

26 April 2006

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[Headbanging, Heavy-Metal and Anthropology](#)

In depth "anthropological" study over the heavy-metal subculture

Sam Dunn, anthropologist and heavy-metal fan, made a switch six years ago from studying Guatemalan refugees to making his own documentary film about the long-haired, leather-clothed, bike-ridden generation of rockers. "Metal: A Headbanger's Journey" is the film's title, the result of five and a half years of in depth participative study. In just a few weeks it will be shown in Los Angeles, Houston and Salt Lake City, while at the end of May the DVD shall be released. Dunn and director Scott McFayden had as a purpose when making the movie the deconstruction of multiple stereotypes governing public imagery about heavy-metal culture. The musical style together with the fans' attitude gave birth to numerous preconceived ideas that finally led to an isolation from the mainstream. Violent, satanic, filthy, drunken - these are the adjectives usually attributed to subculture members. Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest or Slayer are some of the names known to the whole world for aggressive guitar riffs and not-so-innocent lyrics, and to the ones from within the heavy-metal way of life as promoters of a deep-feeling-inspiring music. Sam Dunn, who is the main narrator and also stars in the movie, has been himself part of the culture since he was a teenager. This gave him the chance of using methodological instruments such as direct participation into the analyzed community's life, the most "fashionable" anthropological study method at the moment. The research gave him the opportunity to have a somehow more objective perspective upon the phenomenon - more objective than a Slayer-obsessed teenager, and also more objective than a 70-year-old blaming the anti-religiousness and riotness of those filthy long-haired Satanists. The documentary becomes a way of calling attention on an issue misunderstood for a long time and isolated by the mainstream culture. As society evolves towards a more tolerant perspective upon differences between people, the movie seems to be the right thing at the right moment. As for Sam Dunn's future plans, the film is only the beginning! Afterwards, he will get back to "headbang" over his PhD thesis. The subject topic is, of course, heavy metal again!