



# MUSICOLOGY AND MUSIC TECHNOLOGY WITH DR JAN HERBST AND DR MARK MYNETT

## ACTIVITIES

## TALKING POINTS

### KNOWLEDGE:

1. When did the quest for greater heaviness in metal music begin?
2. What are musicology and music technology? What are the main differences between the two?

### COMPREHENSION:

3. Why is studying heaviness in metal music production an important thing to do?

### APPLICATION:

4. How might Jan and Mark's research benefit the wider metal community? In what ways might people benefit from the project?

### ANALYSIS:

5. What do you think of the complexity of genres and subgenres? Can you see why it is important to some people that they are able to define a particular subgenre that they feel they are part of?

### EVALUATION:

6. Jan mentions that a career in musicology may not be for people who are interested in a 9-to-5 job. What are the pros and cons of an academic career that is fairly loose in terms of its structure? Is this the type of career that appeals to you? Give reasons for your answers.
7. Mark studied popular music production at university while also working as a self-employed record producer. Why would a degree in music production open up opportunities that may not otherwise be available?

- How would you categorise metal music? Listen to some of the artists mentioned in the article and see if there is anything that unifies them. Is there anything that is different?

- Try to untangle a song's composition, performance and studio production. How do they relate to each other regarding how 'heavy' it sounds? A particular heavy song is Gojira's (2008) 'The Way of All Flesh': [open.spotify.com/track/50KILz18Z4of7xt0Fge2PU?si=wDnljbuQDStmPX1uNdgZw](https://open.spotify.com/track/50KILz18Z4of7xt0Fge2PU?si=wDnljbuQDStmPX1uNdgZw)

- Plan a 30-minute lesson to guide your class through Jan and Mark's research. Your lesson must include the reading of the article and some form of assessment to enable you to judge the classes' understanding/opinion of the research.

## TAKE PART IN JAN AND MARK'S RESEARCH PROJECT!

As part of their research project, Jan and Mark have composed a metal song that features contrasting subgenres: doom, symphonic, thrash and modern extreme metal. To access this song, visit: [doi.org/10.34696/9s05-wv03](https://doi.org/10.34696/9s05-wv03). Click on 'Download' under 'Access Dataset' on the right. This dataset will be updated with other materials, too, such as videos.

- 1) Have a go at mixing Jan and Mark's song to explore the concept of 'heaviness'.

In class, as a group or individually, you will need to:

- Import the audio files into a digital audio workstation (DAW) and listen to the individual tracks
- Set the relative levels for all the drum microphones, then all of the other instruments and performances
- Distribute the instruments in the virtual space (left/right in stereo field, foreground and background) to help prevent some instruments masking others
- Manipulate the frequency content of each sound source, to enable a favourable relationship between the lows, mids and highs of each
- Control the dynamics of instruments and vocals with compression
- You may also need to automate volume levels, pan positions, frequency and dynamic content, and effects levels to adapt the mix to changes in various aspects of the performance.

For help with this task, read Mark's guide to mixing metal: [www.soundonsound.com/techniques/mixing-metal](https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/mixing-metal)



Or, for a more comprehensive read on the subject of mixing and mastering modern metal music, Mark's *Metal Music Manual* was the world's first on the subject: [www.routledge.com/9781138809314](http://www.routledge.com/9781138809314)

*Sound on Sound* also offers a guide to mixing music: [www.soundonsound.com/techniques/mixing-essentials](http://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/mixing-essentials)

2) If you enjoyed this activity, have a go at producing a second mix that differs from your first. Reflect on the general aesthetic appeal and the heaviness of both mixes.

- a) Did one approach work better than another? Why?
- b) Did you manage to produce greater 'heaviness' but a less appealing song? What attributes need to be balanced? And how does each instrument/voice contribute to heaviness?
- c) What are the challenges of balancing a large number of instruments? Explain why making each instrument sound good on its own may not achieve the best results or the best quality when played with all other instruments.

Professional metal music producers also reflect on their mixes, which involves making technical and aesthetic decisions.

3) Mark has written several feature articles for the popular *Sound on Sound* magazine. Read through some of them and see whether you could apply some of the techniques to your own mixes!

[www.soundonsound.com/search/all?terms=mynett](http://www.soundonsound.com/search/all?terms=mynett)

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Jan and Mark's project will result in the creation of a range of educational resources. However, Mark has already produced some explainer videos that should prove informative and interesting. You can view one here: [tinyurl.com/2cf54k2z](http://tinyurl.com/2cf54k2z)

And there is an entire playlist here: [tinyurl.com/hczprb](http://tinyurl.com/hczprb)

## METAL MUSIC CROSSOVERS

1) Can other popular music genres be 'heavy' too? Think about the music you like to listen to and determine whether you think there are aspects of 'heaviness' to them.

Listen to the following artists. Do you think they are achieving greater heaviness by crossing over into other genres? Could crossing over into other genres be a way for metal bands to achieve greater heaviness? Explain your reasons. Please be aware that some songs contain expletives, which may not be suitable for some audiences.

- **Metal with electro crossover:** Korn, Architects, Animals as Leaders, Asking Alexandria, Monuments, Kill II This
- **Electronic dance music with metal crossover:** Skrillex, The Algorithm, Downlink, Excision, Gallego, Gengis Tron, Gautier Serre, Whourkr
- **Hip hop/trap with metal influences:** Ghostemane, Scarlxrd

2) This website provides recorded songs from all genres (including metal) that can be mixed for educational purposes: [www.cambridge-mt.com/ms/mtk/](http://www.cambridge-mt.com/ms/mtk/)

Have a go at mixing a song from another genre. Is there an element of heaviness in your song, and can it be manipulated using the same techniques used in metal music?



Live performance of Kill II This