



Presents...

# Far Beyond Visual Kei

The Asian Underground Metal Scene



# Introduction



# Do's and Dont's



# Why Does this panel exist and why the %\$\*# should you listen to us?

- ❑ Anime Cons rarely bring the heaviest bands over, usually focusing on style vs substance and the end result is often mainstream (and potentially lame)
- ❑ A lot of Asian “metal” that often gets mentioned is often Noise, alt rock, or mellow VK.
- ❑ Because there are some of us that remember when there was a metal scene
- ❑ Also because of that VK obsessed friend that thinks a slightly heavier than normal VK band is metal (rocker grrl syndrome)
- ❑ Most of the Asian exports are extremely mainstream or image based independent of actual musical quality
- ❑ The death of rock and metal in the US needs to be fixed.

# Visual Kei: what needs to be said and talking about why we aren't talking about it

- ❑ VK is a fashion and not a musical genre. HOWEVER, the fashion is inextricably tied to rock/metal/punk music.
- ❑ Primarily borrowing from Glam, it kept progressing beyond the end in the west
- ❑ An issue with VK is that while it was a fashion, bands often become derivative and a “VK sound” sort of forms in spite of it not being a genre
- ❑ This is the sound that is often magnified in the mainstream and is fairly weak in comparison to more extreme acts.



# From THE Emperor to uh...Emperor?

A fairly short history of contemporary music in Japan

- Japanese Traditional Folk: Pre western influence
  - Kabuki - Japanese Theater
  - Noh - Theatrical Music
  - Gagaku - Court Music
  - Shomyo - Buddhist Melody for Sutra
  - Joruri/Nagauta - Shamisen music
- Meiji Restoration brings western (pentatonic) music to Japan
  - Enka - “protest songs” during the Meiji era, continued after and resemble traditional Japanese music, usually associated with emotional display
  - Shoka - 1<sup>st</sup> two primary forms brought to Japan by the Meiji Govt. It is western music composed specifically for use in education
  - Gunka - 2<sup>nd</sup> form brought in. Western military marches that include traditional Japanese elements
- Foundation is laid for popular music in japan
  - *Rōkyoku* - Japanese narrative singing with westernized music elements
  - *Kayōkyoku* - literally “pop tune”, began as western style popular music in the 1920s. Later splits into the modern conception of j-pop and modern *Kayōkyoku*. The modern version differentiates from j-pop by using traditional Japanese pronunciations of language.
- Western Jazz and Classical gained popularity as well, though it was diminished during WW2
- Imitation is the greatest form of flattery!



# Let there be Rock!



- ❑ After WW2 Western Youth Culture invades Japan
  - ❑ Yea, the beatles did it, with Bob Dylan being a close 2<sup>nd</sup>
    - ❑ Intro to rock on Japan
  - ❑ GROUP SOUNDS emerge
    - ❑ Basically a literal copy of early western rock\
    - ❑ Evolved from Eleki, instrumental rockabilly and surf music played on electric guitars that helped ease the Beatles and others into Japanese culture.
  - ❑ Deep purple comes and changes Japanese rock music
    - ❑ One of the first bands to tour Japan. Huge impact
    - ❑ One of the largest influences of Japanese metal
    - ❑ Made in Japan was a defining live album
    - ❑ Blackmore's bar

After Deep Purple, other acts such as Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath came through, bringing more influence to the bands of Japan. This movement was called "New Rock".

Later, Japan would become well known for high quality and career defining live albums. Acts such as Iron Maiden (maiden Japan), Judas Priest (Unleashed in the East), Arch Enemy, Scorpions, Ozzy Osbourne, Cannibal Corpse, and Dream Theater. Many metal bands become more popular in Japan than their home countries. (Quiet Riot and Malmsteen found an audience in Japan first, for example)

Eleki

Group Sounds

New Rock:  
Flower Travellin' Band  
Blues Creation  
Happy End  
Sadistic Mika Band  
Les Rallizes Denudes

VK splits off:  
Visual Scandal  
X Japan  
Etc.

Modern Metal

Metal Begins:  
Bow wow  
Loudness  
Luna Sea  
Sabbat

# KISS: they need their own slide

I don't even like them that much....

- ❑ Kiss Came to Japan in the mid 70s
  - ❑ Makeup connected with the Japanese Kabuki tradition and identity
- ❑ Rock Music was already starting to grow in japan
  - ❑ KISS took it to another level
- ❑ One of the strongest VK influences early on (before the rise of Glam in the west)
- ❑ Still has strong pop culture ties in japan
  - ❑ Love live, DMC, Momoiro Clover Z, Softbank Dog, KISS Hello Kitty etc.



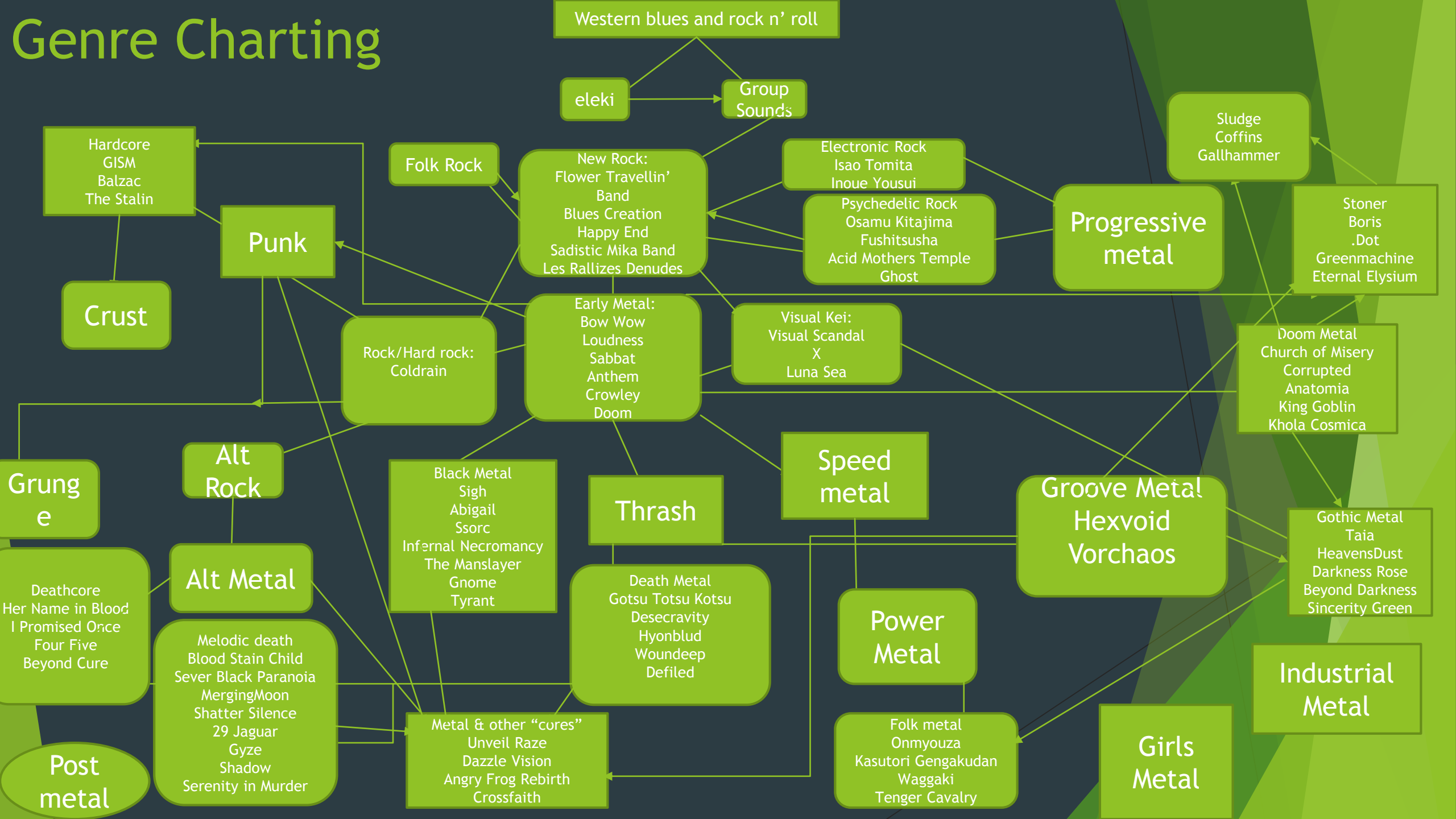


# East Vs West: Uniquely Japanese

Yes, some of this is statistical generalization. With such a global community there are Always exceptions.

East	West
Japanese often speak of the spirit of making heavy/extreme music, similar I idea to the “Japanese Spirit”	Outlet for emotions/aggression. Barring concept bands/albums there is often a personal message buried in the music
Larger duality in the fanbase. Harder to spot the heavy music fan in public on a day to day basis	While not a rule, usually much more wysiwyg and it’s easier to pick up on fandom
Japanese etiquette and politeness carries over into metal fans	Etiquette can exist, but generally fans are more active/lively and can be more aggressive
Though occasionally seen as xenophobic, the Deep fascination with western culture creates many improvements and adaptations to western music.	Fascination with asia is definitely strong, though element usage is much lower
Visual styling (thanks kei genres...) often drastically different from bands sound	While this is starting to change... (some emo shit looking black metal) more often the band image matches the genre
Usage of traditional instruments/scales	Pretty much the same. In this case however, many of the traditional instruments evolved into the modern ones
Western symbolism used as theatrics	Message in the music
Women in metal common, not often a gimmick	Women are increasing but almost always gain notoriety

# Genre Charting



# Ground Level: The Big Exports That Don't (or don't Completely) Suck

- ▶ X Japan - power/thrash era is solid
- ▶ Dir En Grey - post VK Post ballad is solid
- ▶ Blood Stain Child - Japanese In Flames meets trance metal (been to A-kon)
- ▶ Maximum the Hormone - all over the damn place in a good way
- ▶ Babymetal...yes really - guilty pleasure, it's weird with a damn good backing band
- ▶ Church of Misery - niche export but huge in the international Doom/Stoner metal circles
- ▶ Gallhammer - All girl black metal, hugely influential in europe
- ▶ Her Name in Blood - up and coming deathcore, English language, lots of releases in the west (singles/compilations etc)
- ▶ Cthonic - not Japanese, Taiwanese black metal that is major label released in the west and frequently tours in the west. Think Taiwanese Dimmu/Cradle
- ▶ Crash - Korean Multigenre metal. Big enough to find their way into the Pump it Up games with all the K-Pop
- ▶ Sigh - Japanese Blackmetal/fusion. Like some of the others not fully mainstream but well known in extreme metal and exported on fairly major labels

# Sounds From the Underground

- ▶ Progression of metal happened in a similar manner as in the united states
- ▶ A lot of extreme metal began as a backlash against the VK when it's popularity was at it's peak
- ▶ It is as this level where societal and familial pressures play heavily in bands and their careers (big enough to be a job but haven't "made" it)
- ▶ As interest in underground metal grows, so do promoters and labels importing acts to perform and exporting their own acts
- ▶ The internet saves the day for many of these bands
- ▶ In the reverse of some western bands. Some Japanese Extreme metal finds their audience in the west
- ▶ Most extreme genres fall into the sort of bulk grouping of underground metal.

# Very Deep

- ▶ The realm of fringe/obscure and the most extreme of the metal
- ▶ Rarely makes it out of it's country of origin
  - ▶ The internet helps here
- ▶ Very little in the way of non live videos and professional sounding recordings
  - ▶ Think European black metal that isn't on a label.
- ▶ Sometimes genres work their way up in popularity.



# Giant \$&%\*ing list of Bands so you go to my website!

Death Metal	Melodeath	Metal/Deathcore	Gothic metal	Power Metal	Doom/Stoner/Sludge	Black Metal
Defiled	Ares	Her Name in Blood	Heavensdust	Aldious	Church of Misery	Sigh
Gotsu Totsu Kotsu	Blood Stain Child	Angry Frog Rebirth	Taia	Mary's Blood	Boris (early)	Ssorc
Desecravity	Sever Black Paranoia	I Promised Once	Darkness Rose	Galneryus	Coffins	Lycan Thrope
Intestinal Baalism	Shadow	Crossfaith	Eleanor	Light Bringer	Eternal Elysium	Sungoddess
Woundeep	Lost Eden	Dazzle Vision	Grail of Sics	Knights of the Round	.Dot	Magane
Abyss	Sorrow of Tranquility	Beyond Cure	Albiorix Requiem	Skywings	Greenmachine	Abigail
Asphyxia	Followbane	Crystal Lake	Sylph	Gunbridge	Corrupted	Infernal Necromancy
Worm	Evilchoir	Geist of Trinity	Beyond Darkness	Yousei Teikoku	Anatomia	Cataplexy
Scarlet Garden	Thousand Leaves	Hone Your Sense	Sincerity Green	Bridear	Valkyrie	Basilisk
Morbid Vision	Shatter Silence	A Crowd of Rebellion	Jenesais Quoi	Albion	Flower Travellin Band (founder)	Ethereal Sin
Blind Hate	Serpent	A Ghost of Flare	Liv Moon	Killing Frost	Burden of Despair	Meridian Pain
Mortal Gaze	Serenity in Murder	Each of the Days	<b>Symphonic Metal</b>	Art of Gradation	Gallhammer	Crifotoure Satanarda
Vortex	Imperial Circus Dead Decadence	Fate in Spiral		Doll\$Boxx	Necromantics	Zeusas
Unholy Grave	MergingMoon	Fear from the Hate		Destrose	King Goblin	Tyrant
Ogre	Galmet			Cynthia	Aeternum Sacris	Sabbat
GSD	29 Jaguar				Khola Cosmica	The Manslayer
	Gyze					Gnome
	Black Despair					
	Bleed Out					
	Faintest Hope					

# Pioneering Sounds of Japan/Asia

- ▶ There are many uniquely Japanese/Asian Sounds in Heavy music
  - ▶ Usage of traditional instruments not found in other parts of the world
  - ▶ Throat singing (thank you Mongolia)
- ▶ I was asked for a defining sound of Japanese music at one of the panel presentations
  - ▶ I would argue that the manner in which Japan incorporates electronic elements and how far they have integrated and evolved it would be a defining feature
  - ▶ Secondary to that I would say their ability to shift and meld genres and have the same band sound entirely different on a single album.

# WTF Japan

- ▶ Girls Metal
- ▶ Massive Duality
- ▶ Culture Borrowing
- ▶ Guys in Wolf Masks
- ▶ Babymetal
- ▶ Death Panda
- ▶ Lady Baby
- ▶ Death Rabbits

# Metal In Anime

- ▶ Common in anime intros
  - ▶ Death Note, Black heaven, Mirai Nikki, basilisk, Gene Shaft, and more!
- ▶ Anime Studio's will assist with music videos
- ▶ Anime has influenced many great metal bands (Trey from Morbid Angel is full otaku among others)
- ▶ Final Fantasy Nobuo Uematsu is a huge hard rock/metal fan. So much so he started the Black Mages as a side project to do rock/metal covers of Final Fantasy Songs
  - ▶ Uematsu himself has professed being a fan of bands like Deep Purple, Jethro Tull, and Led Zeppelin
- ▶ Touhou has a metal following with bands like Kissing the Mirror, Disarmonia Mundi, and Black Night Burial covering Touhou
- ▶ Things Like Animetal and lazy sound life bring metal to anime
- ▶ There is also Ghibli Metal!

## Metal based/influenced Anime

- DMC
- The Legend of Black Heaven - one of the best anime you have never seen
- Beck: Mongolian Chop Squad - more Rock than metal but respects multiple genres and shows life in a pro band
- Love live - Kiss parody
- K-on - Parody Metal Band
- Bastard! - entire series is heavy metal references

# Vocaloids System for Metal

- ▶ The Versatility of the Vocalist in a box kit means it is useful for metal
- ▶ Many of the voices can be altered to cover growling/screaming through operatic powermetal
- ▶ Attaching this to the mascots makes for some interesting renditions



# Outside of Japan

- ▶ Vibrant Metal scene all across asia
- ▶ Progression of metal and genres reflect the shifts in society and culture of a country
  - ▶ Metal as rebellion or political protest
- ▶ All genres are found across all countries
  - ▶ Hardcore and black metal have particularly large scenes (china black metal scene is huge)
- ▶ Much Like Japan, countries incorporate traditional elements into their music (Mongolian throat singing!)
  - ▶ However unlike Japan, most other Asian nations adhere to the western style of making heavy music (aggression/outlet vs spirit of heavy music)

# Outside of Japan 2

## Korea

Ares  
Necramyth  
The Crescents  
Mahatmat  
Zihard  
Crash  
Sinawe  
A doom  
Oathean  
Gaia  
Dark Mirror of  
Tragedy  
Gostwind  
Dark Ambition  
Holymarsh  
Ishtar  
Tokkaebi  
Seed

## China

Narakim  
Ego Fall  
Tang Dynasty  
Last Successor  
Dengel  
Terminal Lost  
Rakasasa  
Darkness Pool  
Darkness Over  
Depth  
Hyonblud  
Frosty Eve  
Ritual Day  
Four Five  
The Falling  
Hell Savior  
Evilthorn  
Die From Sorrow  
System Collapse  
Tenger Cavalry

## Phillipines

Mortal Fear  
Servorum  
Pathogen  
Beyond This Line  
Ancient Warlord  
Oremuz  
Sin  
Winter Nightfall  
Pentavia

- Rudra - Singapore
- Titanium - Vietnamese
- Disgusted - Vietnamese
- Bao Tap - Vietnamese
- Unlimited Symphony - Vietnamese
- \$uicide \$olution - Singapore
- Decius - Singapore
- Hellghast - Singapore
- Carnivora - Thailand
- In vein - Thailand
- Breathless - Thailand
- Black Infinity - Vietnam
- Cthonic - Taiwan
- Flesh Juicer - Taiwan
- Silent Hell - Taiwan
- Sideeffect - Taiwan

# Festivals in Asia

## FESTIVALS

Loud Park - Japan

Bandung Berisik - Indonesia

Hammersonic Festival - Indonesia

Rock in Solo - Indonesia

KL Metalcamp - Malaysia

Nepal Deathfest

Silence Festival - Nepal

Pulp Summer Slam - Phillipines

Manila Metal and Hardcore Festival - Phillipines

Red Horse Muziklaban - Phillipines

Maelstrom - Sri Lanka

# Resources to Dig Deeper

## Documentaries

- ▶ Japanese Extreme Metal Documentary
- ▶ Metal: A Headbanger's Journey
- ▶ Global Metal
- ▶ Burst City (trippy movie showcasing early Japanese Hardcore)
- ▶ Detroit Metal City (totally a documentary right???)

## Around the web