

The Eastern Voice

Volume 27, Issue 1
October 2014

Upcoming dates to keep in mind...

January 9, 2015: Deadline for submissions to the 2015 EASA conference.
February 1, 2015: Nominations for Spring inductions into *Epsilon Alpha Kappa* due.
March 27-28, 2015: EASA Conference at Rowan University.

In this issue...

Heavy Metal in Academia _____	1
The Belsano Job _____	3
From the Editor's Desk _____	4
1964 New York World's Fair _____	5
Epsilon Alpha Kappa _____	6
New Errands Call for Submissions _____	6
2015 EASA Call for Papers _____	7

Heavy Metal in Academia? An Interview with Dr. Jeremy Wallach about Studying Metal Around the World

Dr. Jeremy Wallach, graduate of University of Pennsylvania and Associate Professor of Popular Culture at Bowling Green State University, has spent the last two decades becoming an expert in the study of popular and heavy metal music. In his interview, Dr. Wallach considers the endurance of metal and its influence on world politics, explains the importance of origin stories in the genre, and highlights some bands for newcomers to the genre.

After publishing his first book, *Modern Noise, Fluid Genres: Popular Music in Indonesia, 1997-2001*, Dr. Wallach has edited a collection of essays entitled *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World*. He organized the first International Heavy Metal conference in the United States at Bowling Green State University in the spring of 2013, and has presented at many ethnomusicology and cultural studies conferences around the world. Earlier this year, Dr. Wallach published a chapter titled "Indieglobalization and the Triumph of Punk in Indonesia" in *Sounds and the City: Essays on Music, Globalisation and Place*, and

co-edited a special issue of *Asian Music* on popular music in Indonesia with Dr. Esther Clinton.

I know from attending the Heavy Metal and Popular Music conference that this is a somewhat contentious issue, but in your expert opinion what was the first 'real' American heavy metal band? Why are the origins of metal so important, both to fans and scholars?

Very contentious indeed! In a recently published article, Deena Weinstein found the earliest mention of "heavy metal" to describe a kind of music was back in 1970, but really the genre didn't coalesce into a self-conscious discursive formation until much later. Metalheads of our time tend to exclude American hard rock bands like Van Halen, Aerosmith, and Kiss from the metal canon even though these groups were considered quintessential heavy metal bands at the time of their initial popularity, bestowing the honor of inclusion only to post-1980 American metal bands (mostly ones on the extreme end of the spectrum). Despite this, Steve Waksman

has argued persuasively that the earliest form of what we now call “heavy metal” was early 1970s arena rock, and by that logic the first American heavy metal band should be Grand Funk Railroad. It seems ludicrous now, but they really were considered a heavy metal group by rock critics in the early 1970s!

As for what I think, well, I don’t really have an “expert opinion” here, since I’m not a rock historian. Origins are extremely important for fans and many different kinds of scholars, but as an anthropologist, it’s the arguments people have (or don’t have) about origins that interest me. What is striking in this case is the overwhelming consensus that heavy metal as we know it today had a British, rather than an American, origin, and that that origin was Black Sabbath.

What is it about metal that allows it to be both increasingly popular worldwide, and continually feared or denigrated in mainstream media coverage?

This is difficult to answer succinctly. Metal provides its listeners with empowering experiences of transgression and deals with troubling issues that the rest of society tends to want to avoid. The music and its culture traffic in taboo images, sounds, and language, and exhort fans to think for themselves and question received doctrine. Thus its threat to established authority is obvious and not always trivial, especially in cases where the music appeals to members of a population subjected to enforced conformity and unjust treatment. It isn’t the case that metal is always vilified in the popular media. In countries where it primarily appeals to educated middle-class listeners it gets a great deal of positive attention, too. But often the music is targeted because it is seen as a threat to social order instead of as a response to already existing social tensions; in other words, it makes a convenient scapegoat.

What accounts for metal’s global popularity? Lots of things, no doubt, but among them is the simple fact that it’s compelling. Metal music, while relatively obscure in the US right now, has never been more vibrant and diverse on a global scale, and it continues to conquer new territory in regions like the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. No corporation is driving this. There must be something about the music.

What led you to the study of metal in a transnational context? Was there much scholarship when you began research for your first book on the topic?

I was initially intrigued by the question of how metal and other rock music genres were interpreted in other parts of the world. I went to Indonesia with that question in mind, armed with the small number of academic studies on metal that had been done at that point. These were all really influential; they included books by Donna Gaines, Robert Walser, and Deena Weinstein. I also read

Harris Berger’s *Metal, Rock, and Jazz* while I was in the field, an extremely valuable text. Unlike some metal scholars I know, I actually read the rock and jazz parts of the book instead of skipping around and just reading the metal sections! While I was doing my fieldwork I also discovered the research of Keith Kahn-Harris, the most important metal scholar of my generation, and began corresponding with him.

How does your background in anthropology inform the way in which you approach the study of popular music?

I have always taken an ethnographic approach to the subject, basing my interpretations on what people say and how they act. My aim has always been to investigate the subjective meanings of music to the people who perform, listen to, and talk about it. In more recent writings I have allowed myself to extrapolate a bit from my own experiences as a fan; some in the field call this “autoethnography,” but I must admit I strongly dislike this term.

In your book *Modern Noise, Fluid Genres*, you closely examine the impact of globalization on the popular music of Indonesia and Southeast Asia. How is American metal influenced by globalization of music from other cultures?

Heavy metal, like rock music itself, is inherently transnational. As my co-editors and I point out in *Metal Rules the Globe*, it emerges more or less simultaneously in the UK, Australia, and the US. Since then, US metal bands have also been decisively influenced by sounds, visual styles, and performance conventions of bands from Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland, among other places. That list is bound to grow considerably in the near future.

How would you respond to skeptics who argue that metal (and other “low” forms of contemporary popular music) is unimportant to study because of its lack of artistic merit or perceived historical impact?

Both of these contentions are unsustainable. With regard to artistic merit see question # 2 above. As for historical impact, metal may be one of the most historically consequential styles of music in modern history. We are still learning about the surprisingly significant role heavy metal fandom played in the collapse of communism in the 1980s and 90s, metal was also a part of the movement to overthrow the Indonesian dictator Soeharto in 1998 and is the music of choice of that country’s incoming democratic reformer president. Argentinian heavy metal bands sing of that country’s years under military dictatorship, just as many Latin American bands sing of their countries’ struggles. The contemporary politics of European national identity are being

played out in the folk metal style, while Norway and Finland earnestly promote heavy metal music as lucrative cultural exports. I could go on, but you get the idea.

What emergent areas in metal or popular music as a whole, do you think deserve additional critical attention from scholars?

The field is wide open. So much needs to be done it's hard to know where to begin. I'll say one thing: if you're an aspiring metal scholar and you like the newer styles, we need you! Almost nothing has been written about "-core" groups, a result of the fact that most metal scholars are over 25.

Can you recommend a band to check out for those who are new to the genre, but have an interest in exploring international metal bands?

Chthonic from Taiwan, if you're willing to dive in the deep end...Honestly, it's hard to "get" metal unless you have a place to start from, which is going to depend on what kinds of music you're already familiar with. And, of course, some people never develop a taste no matter how much they're exposed to it. If you like dance music, you might like Ministry; if you like prog rock, you might like Iron Maiden or Gojira; if you like jazz, you might like Meshuggah; if you like classical music, you might like Epica. In general, though, it's a good idea to expose yourself to rock music first, especially if all you're familiar with is country and post-1990 hip hop (much pre-1990 hip hop, on the other hand, has a raw energy similar to metal). Bands like Pink Floyd, Nirvana, Led Zep. Metal tends to require gateway bands to access.

- Anna O'Brian, Penn State Harrisburg

The Belsano Job

Nearly 90 years to the day, the small town of Belsano, Pennsylvania saw its most notorious event: the theft of thirty-three thousand dollars in payroll money from the neighboring Edensburg Coal Company. Working in conjunction with a group of robbers waiting at the concrete bridge near Belsano, two men (who had gained passage at a previous stop) stormed the room where Joseph Davis and James Garman were guarding the payroll safe. Garman was fatally wounded in the attack, allowing for Davis to be overcome by their attackers. With the help of the thieves' outside accomplices, the group made off with the safe in a getaway vehicle. Two weeks later, after a multi-state search for the group of bandits by the State Police, police apprehended two men, Anthony Pezzi and Michaelo Bassi, in Terre Haute, Indiana. In combination with the two men's flimsy alibis, Pezzi and Bassi were found to be carrying guns and nearly \$3,000 dollars in cash...enough evidence to have them extradited to Pennsylvania to stand trial. According to popular legend, the two men became the 141st and 142nd men to die by the electric chair on February 23, 1925. According to their death certificates, Michaelo Bassi and "Toni" Pezzi were executed on September 21, 1925 by means of legal electrocution by the Western State Penitentiary.

Most of the money and the safe have never been recovered. For fun, geocachers have placed a small 50 caliber ammo box off the tracks of the abandoned C&I Railroad near the site of the train robbery. Local lore claims the original safe is still located near the site of the robbery, so lucky geocachers may find more than they bargained for!

- Christie Briley

MISCHIEFED MANAGED

As a born and bred East Coaster, I know that 'trick-or-treating' often does involve more trick than treat. As tradition holds, the night before Halloween is deemed 'Mischief Night' where [most often] teens go out to raise a ruckus. According to the Department of Statistics at Kentucky State University, for Americans Mischief Night (also known as Devil's, Goosey, Hell, or Gate Night for our neighboring states), is solely an East Coast phenomenon. With its modern origins in Oxford in the late 1700s, it was brought across the pond as a way for children and youths to perform fun pranks before a holiday. It was later connected with Halloween (believed, in part, due to the shift in rural to city dwelling), and, as I was taught growing up in a Polish family from New Jersey, was a way to warn wary spirits intent on doing harm that more was to come the following day.

The actions taken during Mischief Night can vary from neighborhood to neighborhood allowing for an intriguing take on an old tradition. Luckily, most teens stick with the modern traditions of TP'ing houses and egging cars! Messy, to be sure, but all in good fun.

- Christie Briley, Penn State Harrisburg

From the Editor's Desk

There's a chill in the air, the pumpkin patches are burgeoning, the farmers reap their harvests, and Halloween attractions are opening for spooky business. All of that can only mean one thing...fall is here!

With Fall comes another exciting year of American Studies in the Eastern region. If you are looking for culture, you have come to the right place. Culture, after all, is our business. In this issue of *The Eastern Voice*, you will find information about all sorts of cultural events, past and present. In particular, please take a look at a fascinating piece on the 1964 World's Fair penned by Christie Briley, student editor of *The Eastern Voice*. And since our field has made its "Transnational Turn," we at EASA thought the timing was right for an exploration of American culture overseas. With this in mind, Anna O'Brien has conducted our "newsmaker interview" with Dr. Jeremy Wallach, who has written a book on the role of American heavy metal music in foreign countries. Special thanks to Christie and Anna for these articles and their work on this newsletter.



I also want to direct your attention to the "Call for Papers," which tells you all about our coming conference – and how you can participate. This coming spring, we will be holding our annual conference at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. For this event, we are working closely with Emily Blanck, coordinator of Rowan's American Studies Program. I am also pleased to report that we will be partnering with the Middle Atlantic Folklife Association (MAFA) – hopefully to generate, in William Blake's words, a "fearful symmetry." So please read the Call and consider sending in a proposal. We hope to see you in Glassboro!

Last, I urge you to pay special attention to the article on the Honor Society. It explains exactly how talented American Studies undergraduates can – for the first time in our field's history – receive this form of recognition. Should you have any questions, Anthony Buccitelli, President of *Epsilon Alpha Kappa*, will be happy to field your queries.

In closing, I urge you to get involved this year, to create fresh knowledge, and to never forget our motto or fail to carry out its awesome mandate: *Enjoy Culture!*

Sincerely,
Dr. John Haddad
American Studies, Penn State Harrisburg

Peace Through Understanding: The 1964 New York World's Fair

April 22, 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of the last New York World's Fair. While the fair was not officially sanctioned by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), it is considered one of the more innovative fairs to have been put on. The 1964 New York World's Fair was dedicated to "Man's Achievement on a Shrinking Globe in an Expanding Universe" and featured a wide variety of international and national achievements. As its tagline indicates, many of the technologies on display were the precursors to the technology we use today to stay connected around the globe "shrinking" the distances it takes for information and people to travel. Space travel, amid the great Space Race, was also prominent in at the New York World Fair. Most notable of all, fair goers were able, for the first time, to interact with computer technology. In honor of the world fair that helped to shape modern travel and consumer electronic needs, we spoke with futurist and American Studies scholar Dr. Charles Kupfer of Penn State University, about the World's Fair.

As an American studies scholar, how do you think world's fairs incorporated an American outlook on the future, especially when the fairs were located on American territory?

I think there's something fetching and refreshingly innocent about the very notion of capturing the zeitgeist in a built-environment way. I mean, if you think about it, the world is as it is. What did they say about Christopher Wren & London? 'If you seek his monument, look around you.' Well, the British certainly went in for fairs, and of course the Americans did, too. The fairs were confident, upbeat, disdainful of the negative Nancies who always want to play the doom/gloom/blame game. Were they artificial? Well, duh! But they were FUN, that's the point. Popular entertainment, aimed at the public, intended to give them a laugh or two, and to teach them a thing or two. Of course, there are folks in academe who think that the way to handle the public is to point fingers and indict. But nobody listens to those downers. These fairs might not have been accurate indicators of what was to come, but they sure were accurate indicators of what the regular folks liked!

For the 1964 New York World's Fair, scientific and sociological predictions weren't the only interesting attractions as Walt Disney incorporated and perfected his Audio-Animatronics into the exhibits. This technology, which was initially introduced on a small scale a year previously in Disneyland, were later widely used in his theme parks. This is probably my favorite aspect of the fair. What type of exhibit and/or attraction would have had your interest?

If I went back, I'd love to see the international pavilions. I'm an intellectual historian with an international bent, and I'm very interested in the ways other places present themselves and are received by Americans. That has always been protean, and -- like the fairs -- very constructed, even artificial. It would be great to see how Mussolini's Italy wanted to show itself off, or how the Dutch wanted New Yorkers to see the Netherlands during the Thirties.

I'd love to walk the Midway Plaisance in Chicago, 1894. There is a photo of "Dahomian Cannibals." Of course this is awfully colonialist and rife with difficult racist overtones. But to see these subjects of European colonialism as the grandfathers of those who won national independence? That would be my approach.

Since I grew up before animatronics were retro, I'd be right at home with the 1964 stuff. I was alive then, you know. But just barely!

And finally, if there was a world's fair today, what type of exhibits do you think would be included? If literature and popular culture is to be believed, many people have grim views of the future. Do you think this outlook would impact the potential exhibits in the modern world's fair?

I don't think they could pull off a Fair today. People would need flash-boom-bang special effects, and the political pressures might be insuperable: "What about showing this instead of that? How to portray these people and those people? Are there enough, proportionally? Is it respectful? Is it too triumphalist? Blahblahblah. Sounds boring already. But maybe the thing I'm getting at is this: The United States, in all its glorious messiness and confusion, IS a World's Fair. It's here. We live in it, and we can enjoy it if we're of the right mindset. I do.

I would like to thank Dr. Kupfer for his fantastic responses! - Christie Briley

Epsilon Alpha Kappa, American Studies Honor Society: Looking for New Members!

In the Fall of 2011, EASA piloted the first American Studies honor society – *Epsilon Alpha Kappa*. These Greek letters stand for “excellence in the study of American culture,” and the first cohort of students met the high standard implied in the name. The society welcomed over 30 students from six different institutions. This year, we would like to add more institutions to the Honors family. If you are teaching at a college or university with an American Studies program, please get in touch with the president of the society – Anthony Buccitelli of Penn State Harrisburg (abb20@psu.edu). He will go over the ropes with you, and let you know how your program can become involved.

Students wishing to join *Epsilon Alpha Kappa* must meet several requirements. Though a complete list of requirements can be obtained by contacting Dr. Buccitelli, the most salient of these concerns are GPA and scholarly/creative work.

Students must achieve a minimum GPA of 3.4 in courses relating to American Studies and must submit a piece of research or creative work assessed as “excellent quality” by an induction committee (consisting of three professors) from the student’s campus. After paying the induction fee (\$25), the student will receive both an official certificate and a red, white, and blue honors cord to be worn at graduation. The student will also have the option of being inducted into the Society at the annual EASA conference, and his or her name will be published in the EASA Newsletter – *The Eastern Voice*.

Honors students are also encouraged to submit works of scholarship to our journal, *New Errands*, which is dedicated to undergraduate research. This academic journal is edited by Anthony Buccitelli and is published twice each year. Though many submissions come from our region,

the journal in fact welcomes research papers from any American Studies undergraduate student living anywhere in the country – or anywhere in the world.

We have one additional aspiration for the Honor Society. Our hope is that on individual college campuses, *Epsilon Alpha Kappa* might evolve into something more than just a means to recognize distinction in American Studies. Students and faculty associated with the society might come together to organize American-Studies themed events. For example, one might imagine honors students working in conjunction with a faculty member to schedule field trips, to invite guest speakers to campus, and to organize trips to conferences. So as you consider bringing *Epsilon Alpha Kappa* to your program, please consider its full potential as a possible bringer of community.

New Errands: The Undergraduate Journal of American Studies

The Eastern American Studies Association and the American Studies Program at Penn State Harrisburg are pleased to announce the debut of a new website for *New Errands: The Undergraduate Journal of American Studies* and the publication of our Fall 2014 issue. The new website, which features both the new issue and an archive of our previously published issues, can be found at: <http://journals.psu.edu/ne/index>.

New Errands is also currently seeking submissions for our Spring 2015 issue. We encourage both self-submission by undergraduate students and nominated submissions by instructional faculty. Essays must have an Americanist focus, but can employ a variety of disciplinary methods. Submissions can be emailed as Word documents to newerrandsjournal@gmail.com or submitted directly through our website. Our author guidelines and submission procedures can be found here: <http://journals.psu.edu/ne/about/submissions>.

The 2015 Annual Conference of the Eastern American Studies Association

Title: The 2015 Annual Conference of the Eastern American Studies Association

Theme: Land and Sea – Geography, Economy, and Culture in the American Experience

Date: March 27-28, 2015

Venue: Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

Partner Organization: Middle Atlantic Folklife Association (MAFA)

EASA will be partnering in 2015 with the Middle Atlantic Folklife Association to hold a joint conference bringing together cultural perspectives on “Land and Sea: Geography, Economy, and Culture in the American Experience” and other aspects of American, folklife, and heritage studies. The location of this year’s meeting – Rowan University in New Jersey – provides a vantage from which to view diverse features of the Eastern United States. Looking to the east is the Atlantic Ocean and the famous “Jersey Shore.” Although many people know the “Shore” for its popular entertainments, beauty contests, and gambling, it also has a longstanding maritime folk culture, including the craft of the renowned Jersey Skiff, in addition to the east of the “Pine Barrens” that attracted studies of its residents known as “Pineys” by the American Folklife Center. To the west is the Delaware River and the Philadelphia

metropolitan area. Glassboro, the home of Rowan University, is historically connected to early American manufacturing – the renowned “Glass Works in the Woods” that has led some scholars to view the Delaware Valley as the cradle of American industrialism. Yet southern New Jersey is also known for being a leading producer of fresh fruits and vegetables, including cranberries, blueberries, tomatoes, and escarole/endive. The varied landscape facilitates identities often by occupational and recreational communities. Evidence of its crossroads reputation is the Glassboro Summit in 1967 between President Lyndon Johnson and Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin, with the Glassboro site chosen because it is equidistant between New York and Washington, D.C.

Against the backdrop of this geographic crossroads, the program committee invites papers, forums, and sessions that explore the connections of geography, economy, and culture in the American experience. The committee is interested not only in historical and cultural analyses of social adaptation to the landscape but also in organizational efforts to interpret, conserve, and enhance community identities, public heritage, and folk traditions. These studies need not be limited to New Jersey – they can include the Atlantic World. In sum, this conference will explore the local, regional, and global patterns and exchanges that contribute to the distinctive eastern American mix of land and sea. As always, EASA is open to papers and panels on any topic of American Studies, including those which do not fit under the conference theme.



Submission Guidelines

Individual Papers: Send a short abstract (no more than 500 words) and a brief CV or resume of no more than two pages.

Full Panels: Send a cover sheet with the title of the panel, the names of each participant, and the titles of their presentations. Include a short abstract of each paper (no more than 500 words) as well as a CV or resume of no longer than two pages for each panel participant.

All materials should be sent to Christie Briley at czb5178@psu.edu before **January 9, 2015**. Graduate students whose proposals are accepted will be encouraged to submit their final papers electronically several weeks prior to the conference if they wish to be considered for the Simon J. Bronner Award for the outstanding graduate paper in American Studies. For more information, see the [EASA website](#).

PRESIDENT

John Haddad, Penn State Harrisburg

VICE PRESIDENT

Emily Blanck, Rowan University

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Louise Stevenson, Franklin & Marshall College

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Sharon Musher, Stockton College

Anthony Buccitelli, Penn State Harrisburg

Megan McGee Yinger, Penn State Harrisburg (Graduate Student Representative)

CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS AND NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Christie Briley, Penn State Harrisburg

Anna O'Brian, Penn State Harrisburg

John Haddad, Penn State Harrisburg

PRESIDENT OF HONORS SOCIETY

Anthony Buccitelli, Penn State Harrisburg

PAST PRESIDENTS

Lisa Jarvinen, La Salle University

Francis J. Ryan, La Salle University

Mark Sawin, Eastern Mennonite University

Angus Gillespie, Rutgers University

Charles Kupfer, Penn State Harrisburg

Simon Bronner, Penn State Harrisburg