The goth subculture is a contemporary subculture found in many countries. It began in the United Kingdom during the early 1980s in the gothic rock scene, an offshoot of the Post-punk genre. The goth subculture has survived much longer than others of the same era, and has continued to diversify. Its imagery and cultural proclivities indicate influences from nineteenth century Gothic literature along with horror films and to a lesser extent the BDSM culture.[1][2][3]

The goth subculture has associated tastes in music, aesthetics, and fashion, whether or not all individuals who share those tastes are in fact members of the goth subculture. Gothic music encompasses a number of different styles. Styles of dress within the subculture range from deathrock, punk, androgynous, Victorian, some Renaissance and Medieval style attire, or combinations of the above, most often with black attire, makeup and hair.
By the late 1970s, there were a few post-punk bands labeled "gothic". However, it was not until the early 1980s that gothic rock became its own subgenre within post-punk, and that followers of these bands started to come together as a distinctly recognizable movement. The scene appears to have taken its name from an article published in UK rock weekly Sounds: "The face of Punk Gothique",[4] written by Steve Keaton and published on February 21, 1981. The opening of the Batcave in London's Soho in July 1982 provided a prominent meeting point for the emerging scene, which had briefly been labeled positive punk by the New Musical
Express.[5] The term "Batcaver" was later used to describe old-school goths.

Independent from the British scene, the late 1970s and early 1980s saw death rock branch off from American punk.[6] In 1980s and early 1990s, members of an emerging subculture in Germany were called Gruft[e]s (English "vault creatures" or "tomb creatures"); they generally followed a fusion of the gothic and new wave with an influence of new romantic, and formed the early stages of the "dark culture" (formerly called "dark wave culture").

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After post-punk

After the waning in popularity of post-punk, the subculture diversified both musically and visually. This caused variations in the "types" of goth. Local scenes also contributed to this variation. By the 1990s, Victorian fashion saw a renewed popularity in the goth scene, drawing on the mid-19th century gothic revival and the more morbid aspects of Victorian culture.

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Current subcultural boundaries

By the 1990s, the term "goth" and the boundaries of the associated subculture had become more contentious. New subcultures emerged, or became more popular, some of them being conflated with the goth subculture by the general public and the popular media. This conflation was primarily owing to similarities of appearance, social customs, and the fashions of the subcultures, rather than the musical genres of the bands associated with them. As time went on, the term was extended further in popular usage, sometimes to define groups that had neither musical nor fashion similarities to the original gothic subculture. This has led to the introduction of goth slang terms that some goths and others use to sort and label members of loosely related or at times unrelated subcultures. The response of these pseudo-groups to the older subculture varies. Some, being secure in a separate subcultural identity, express offense at being called "goth" in the first place, while others choose to join the existing subculture on their own terms. Still others have simply ignored its existence, and decided to appropriate the term "goth" themselves, and redefine the idea in their own image. Even within the original subculture, changing trends have added to the complexity of attempting to define precise boundaries.

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The goth scene
The bands that began the gothic rock and deathrock scene were limited in number, and included Bauhaus, Specimen, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Damned, The Birthday Party, Southern Death Cult, Ausgang, Sex Gang Children, 45 Grave, UK Decay, The Virgin Prunes, Kommunity FK, Alien Sex Fiend and Christian Death. Gloria Mundi, The Cure, This Mortal Coil, Dead Can Dance, mittageisen, early Adam and the Ants and Killing Joke have also been associated.

By the mid-eighties, the number of bands began proliferating and became increasingly popular, including The Sisters of Mercy, The Mission (known as The Mission UK in the US), Xmal Deutschland, The Bolshoi and Fields of the Nephilim. The nineties saw the further growth of eighties bands and emergence of many new bands. Factory Records, 4AD Records, and Beggars Banquet Records released much of this music in Europe, while Cleopatra Records among others released much of this music in the United States, where the subculture grew especially in New York, Los Angeles, and Orange County, California, with many nightclubs featuring "gothic/industrial" nights. The popularity of 4AD bands resulted in the creation of a similar US label called Projekt Records. This produces what is colloquially termed ethereal wave, a subgenre of dark wave music.

By the mid-1990s, styles of music that were heard in venues that goths attended ranged from gothic rock, death rock, industrial music, Psychobilly, EBM, ambient, experimental, synthpop, shoegazing, punk rock, to 1970s glam rock.

Recent years have seen a resurgence in the early positive punk and death rock sound, in reaction to aggrotech, industrial and synthpop, which had taken over many goth clubs. Bands with an earlier goth sound like Cinema Strange, Bloody Dead And Sexy, Black Ice, and Antiworld are becoming very popular. Nights like Ghoul School and Release The Bats promote death rock heavily, and the Drop Dead Festival brings in death rock fans from all over the world.

Today, the goth music scene thrives in Western Europe - especially in Germany, with large festivals such as Wave-Gotik-Treffen, M'era Luna and others drawing tens of thousands of fans from all over the world.[7] However, North America still sees large scale events, most recently, Chamber's Dark Art & Music Festival.[2]
Historical and cultural influences

Origins of the term

The original Goths were an Eastern Germanic tribe who played an important role in the fall of the western Roman Empire. In some circles, the name "goth" later became pejorative: synonymous with "barbarian" and the uncultured due to the then-contemporary view of the fall of Rome and depictions of the pagan Gothic tribes during and after the process of Christianization of Europe. During the Renaissance period in Europe, medieval architecture was retroactively labeled gothic architecture, and was considered unfashionable in contrast to the then-modern lines of classical architecture.

In the United Kingdom, by the late 1700s, however, nostalgia for the medieval period led people to become fascinated with medieval gothic ruins. This fascination was often combined with an interest in medieval romances, Roman Catholic religion and the supernatural.

The gothic novel of the late eighteenth century, a genre founded by Horace Walpole with the 1764 publication of The Castle of Otranto, was accountable for the more modern connotations of the term gothic. He originally claimed that the book was a real medieval romance he had discovered and republished. Thus was born the gothic novel's association with fake documentation to increase its effect. Henceforth, the term was associated with a mood of horror, morbidity, darkness and the supernatural as well as camp and self-parody. The gothic novel established much of the iconography of later horror literature and cinema, such as graveyards, ruined castles or churches, ghosts, vampires, nightmares, cursed families, being buried alive and melodramatic plots. An additional notable element was the brooding figure of the gothic villain, which developed into the Byronic hero. The most famous gothic villain is the vampire, a folklore legend of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, best known from Bram Stoker's novel Dracula and the horror movies it influenced.

Certain elements in the dark, atmospheric music and dress of the post punk scene were clearly gothic in this sense. The use of gothic as an adjective in describing this music and its followers led to the term goth.

19th century
The Revolutionary War-era "American Gothic" story of the Headless Horseman, immortalized in Washington Irving's story "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (published in 1820), marked the arrival in the New World of dark, romantic story-telling. The tale was composed by Irving while he was living in England, and was based on popular tales told by colonial Dutch settlers of New York's Hudson River valley. The story was adapted to film in 1922, and in 1949, in the animated The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad. It was readapted in 1980 and again in Tim Burton's 1999 Sleepy Hollow. Burton, already famous through his films Edward Scissorhands, Beetlejuice and Batman, created a storybook atmosphere filled with darkness and shadow.

Throughout the evolution of goth subculture, classic romantic, gothic and horror literature has played a significant role. Keats, Poe, Lovecraft, Baudelaire and other tragic and romantic writers have become as emblematic of the subculture as has using dark eyeliner or dressing in black. Baudelaire, in fact, in his preface to Les Fleurs du mal (Flowers of Evil) penned lines that as much as anything can serve as a sort of goth malediction:

C'est l'Ennui! —l'œil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
—Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère!
It is Boredom! — an eye brimming with an involuntary tear, he dreams of the gallows while smoking his water-pipe. You know him, reader, this fragile monster, —hypocrite reader,—my twin,—my brother!

20th century influences

The influence of the gothic novel on the goth subculture can be seen in numerous examples of the subculture's poetry and music, though this influence sometimes came second hand, through the popular imagery of horror films and television. The powerful imagery of horror movies began in German expressionist cinema after the first world war and then passed onto the Universal Studios films of the twenties and thirties, and then to the horror films of the English Hammer Studio. By the 1960s, TV series, such as The Addams Family and The Munsters, used these stereotypes for camp comedy. The Byronic hero, in particular, was a key precursor to the male goth image, while Dracula's iconic portrayal by Bela Lugosi appealed powerfully to early goths. They were attracted by Lugosi's aura of camp menace, elegance and mystique. Some people even credit the band Bauhaus' first single "Bela
Lugosi's Dead", released August 1979, with the start of the goth subculture, though many prior art house movements also influenced gothic fashion and style, the illustrations and paintings of Swiss artist, H. R. Giger being one of the earliest. Notable other early examples include Siouxsie Sioux of the musical group Siouxsie and the Banshees, and Dave Vanian of the band The Damned. Some members of Bauhaus were, themselves, fine art students or active artists.

Some of the early gothic rock and death rock artists adopted traditional horror movie images, and also drew on horror movie soundtracks for inspiration. Their audiences responded in kind by further adopting appropriate dress and props. Use of standard horror film props like swirling smoke, rubber bats, and cobwebs were used as gothic club décor from the beginning in The Batcave. Such references in their music and image were originally tongue-in-cheek, but as time went on, bands and members of the subculture took the connection more seriously. As a result, morbid, supernatural, and occult themes became a more noticeably serious element in the subculture. The interconnection between horror and goth was highlighted in its early days by The Hunger, a 1983 vampire film, which starred David Bowie, Catherine Deneuve, and Susan Sarandon. The movie featured gothic rock group Bauhaus performing "Bela Lugosi's Dead" in a nightclub. In 1993, Whitby became the location for what became the UK's biggest goth festival as a direct result of being featured in Bram Stoker's Dracula. A literary influence on the gothic scene was Anne Rice's re-imagining of the idea of the vampire. Rice's characters were depicted as struggling with eternity and loneliness, this with their ambivalent or tragic sexuality had deep attractions for many goth readers, making her works very popular in the eighties through the nineties.

The re-imagining of the vampire continued with the release of Poppy Z. Brite's book Lost Souls in October of 1992. Despite the fact
that Brite's first novel was criticized by some mainstream sources for allegedly "lack[ing] a moral center: neither terrifyingly malevolent supernatural creatures nor (like Anne Rice's protagonists) tortured souls torn between good and evil, these vampires simply add blood-drinking to the amoral panoply of drug abuse, problem drinking and empty sex practiced by their human counterparts"[volume & issue needed], many of these so-called "human counterparts" identified with the the teen angst and Goth music references therein, keeping the book in print. Upon release of a special 10th Anniversary edition of Lost Souls, Publishers Weekly—the same periodical that criticized the novel's "amorality" a decade prior—deemed it a "modern horror classic" and acknowledged the fact Brite has established a "cult audience."[8]

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**Later media influences**

As the subculture became well-established, the connection between goth and horror fiction became almost a cliché, with Goths quite likely to appear as characters in horror novels and film. For example, *The Crow* drew directly on goth music and style. Neil Gaiman's acclaimed graphic novel series *The Sandman* influenced Goths with characters like the dark, brooding Dream and his sister Death.

Mick Mercer's 2002 release *21st Century Goth* explores the modern state of the Goth scene around the world, including South America, Japan, and mainland Asia. His previous 1997 release, *Hex Files: The Goth Bible* similarly took an international look at the subculture.

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**Visual art influences**
The Belgian photographer Viona Ielegems at Wave-Gotik-Treffen in 2005

The Goth subculture has influenced different artists - not only musicians - but also painters and photographers. In particular their work is based on mystic, morbid and romantic motifs. In photography and painting the spectrum varies from erotic artwork to romantic images of vampires or ghosts. To be present is a marked preference for dark colours and sentiments, similar to Gothic fiction, Pre-Raphaelites or Art Nouveau. In the Fine Art field, Anne Sudworth is a well known goth artist with her dark, nocturnal works and strong Gothic imagery. Often, goth visual art goes hand in hand with goth music, such as artist Nathaniel Milljou whose gothic artwork is predominantly used by bands and nightclubs.

Some of the graphic artists close to Goth are Gerald Brom, Nene Thomas, Luis Royo, Dave McKean, Jhonen Vasquez, Trevor Brown, Victoria Francés as well as the American comic artist James O'Barr. H. R. Giger of Switzerland is one of the first graphic artists to make serious contributions to the Gothic/Industrial look of much of modern cinema with his work on the film "Alien" by Ridley Scott.

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Ideology
Defining an explicit ideology for the gothic subculture is difficult for several reasons. First is the overwhelming importance of mood and aesthetic for those involved. This is, in part, inspired by romanticism and neoromanticism. The allure for goths of dark, mysterious, and morbid imagery and mood lies in the same tradition of Romanticism's gothic novel. During the late 18th and 19th century, feelings of horror, and supernatural dread were widespread motifs in popular literature; The process continues in the modern horror film. Balancing this emphasis on mood and aesthetics, another central element of the gothic is a deliberate sense of camp theatricality and self-dramatization; present both in gothic literature as well as in the gothic subculture itself.

Goths, in terms of their membership in the subculture, are usually not supportive of violence, but rather tolerant. Many in the media have incorrectly associated the Goth subculture with violence, hatred of minorities, and other acts of hate. However, violence and hate do not form elements of goth ideology; rather, the ideology is formed in part by recognition, identification, and grief over societal and personal evils that the mainstream culture wishes to ignore or forget. These are the prevalent themes in goth music. The second impediment to explicitly defining a gothic ideology is goth's generally apolitical nature. While individual defiance of social norms was a very risky business in the nineteenth century, today it is far less socially radical. Thus, the significance of goth's subcultural rebellion is limited, and it draws on imagery at the heart of Western culture. Unlike the hippie or punk movements, the goth subculture has no pronounced political messages or cries for social activism. The subculture is marked by its emphasis on individualism, tolerance for diversity, a strong emphasis on creativity, tendency toward intellectualism, and a mild tendency towards cynicism, but even these ideas are not universal to all goths. Goth ideology is based far more on aesthetics and simplified ethics than politics.

Goths may, indeed, have political leanings ranging from left-wing to right-wing, but they do not express them specifically as part of a cultural identity. Instead, political affiliation, like religion, is seen as a matter of personal conscience. Unlike punk, there are few clashes between political affiliation and being "goth". Similarly, there is no common religious tie that binds together the goth movement, though spiritual, supernatural and religious imagery has played a part in gothic fashion, song lyrics and visual art. In particular, aesthetic elements from Catholicism often appear in goth culture. Reasons for donning such imagery range from expression of religious affiliation to satire or simply decorative effect.

While involvement with the subculture can be fulfilling, it also can be risky, especially for the young, because of the negative attention it can attract due to public misconceptions of goth subculture. The value that young people find in the movement is evidenced by its continuing existence after other subcultures of the eighties (such as the New Romantics) have died out.
Fashion

Main article: Gothic fashion

Goth fashion is stereotyped as a dark, sometimes morbid, eroticized fashion and style of dress. Typical gothic fashion includes dyed black hair, dark eyeliner, black fingernails, black period-styled clothing; goths may or may not have piercings. Styles are often borrowed from the Elizabethan, Victorian or medieval period and often express Catholic or other religious imagery such as crucifixes or ankhs.[9][10] The extent to which goths hold to this style varies amongst individuals as well as geographical locality, though virtually all Goths wear some of these elements. Fashion designers, such as Alexander McQueen and John Galliano, have also been described as practicing "Haute Goth".[3] Goth fashion is often confused with heavy metal fashion:[11] outsiders often mistake fans of heavy metal for goth, particularly those who wear black trench coats or wear "corpse paint" (a term associated with the black metal music scene).

Controversy

The gothic fascination with the macabre has raised public concerns regarding the psychological well-being of goths. The mass media has made reports that have influenced the public view that goths, or people associated with the subculture, are malicious; however this is disputed and the Goth subculture is often described as non-violent.[12] Some individuals who have either identified
themselves or been identified by others as goth, whether correctly or incorrectly, have committed high profile violent crimes, including several school shootings. These incidents and their attribution to the goth scene have helped to propagate a wary perception of Goth in the public eye.[10][13]

A compilation of three photos of Scott Dyleski, run on the cover of the San Francisco Chronicle. The picture on the right, of Dyleski in the ninth grade, which shows him in makeup and long hair, was criticized by his defense attorney as unfair and misleading, because by fall 2006 Dyleski's appearance had become more conservative and mainstream. The Dyleski trial sparked controversy over the goth scene.

Public concern with the goth subculture reached a high point in the fallout of the Columbine High School massacre that was carried out by two students, incorrectly associated with the goth subculture. This misreporting of the roots of the massacre caused a widespread public backlash against the North American goth scene. Investigators of the incident, five months later, stated that there was no involvement between the goth subculture and the killers, who held goth music in contempt.[14]

The Dawson College shooting, in Canada, also raised public concern with the goth scene. Kimveer Gill, who killed one and injured nineteen, maintained an online journal at a web site, VampireFreaks, in which he "portrayed himself as a gun-loving Goth."[15] The day after the shooting it was reported that "it are rough times for industrial / goth music fans these days as a result of yet another trench coat killing", implying that Gill was involved in the goth subculture.[15] During a search of Gill's home, police found a letter praising the actions of Columbine shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold and a CD titled "Shooting sprees ain't no fun without Ozzy and friends LOL". Although the shooter claimed an obsession for "Goth", his favorite music list was described, by the media, as a "who's who of heavy metal.[16][17][18]

Mick Mercer, author, noted music journalist, and world's leading historian of Goth music[19][20][21] stated, of Kimveer Gill, that he was "not a Goth. Never a Goth. The bands he listed as his chosen form of ear-bashing were relentlessly Metal and standard Grunge,
Rock and Goth metal, with some Industrial presence.", "Kimveer Gill listened to metal", "He had nothing whatsoever to do with Goth" and further commented "I realise that like many Neos this idiot may even have believed he somehow was a Goth, because they're only really noted for spectacularly missing the point." Mercer emphasized that he was not blaming heavy metal music for Gill's actions and added "It doesn't matter actually what music he liked."[22]

Another school shooting that was wrongly attributed to the goth subculture is the Red Lake High School massacre.[23] Jeff Weise killed 7 people, and was believed by a fellow student to be into the goth culture: wearing "a big old black trench coat," and listening to heavy metal music. Weise was also found to participate in neo-nazi online forums.[24]

Other murders which are attributed to people suspected of being part of the goth culture include the Scott Dyleski killing,[25] and the Richardson family murders,[26][27] although neither of these cases raised the same amount of media attention as the school shootings.

In part because of public misunderstanding and ignorance surrounding gothic aesthetics, goths sometimes suffer prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance. As is the case with members of various other controversial subcultures and alternative lifestyles, outsiders sometimes marginalize goths, either by intention or by accident.[28] Goths, like any other alternative sub-culture sometimes suffer intimidation, humiliation, and, in many cases, physical violence for their involvement with the subculture.[13]

In 2006 James Eric Benham, a Navy sailor, along with his brother, attacked four goths in San Diego California. One goth, Jim Howard, had to be rushed to the hospital. The perpetrators of this attack were found guilty in August 2007 on four related accounts, two of which were felonies, though Benham only spent 37 days in jail. During the trial, it was made clear that the goths were assaulted due to their subculture affiliation. This can be otherwise known as a "hate crime" though the San Diego courts do not recognize this attack as such at this time.[29][30][31]

On August 11, 2007, two goths, walking through Stublylee Park in Bacup, Lancashire, England were attacked by a group of teenagers because they were goths. Sophie Lancaster subsequently died from her injuries.[32][33] On April 29, 2008, two teens Ryan Herbert and Brendan Harris were convicted for the murder of Lancaster and given life sentences, three others were given lesser sentences for the assault on her boyfriend Robert Maltby. In delivering the sentence Judge Anthony Russell stated “This was a hate crime against these completely harmless people targeted because their appearance was different to yours.” He went on to defend the goth community, calling goths “perfectly peaceful, law-abiding people who pose no threat to anybody.”[34][35][36] Judge Russell add that he “recognised it as a hate crime without Parliament having to tell him to do so, and had included that view in his
Despite this ruling, a bill to add discrimination based on subculture affiliation to the definition of hate crime in British law did not pass.[38]

In 2008, Paul Gibbs, a Briton from Leeds, UK was attacked by three men. He and his group of about 20 young goths were on a camping trip in the vicinity of Rothwell when two 18-year-olds (Quinn Colley, Ryan Woodhead) and one 22-year-old (Andrew Hall) raided, stabbed four of the men and robbed two women. Quinn Colley had previously appeared in a homemade clip rapping on his love of violence.[39] Gibbs was offered a motorbike ride by the attackers who at first insidiously befriended the group. On their way Gibbs was knocked down from the bike, rendered unconscious by a helmet and had his ear sliced off. Afterwards, the attackers returned to the camp. Colley and Woodhead were sentenced to at least 2.5 years of prison while Hall at least 4.5 years. Gibbs' ear was found 17 hours later, thus doctors could not immediately reattach it. Instead, they stitched it inside his stomach with the hope that some of the tissue will re-grow. The ear could be reconstructed by using cartilage removed from Gibbs' ribs.[40][41][42][43]

A study published on the British Medical Journal concluded that "identification as belonging to the Goth subculture [at some point on their lives] was the best predictor of self harm and attempted suicide [among young teens]", and that it was most possibly due to a selection mechanism (persons that wanted to harm themselves later identified as goths, thus raising the percentage of those persons who identify as goths). The study was based on a sample of 15 teenagers who identified as goths, of which 8 had self-harmed by any method, 7 had self-harmed by cutting, scratching or scoring, and 7 had attempted suicide.[44][45][46] The authors said that most self-harm by teens was done before joining the subculture, and that joining the subculture would actually protect them and help them deal with distress in their lives.[45][46] The authors insisted on the study being based on small numbers and on the need of replication to confirm the results.[45][46] The study was criticized for using a small sample of goth teens and not taking into account other influences and differences between different types of goth.[47]

See also

- Gothic fashion
- Gothic fiction
- Gothic rock
- History of subcultures in the 20th century
- List of Gothic rock bands
New Gothic Art
Singapore Dark Alternative Movement
Toronto Goth Scene

References

Books

- **Venters, Jillian**: *Gothic Charm School: An Essential Guide for Goths and Those Who Love Them.* (Harper Paperbacks, 2009 ISBN-10: -0061669164 )- An etiquette guide to "gently persuade others in her chosen subculture that being a polite Goth is much, much more subversive than just wearing T-shirts with "edgy" sayings on them."

**Articles**


**Notes**

1. ^ César Fuentes Rodríguez "Mundo Gótico", pages 18 & ss./pages 206 & ss.
2. ^ Carol Siegel "Goth's Dark Empire", pages 8-13 and ss.
9. ^ a b c ReligiousTolerance.org's article on "Goth"
10. ^ a b Eric Lipton Disturbed Shooters Weren't True Goth from the Chicago Tribune, April 27, 1999
13. ^ a b Marcia Montenegro The World According to Goth Christian Answers for the New Age
14. ^ Columbine retrospective


46. ^ a b c "Goths 'more likely to self-harm". BBC. 2006-04-13.

47. ^ Sources:

48. ^ NYtimes.com

Further reading


External links

- Article from the New Scientist on benefits of the Goth subculture.