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Abstract

Since the late 1970s, heavy metal music has faced a considerable amount of negative media coverage. Much of this negative media coverage has been observed internationally, and has often lead to moral panics surrounding the music and its fans. These moral panics were often fuelled by concerned parent groups and the religious right, all of whom claimed that heavy metal music was a dangerous influence on young people because of the hidden Satanic messages that it supposedly contained. As a result of these panics, a number of heavy metal artists faced being banned or censored. But has Australia experienced a moral panic involving heavy metal? This research project uses discourse analysis to analyse Australian newspaper content to determine whether a moral panic surrounding heavy metal artists Slipknot and Marilyn Manson has occurred in Australia. While the international news coverage surrounding these two artists suggests that moral panics have occurred elsewhere, I argue that in Australia a classic moral panic has not occurred, but that some ‘mild’ and ‘micro’ panics surrounding these artists have occurred. However, these have not lead to any banning or censoring as a way of protecting young people. I argue that this lack of moral panic has come about because moral panic is now a standardised way of reporting within the media by journalists, and that the Australian news media now understand there is no need to create concern and panic regarding these heavy metal artist