

Propaganda Time: The Winter of Discontent and the London Metal Scene

The Winter of Discontent

- Winter of 1978-1979 in the U.K.
- Public sector workers struck in response to government pay caps aimed at combating inflation
- Caused problems in London, such as trash piling up in the streets, which led to criticism of the strikers by mainstream, middle class media
- Ended with Margaret Thatcher (Conservative) replacing James Callaghan (Labour) as Prime Minister

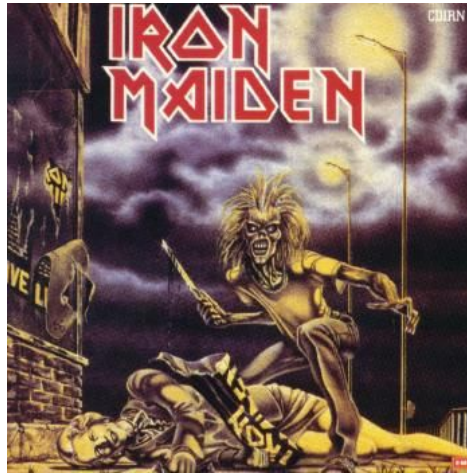


Trash in Leicester Square in London: Hulton Archive, 1979

New Wave of British Heavy Metal

- Bands focused on: Motörhead, Angel Witch, Iron Maiden
- Started in the mid 70s
- Largely young, White, working class males coming of age during the economic turmoil of the 1970s
- Revival of late 1960s heavy metal, added punk influences

NWOBHM Response



Cover art for the single "Sanctuary":
Derek Riggs, 1980

- Winter of Discontent = political catalyst, media coverage exemplified tensions between working and middle classes
- Some direct commentary through lyrics and album art, performances at underground political events
- Most commentary subtle, accomplished through breaking mainstream norms (distortion and rebellious lyrical themes such as crime and sex)
- This music movement gave working class males impacted by the economic problems that came to a head during the Winter of Discontent a community and eventually a voice in the mainstream.

The Media

- Mainstream media voiced disapproval of the music, echoing their response to the strikes during the Winter of Discontent
- Despite media criticism, the New Wave of British Heavy Metal's rebellious sound and commentary appealed to many and earned the genre international success, leading to heavy metal's explosion in popularity in the 1980s.

"They like it if you stay confused. Propaganda time, the official line, you're hungry, you get fed."
Motörhead, "Talking Head"

"The world's state of affairs gets worse and worse day by day, Everybody seems to be confused, no one ever knows the way."
Angel Witch, "Confused"