loudestness” of metal as a core defining feature of the genre (39), claims upon which Robert Walser has expanded to illuminating effect. Walser’s discussion of volume in connection with metal also can help to shed light on why Motörhead’s use of volume went a bit against the grain of the genre’s conventions as they existed in the 1970s and might have aligned the band with certain features of punk. According to Walser, “loudness mediates between the power enacted by the music and the listener’s experience of power ... the music is felt within as much as without, and the body is seemingly hailed directly”(45). Such a characterization goes some way towards explaining how volume worked to seal the bond between Motörhead and its audience, for whom the band’s willingness to continually “turn it up” conveyed their commitment to a particularly extreme sort of rock and roll experience.

29. Walser also notes that metal uses of amplification often rely not only on volume as such but volume in association with other sonic qualities such as echo and reverb that create a sense of expanding aural space, “making the music’s power seem to extend infinitely” (45). On this point, Motörhead deviated from the practice established by such bands as Black Sabbath and Judas Priest, the latter of whom were roughly contemporary with the band. Not that Motörhead never supplemented their sound with echo or reverb. But the pace of their music, the rapid tempos that forged well ahead of those pursued by the metal bands of the era, inhibited the sense of vastness in their sound. The basic rhythmic and harmonic tool of heavy metal, the power chord, relies not only upon elements of timbre and volume but also, in a crucial sense, upon time and tempo; power chords often sound most powerful when they are allowed to sustain, to remain suspended in time, and it is these moments of *sustained power* that create some of the most readily identifiable generic effects of heavy metal. Motörhead’s music has few such moments. The chords they played were steeped in sonic power, but those chords were played at a pace that made them seem more to crash into one another than to build infinite layers of echoing power. Lemmy’s distinctively distortion-laden bass sound also comes into play here, for the illusion of space created by heavy metal relies in large part on a sense of depth in the music that arises from the contrast between the jagged, trebly timbre of the guitar and the throbbing, relatively clean sound of the bass. Eliding the sonic difference between bass and guitar, Motörhead collapsed the space between the two instruments to a considerable degree. Their music was all rushing distorted surface, and the power generated by the music was not so much undermined by the band’s speed as it was continually threatening to outpace itself.
30. Supplementing these qualities of Motörhead was another quality alluded to in the foregoing reviews, especially that by Deanne Pearson: the band’s supposed lack of technical skill, which made their music sound not just loud but painfully loud, cacophonous, lacking in melodic or harmonic distinction. The members of Motörhead often vigorously contested such charges, with Lemmy in particular always ready to defend his capabilities and the capabilities of his bandmates. Yet the song structures and guitar solos that marked the band’s music were not designed to showcase virtuosity in the manner of other late 1970s hard rock and metal bands such as UFO, Rainbow, or Thin Lizzy. In this the band could be compared to many of the punk bands of the time who did not so much refuse the acquisition of musical technique as question the uses to which that technique was put. Motörhead had one key distinction from their punk counterparts in this regard, however. Especially in England, for many punk bands the questioning of musical technique was attached to the relative youth and inexperience of the musicians; the “uncooked” sounds of punk were meant to signify a generational act of reclamation, as young bands asserted their right to play over the valorization of virtuosic technique that had taken hold in various spheres of rock since the late 1960s. As more seasoned musicians, the members of Motörhead did not pursue their brand of noise with such an age-based agenda. They were not rebelling against the rock and roll past so much as bringing some of its buried elements to the surface. As such, in the words of metal critic Martin Popoff, they could be considered “the first grunge rockers, being the first who could actually play, but chose to stink up the place” as a deliberate gesture (295-6).

31. *Overkill*, Motörhead's second album, distilled the band's elements with new focus and consistency. Released in early 1979, the album came out at a time when British punk had entered something of a hangover period following its initial rush. British metal, in turn, was on the verge of a period of renewal that was shaped in part by the growing interchange between metal and punk. Heavy metal had not been fully washed away during the height of enthusiasm for punk, but it had been put on the defensive, at least in print. Judas Priest, arguably the most influential metal band to emerge during the punk era, was the object of some attention and no small degree of ridicule during these years. The members of Priest were typically diplomatic in their appraisals of the surrounding punk phenomenon, though they also took a line that became standard in metal appraisals of punk over the next decade, noting appreciation for the punk attitude while expressing condescension regarding punk musical abilities.⁸
32. For critics who had devoted themselves to the transformative ideologies of punk, however, assessing a band like Judas Priest was like entering into an alien sphere. Such were the attitudes of writers Paul Morley and Jon Savage, two of the more astute and stringent advocates of punk, who each took up the challenge of Priest with considerable hesitation and skepticism. Morley portrayed attendance at a Judas Priest concert as an experience akin to being "an atheist amongst fervent believers ... it is all very religious ... It's a bewildering ritual of call and mass response." For Jon Savage, it was the Priest album *Killing Machine* that presented the challenge of how to get past his own critical biases.⁹ Admitting that the codes of Priest's music were unknown to him, Savage spent much of his review musing on the band's apparent leather fetish, which brought "gay biker associations" to the surface, requiring the members of Priest "to be even straighter than usual" to avoid the wrong message ("Play Doughty"). Savage was hardly the first critic to note traces of homoeroticism running through Priest's image, but his accompanying refusal to give their music due attention was indicative of the ideological divide that metal provoked. His only way to escape wholesale dismissal of the band was to make them the basis of a rather stock problem: "do 'the people' want what they get, or will they accept more than they're usually given?"
33. These attitudes towards metal would hardly go away by 1979, but with punk's momentum receding, bands like Judas Priest and Motörhead were to be cast less as throwbacks than as standard-bearers. In this transitional context, Motörhead's tendencies toward crossover between metal and punk would become paradigmatic, and *Overkill* would solidify the group's boundary-crossing reputation. The release of the album was overseen by yet another record label, Bronze, with whom Motörhead would stay for the next several years. Founded by industry veteran Gerry Bron, Bronze was an independent label with a less well-defined image than Stiff or Chiswick but with a decided track record in marketing heavy metal through Bron's long-standing association with genre stalwarts Uriah Heep. Meanwhile, the producer of *Overkill*, Jimmy Miller, was a rock and roll veteran of a different stripe, having famously collaborated with the Rolling Stones on a celebrated string of albums during the late 1960s and early 1970s that culminated in the 1972 release of *Exile on Main Street*. That album had found the Stones sinking into the murky, stirring depths of their blues influences with a low-fi ambience that conveyed the tone of a convincingly unsteady drug trip. With *Overkill*, by contrast, Miller fleshed out

Motörhead's sound with impressive clarity and maximized the band's propulsiveness while capturing a sense of dynamics from the group lacking in their previous recorded work.

34. As on their debut album, the opening track of *Overkill*—also titled “Overkill”—was a genuine pacesetter. “Overkill” opens with a remarkable burst of drumming from Phil Taylor, belying the notion that this was a band lacking in technical mastery. Taylor’s drum riff at the opening and throughout the song makes use of a double bass drum, which produces a pounding bottom end played at a tempo that well exceeded anything on Motörhead’s debut.¹⁰ After a couple bars of unaccompanied drumming, Taylor is joined by Lemmy’s buzzing distorted bass, which has much of the character displayed in the opening to “Motorhead” but is played much higher on the neck to better separate itself from the bottom-heavy approach of the drums. As was becoming customary, Eddie Clarke enters the song last, establishing that unlike many heavy rock bands, Motörhead was a group ruled by its rhythm section.
35. “Overkill” was also in keeping with the established style of Motörhead in that it was structured around minimal chord changes. Rather than three-chord rock, Motörhead specialized in two-chord rock; their harmonically confined structures were made to intensify their songs’ rhythmic effects. Clarke and Lemmy build interlocking two-chord patterns throughout the verses of “Overkill,” turning the basic musical gesture of moving from one chord to another and back again into a fulcrum of sonic tension. This highly concentrated set of riffs is in keeping with the song’s lyrical content. As “Motorhead” had portrayed the rushing intensity of speed, “Overkill” depicted a comparably intense sort of experience, located not in drugs but in the onslaught of the band’s music. In the manner of the MC5’s “Kick out the Jams,” “Overkill” is an explosive *piece* of rock and roll about the explosive physical *impact* of rock and roll. Lemmy’s lyrics are concise but descriptive: “On your feet you feel the beat, it goes straight to your spine/Shake your head you must be dead if it don’t make you fly.” The song’s chorus, which involves the repetition of the title word, is the one moment at which a bit of release is offered from the churning velocity; the band eases (relatively speaking) into a set of more standard chord changes, and Taylor’s drumming temporarily assumes a less unrelenting cast. But following the last of its three choruses, “Overkill” goes into overdrive, with Eddie Clarke playing a frenetic solo as Taylor and Lemmy locked into a merciless groove. Seeming to end on a final decaying power chord, Taylor restarts his drums and Lemmy repeats his introductory bass riff not once but twice, leading to two false endings and two further thirty-second iterations of distorted flurry before “Overkill” at last released its grip.
36. Considered as a whole, *Overkill* the album was viewed by more than one critic as leading the way toward a new degree of interchange between punk and metal. Geoff Barton, by that point well entrenched as a staunch ally of the band, put the case most emphatically. Satirically assuming the stance of an outraged listener writing a letter of complaint regarding the offensiveness of the album’s content, Barton’s review managed to observe through the satire that “I’ve heard talk of this album being the first true HM/punk crossover,” and further claimed, “playing this LP on my Bang and Olufsen with the volume turned down, even the so-called ‘silent’ grooves between the tracks register 90

db's on my noise meter!" (Review of *Overkill*). Joining Barton in this judgment was John Hamblett, whose *New Musical Express* review deemed *Overkill* "the definitive Heavy Metal album," but went on to proclaim that "the only things that stop this being on par with *Never Mind the Bollocks* are a few rather misguided slow moments and the indisputable fact that at least two-thirds of Motörhead are older and uglier than the Pistols were." Motörhead did not wage war with the mythology of rock to the degree the Pistols did—the band was, rather, steeped in a version of that mythology, evident in Lemmy's continuing infatuation with the outlaw stance. As a strictly sonic phenomenon, however, the band upended some of rock's prevailing conventions as effectively as any of their peers. Fusing residual psychedelia with rhythmic drive and excessive volume, forsaking virtuosity for sonic density, Motörhead created a heavy rock aesthetic that was to wield considerable influence in the ensuing decade.

37. Just two months after he published his review of *Overkill*, Geoff Barton issued the first installment in his widely influential series of articles for *Sounds* documenting the "New Wave of British Heavy Metal" ("If You Want Blood"). Coined by Barton's editor at *Sounds*, Alan Lewis, the New Wave of British Heavy Metal—or NWOBHM, as it would become clumsily abbreviated—soon assumed significance well beyond its function as a journalistic catch phrase. New heavy metal bands began to proliferate at a dramatic rate in the UK, and the audience for the music grew accordingly. Perhaps even more striking was the concurrent development of a new breed of independent record labels devoted to the genre, which included Neat, Ebony, and even Heavy Metal, many of which had a distinctly underground cast in the styles of metal they sought to promote. While Motörhead had effectively stumbled into their alliance with the independent labels for which they recorded, now British metal was showing signs of having absorbed the punk emphasis upon independent production. Musically, too, the influence of punk was apparent. Many new bands pursued varieties of metal in keeping with leading lights of the genre such as Judas Priest, Rainbow and Black Sabbath, but others played in a faster, coarser style, with songs that were, if not significantly tighter in construction, at least shorter and more compact than listeners had come to expect from the genre. Talk of metal/punk crossover, which in the preceding years had been limited to Motörhead and a handful of other bands, became almost commonplace in the years 1979–83, when NWOBHM held sway.
38. Unsurprisingly, the fortunes of Motörhead were notably altered during these years. Although they would remain a minority taste in the U.S. for years to come, Motörhead became a bona fide star attraction in their native England. *Ace of Spades*, released in late 1980, reached the number four position on the British charts, a feat the band topped with their next album, the live *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith*, which hit the top of the charts. Reflecting this success, Motörhead swept through the 1980 *Sounds* readers' poll, winning first place honors for best band, best album (for *Ace of Spades*), and best single (for the title song from that album). Individually, Lemmy took the top spot in the poll for his bass playing—and the number two spot as male sex object—while Phil Taylor placed third among drummers and Eddie Clarke seventh among guitarists ("*Sounds* Readers' Poll"). The stylistic fusion promoted by Motörhead had found its audience.

39. Though rarely considered as such in histories of punk, metal/punk crossover became one of the defining features of the immediate post-punk era in British popular music. Many at the time considered the generic union unlikely, but it was in some regards bound to happen. As Deena Weinstein asserted in her sociological analysis of heavy metal: “The heavy metal and punk subcultures are the two dominant examples of youth attempting to create and hold onto their own distinctive and unassimilable culture” in the aftermath of the 1960s (109). Metal and punk gave rise to contrasting aesthetic and stylistic values in pursuit of this goal, but in the crucial years of the 1970s remained connected by an underlying similarity of motivation. When punk “broke” in England in the key years of 1976–77, metal seemed poised to go into remission. Instead, it emerged revived, due in part to the efforts of a band like Motörhead, who, despite their own ambivalence towards the heavy metal genre, offered an early and influential example of how metal power and volume could be blended with punk speed and a sense of the ordinary.¹¹ Meanwhile, the status of Motörhead as a proto-crossover band in the midst of the definitive punk explosion also reveals some rarely acknowledged dimensions of that charged rock-historical moment. Many of its most influential chroniclers have presented punk as a veritable “all or nothing” proposition in which the stakes were as high as the continued viability of rock itself. However, for many and perhaps most of those affected by punk, it was another in a range of options and styles. Motörhead represented the less purified side of punk, a side that needs to be taken into account to show the full range of practices to which punk gave rise.

Endnotes

1. Of course, racial crossover has figured significantly in popular music scholarship, though less so in the scholarship on genre. Jason Toynbee does include a section on “crossover” in his analysis of genre in *Making Popular Music* (119-122). Even though the discussion of crossover occurs under the rubric of genre, however, Toynbee’s approach to the topic demonstrates a fundamental point: that even though racial crossover has clear generic dimensions to it, with genres coded as “white” and genres coded as “black” often coming into contact, discussion of crossover in terms of race tends to leave genre itself as a secondary consideration. Thus does Toynbee tend to concentrate on the relationship of crossover artists to racial communities, on the one hand, and patterns of racialized performance and belief on the other.

2. Whether the Sex Pistols pursued their various deals with EMI, A&M, and Virgin out of a desire for deliberate sabotage, hoping to subvert the usual business workings of rock from the inside, remains very much a matter of interpretation. Jon Savage, author of the monumental study of punk and the Pistols, *England’s Dreaming*, would certainly claim as much, and did so in several articles written during the era for the British weeklies *Sound ds* and *Melody Maker*. No doubt there is some significant truth to this perspective. Malcolm McLaren’s managerial strategy was markedly confrontational, and he was able to use the publicity surrounding the band’s various dealings to bolster their image as renegades who refused to be contained by the decorum of the music industry.

3. Interviewed in 1978, for instance, Strummer asserted against critics of the band: “Listen, we want to reach a lot of people. If we’d put our own label together we’d have only reached a few

hundred or maybe thousand people. What's the good of that when you're trying to be realistic about these things?" (Kinnersley 8).

4. Lemmy can be heard on the Damned's cover of Sweet's glam rock classic, "Ballroom Blitz," which is included on the compact disc reissue of the Damned's third album, *Machine Gun Etiquette*. For a review of the April 1977 show that paired the two groups, as well as the Adverts, see Savage, "Damned: A Piece of Cake."

5. It should be noted that Mark P. concluded his Chiswick survey with a statement of despair that prefigured the demise of the zine, the editorship of which he had already abdicated: "This whole piece was an exercise in 'how to bore the pants of [sic] you while reviewing records that you've probably already heard or got.' Writing is for cunts who are scared to show their faces. ... That's why the GLUE should stop stop right now."

6. The "Roxy stance definition" is a reference to the Roxy, a club opened in December 1976 that for a brief time was the primary subcultural space in London for live performance of punk. By many accounts, the Roxy quickly became overrun by the dictates of subcultural style; it was a space where the founding spontaneity of punk was transformed into a set of codes that were to be followed in order for one to merit the "Punk" tag. For a critical appraisal of the Roxy written at the time of the club's brief existence (it was effectively shut down in May 1977), see Burchill and Parsons, "Fear and Loathing at the Roxy." For a historical appraisal by someone who was present at the creation, so to speak, see Savage, *England's Dreaming*, 300–1.

7. A recent collection edited by Washburne and Derno, *Bad Music*, includes several essays that address the social and cultural function of distinguishing between the good and the bad in the sphere of musical judgment, including one essay each on the genres of punk and metal. In the opening essay of the collection, Simon Frith refers to one manner of response to "bad" music involving "anger at music being played *too loud*," which he notes is a reaction motivated not by "volume as such ... but the feeling that someone else's music is invading our space, that we can't listen to it as music ... but only as noise, as undifferentiated din" (32–3). Such was the response engendered by Motörhead in many critics of the band, as will be shown below.

8. A characteristic comment was made by Priest singer Rob Halford in a 1977 interview: "Punk to me is rock ... I saw the Sex Pistols and I got something from the band when I saw them ... If anything I would say that ... our music is like an advancement of their music, because their rock is basic and so much more direct" (Doherty 35).

9. This album would be released in the US under the title of *Hell Bent for Leather*.

10. Taylor discussed his use of the double bass drum setup in a 1979 article in *Sounds*. Gary Cooper, author of the article, noted Taylor's technical proficiency as a drummer in that article, observing that "Phil talks about drumming theory with a knowledge and expertise which I've only ever previously encountered in people like Phil Collins and Bill Bruford. It's that old Motorhead story all over again," he continued, "The band *looks* like the aftermath of a Moorcock demolished London ... but, in fact, Phil, Lemmy and Larry have years of experience and considerable ability" (46).

11. It should be noted that even at the height of their popularity among metal fans, in the early 1980s, Lemmy and his bandmates were never entirely comfortable with the heavy metal designation. In an article accompanying the *Sounds* 1980 readers' poll, for instance, both Lemmy and drummer Phil Taylor expressed their reservations about the tag. Taylor complained that metal "always seems so slow and ponderous," a characterization affirmed by Lemmy, who stated his preference for MC5-style hard rock (Millar 29). To my mind, such concerns on the part of the band do not invalidate their association with heavy metal, but only serve to confirm the extent to which genre is never an entirely closed system of meaning.

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