

## **“Dance To The Dissonant Sway”: Groove, Headbanging, and Entrainment in Extreme Metal**

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### Abstract

Analytical studies of rhythm and meter in extreme metal stress the inseparable relation of musical content (repeated riffs or *grooves*) with the bodily motions of performers and fans (headbanging and/or moshing). To further analyze this relationship, this paper uses live performance videos and transcriptions of songs by Meshuggah and Animals as Leaders to illustrate how and why a single extreme metal groove can encourage and accommodate multiple modes of entrainment. I argue that these riffs create “targets for bodily motion” (Zbikowski 2004, 286) through 1) the interplay of grouping and meter and 2) the realization or denial of metric projections. To accomplish this, this paper synthesizes work on extreme metal (Hannan 2018, Lennard 2018, Lucas 2018 and 2019, Pieslak 2007), grooves and embodiment (Cox 2011, Kozak 2018, Pressing 2002, Zbikowski 2004), and rhythm and meter (Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1983, Hasty 1997). The talk will demonstrate that the ability of extreme metal grooves to promote multiple modes of entrainment is an important stylistic marker, with ramifications that speak to broader issues in the study of music and movement.

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#### Live Performance Videos

- Animals As Leaders. 2013. "Animals As Leaders Concert at Musicians Institute: Wave of Babies." YouTube video. 6:17.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L\\_avmSHz2s&list=RD8L\\_avmSHz2s&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L_avmSHz2s&list=RD8L_avmSHz2s&start_radio=1)
- Meshuggah. 2011. "Meshuggah: Perpetual Black Second (Live in Tokyo)." YouTube video. 5:14.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQnsFO-kGTY>

Fred Wesley & the J.B.'s, "Doing it to Death," opening. Reproduced from Lawrence M. Zbikowski, "Modelling the Groove: Conceptual Structure and Popular Music," *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 129 (2) (2004), 293. Annotations are mine.

Targets: beats; beat subdivisions; Guitar 2; dynamic shape of entire bar (strong arrival on beat 4).

The musical score is in 12/8 time with a tempo of approximately 114. It features five staves: Guitar 1, Guitar 2, Bass, Hand claps, and Drums. The guitar parts are annotated with red boxes and arrows. The first two measures of the guitar parts are marked with 'Divide in 3' and 'in 2'. Red boxes and arrows point to the strong arrival on beat 4 in the guitar parts.

Move hips with beats 1 and 3, arms with 2 and 4, head with guitar 2.  
OR: feet with beats 1 and 3, body differently.

# Meshuggah, "Perpetual Black Second."

Circles indicate first attack of each statement of the riff. This is what the vocalist headbangs to.

Asterisks indicate beats 1 and 3 of each measure. This is what the guitarists and bassist headbang to.

$\text{♩} = 150$  Countoff

Guitars/Bass

*Meter and grouping acutely out of phase*

Drum Key

Bass Hi-hat Snare Crash Cymbal

Meshuggah, “Perpetual Black Second,” metric projection.

beginning      continuation      anacrusis

$Q^1 = \text{♩.}$

$R^1 = \text{♩.}$

$Q^2 = \text{♩.}$



$Q^3 = \text{♩.}$

$Q^4 = \text{♩.}$

$Q^5 = \text{♩.}$

$R^2 = \text{♩.}$

Legend (after Butterfield 2006, [6])

-  Duration unfolding in time; carries projective potential
-  Completes the duration; realizes its projective potential; serves as a measure for a second duration

Animals as Leaders, "Wave of Babies." Bass drum and hi-hat not transcribed due to low volume level.

♩ = 85

China Cymbal  
Snare Drum

Guitars

*Meter and grouping acutely out of phase*

5 sixteenths    5    9    9    7

Guitars

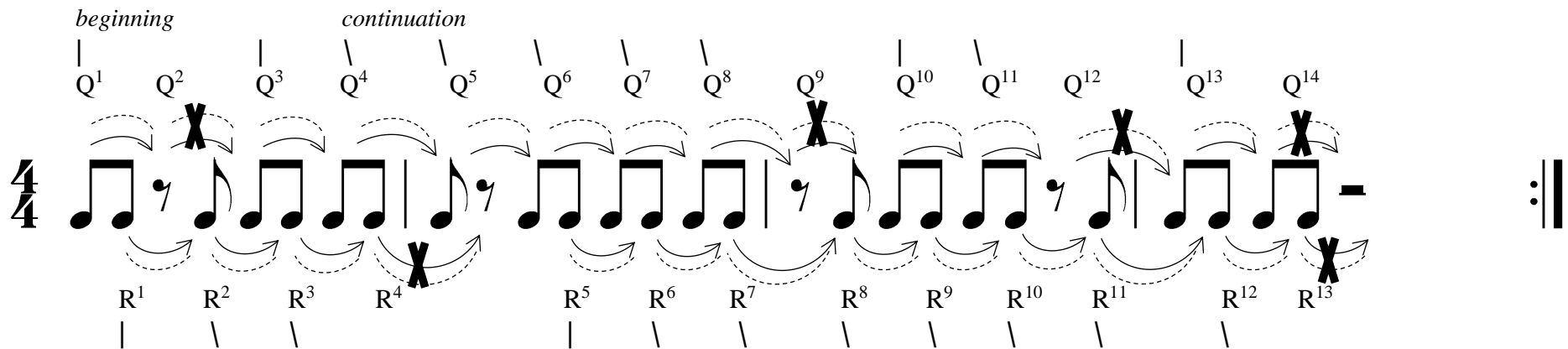
Repeat contains variations in guitar riff and drum part.

5    5    9    10



Animals as Leaders, “Wave of Babies,” metric projection.

$Q^n$  = quarter-note duration that begins on beat 1, 2, 3, or 4.

$R^n$  = quarter-note duration that begins on an “and.”



Legend (after Butterfield 2006, [6])

-  Duration unfolding in time; carries projective potential
-  Completes the duration; realizes its projective potential; serves as a measure for a second duration