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## **Report on the international scientific seminar *Nordic Metal Music Seminar II*, Kitee, Finland, 13–15 September 2021 (online)**

Nordic Metal Music Seminar II took place between 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of September, 2021. It was the second edition of the event initiated by Anna Svetlova, PhD student from Jagiellonian University, and previously organized in town of Kitee, Finland. Originally, it supposed to take place in Finland again but it was held online due to pandemic. It was organized by Ethnomusicology Studies (University of Eastern Finland), Faculty of Polish Studies (Jagiellonian University in Krakow), International Institute for Popular Culture (University of Turku). The last organizer, but definitely not least, was Kitee International Music and Art Festival (Finland).

The second edition was focused on specificity of Nordic metal music, its scene and musical practices. Analyzes were conveyed through the lens of various academic perspectives, including cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, film studies, literature or historical studies, among others. Scholars who took part in the event represented renowned academic institutions from various countries, such as Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Turkey, Finland, the UK, United States, and tend to cover both particular cases and wider tendencies in historical and contemporary Nordic metal music and culture.

Each day of the event was opened by the keynote speaker. The first day was introduced by the lecture of Toni-Matti Karjalainen (Finland), called *Northern Tunes: Journey of Finnish Heavy Metal into the World*. It was devoted to the questions of growing scene and rising popularity and recognition of Finnish metal as a phenomenon strongly rooted in the changes of the globalization age. Dr. Karjalainen's research covered the development of the Finnish metal from 1980s to 2010s, explicitly describing its way from an underground scene to key ingredient of Finland's country brand.

The first panel focused on symbolism, mythology and ideology of Nordic metal. Dr. Janos Fejes analysed mythological traits in heavy and extreme metal lyrics. His massive quantitative research described themes of songs as well as their reception. Qian Xie (United States) focused more on visual aspects, such as band logos, costumes, images, and pointed out undoubted importance of Finnish national epic – Kalevala.

Charlotte Doesburg (United Kingdom) tracked careful and historically accurate depiction of The Great Finnish Famine in the lyrics of a folk metal band Hiidenhauta.

The second day was started with another keynote speech, called *All of a Sudden, the Thing You Love Is Taken Away from You. Comparing COVID-19 Related Attitudes of Metal Fans and Other Festival Goers*, only this time presented by two scholars: Maarit Kinnunen and Antti Honkanen (Finland). Their sociological analysis tends to understand differences between metal fans and other festival goers, their approach to post-covid festivals and epidemic restrictions. They considered such aspects as sex, age, marital status, education and economic situation.

There were two presentations delivered during the second day's panel. The first one, by Agnieszka Kiejziewicz and Piotr Wajda (Poland), was connected to metal film biopics; scholars considered them as a separate, though controversial genre, and analysed its crucial factors based on example of Lords of Chaos – biography of legendary Norwegian black metal group Mayhem. Black metal was also the main point of Ondrej Daniel's (Czech Republic) speech, as he talked about reception of Nordic black metal in Czech and Slovak far-right movements that he believed is an important example of politicization of social life in post-Soviet Central-Eastern Europe.

The last day of the seminar was also the most intense one, as it contained a keynote speech, two presentations, and a discussion afterwards. Aila Mustamo from the University of Turku presented her speech *Between Vikings and the Nanny State – Identity, Modernity, and Metal in the Nordic Countries*. She focused especially on black and folk metal and marked the important relationship between metal and Romantic ideas that often neglect modernity as an ideological concept and lifestyle. Dr. Mustamo also examined complicated connection between Finnish identity and welfare state as well as the impact of economic condition on rebellious artistic practises.

Ceren Gürseler discussed the specificity of Norwegian metal culture. She highlighted significant elements that created Norwegian imaginary in terms of aural and visual aspects. She also mentioned interesting examples of a huge popularity of a genre, such as black metal tourism and seminars about black metal. Dawid Kaszuba prepared case study related to Swedish band Ghost and the way band juxtapose two contradictory discourses of pop and metal. He reconstructed binary definition of metal as oppositional to pop and tended to present how Ghost undermines these dichotomies musically, visually, and ideologically.

This year's edition was not restricted only to purely academic research. That is because the event was closed with the discussion between Nordic metal musicians: Johannes Eckerström (Avatar), Suvimarja Halemtoja (Humavoid), Josh Rood (Nexon), and Niilo Sevänen (Insomnium). The discussion, led in a smooth manner by Kimi Kärki from University of Turku, covered variety of topics connected to contemporary Nordic metal, such as gender inequality or usage of Nordic elements. It contained interesting diagnoses of Nordic heavy music's success (governmental support and creative atmosphere) and ideas for the future perspectives of the genre that, according to some of musicians, has recently experienced fading of "Nordic metal boom". The conversation allowed participants to compare theoretical

perspective with practical one and supplied academic analyses with their artistic approach.

Despite many restrictions the online event gathered large audience of both scholars and fans of Nordic metal and allowed for international contact and cooperation. Not only the presentations were delivered with high quality but also the discussions addressed important and inspiring themes as well. The wide range of topics from various academic grounds enabled to build interdisciplinary research on Nordic Metal as a phenomenon that is embedded in musical, visual, cultural, social, and historical grounds, to name just a few. The second edition definitely showed that Nordic Metal Music Seminar becomes more and more prominent and recognizable event in the world of metal music studies that is able to combine perspectives of academics, fans, and musicians.