

SONIC SIGNATURES IN METAL MUSIC PRODUCTION TEUTONIC VS BRITISH VS AMERICAN SOUND

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Abstract

Popular music studies have seen a rising interest in what could be called »sonic signatures« or »signature sounds«. Based on previous research involving interviews with influential German producers, this article explores sonic signatures of German, British, and American metal. Producing pastiche mixes of the same multi-track recording, each modified to match the characteristics of a national sonic signature, allows for a comparison of these signatures as applied to both the full arrangements and their individual parts. Such an approach further considers practical challenges that real-world mixing and mastering engineers face when crafting music with specific sonic signatures in mind. The findings suggest that the same source material can be modified to create unique sounds as per the mixing engineer's vision. In metal's formative years sonic signatures were more distinct due to the smaller number of bands, producers, and studios. The capabilities of modern production tools, the shift from recording to mixing, and wider access to production knowledge have resulted in a multitude of signatures within and across countries and cultures, making it harder than ever to characterise national signatures in metal music.