

UPFRONT

by COLBY COSH

A cure for metal madness?

Ah, the perils of westernization. Schoolchildren in Malaysia, the sprawling Muslim monarchy of Southeast Asia, have apparently started to listen to "black metal" music, a sub-genre of heavy metal that is louder, nastier, more chaotic and vastly more blasphemous. Youths have been turning up at schools in leather with their faces painted and their bodies festooned with tattoos and anti-Christian symbols.

"Some of them, and this group included pre-teens too, were hurting themselves physically, scratching and cutting themselves, and the allegation was that they did this after listening to black metal music," writes a journalist for the *Malay Mail*. "The allegations also included meddling with and delving into Satanic rituals...apparently they were so confused they didn't know whether their newfound 'religion' required them to tread on the Bible or the Koran."

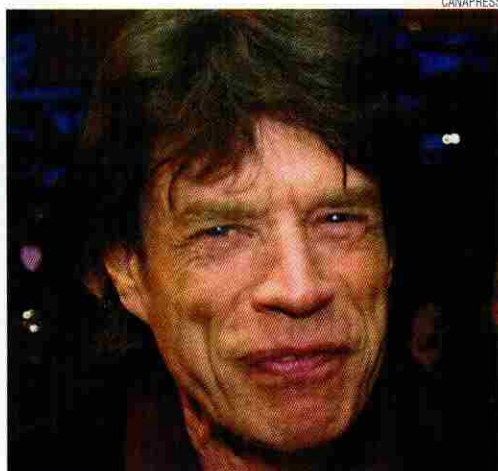
No matter: the government has already responded strongly. The Ministry of National Unity and Social Development (how very Canadian-sounding!) plans to deal with the "black metal" cult by drugging its young members. "A private company will sponsor the treatment program. The medicine has been tested on drug addicts and found to be effective in stimulating their thinking," commented one official. Using pills to correct bad children? It seems westernization isn't confined to mere music, after all. ■



That haunting sneer

► About twenty years ago, the international press started noticing that the strutting, priapic rock icons of the '60s were starting to age. They certainly have not stopped doing so, but the delicious irony has long since become a cliché, especially in the cases of two leading spokesmen for the generation: The Who's Pete Townshend, who wrote the line "Hope I die before I get old," and Mick Jagger, who sang "What a drag it is getting old" when he was about half his current age.

Both men are still touring and recording. Jagger at 58 and Townshend a spry 56. Sadly, their creativity has outlived their senses of humour. The British seniors' magazine *Saga* recently interviewed Jagger, who co-operated politely but was shocked to see a cover photo of himself relaxing in a rugby shirt and looking



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quite like a contented snowbird pensioner on Miami Beach. A spokesman described the gerontological studmuffin as "horried." Townshend, by contrast, is best described as apoplectic; when the *Observer* of London named him as a representative of "Colostomy Rock," the guitarist wrote in to note that his father, a jazz saxophonist who played until he was 68, had a colostomy not long before dying a miserable death from colon cancer.

"The author suggests that what we write when young turns against us in later life," wrote acid-penned Pete. "Maybe his...sneer will come to haunt him in the shape of a bag worn at the hip. If it is me

who has the privilege of wearing one, it will give me the greatest pleasure to empty the exquisite thing over his miserable head." Anarchy lives! ■

Duly Noted

► According to new forecasting methods described in the August 2 edition of *Nature*, the end of world population growth is imminent. Austrian demographer Wolfgang Lutz and his co-authors believe there is an 85% chance that the size of the human species will peak before 2100. They estimate the peak population at around nine billion, based on a model that uses more complex

assumptions than existing UN studies that failed to take into account declining fertility rates in the developing world. There is no word yet on how many of the nine billion will be store-bought clones of Hollywood celebrities.

► Further news on the resurgence of monarchism in Europe: the new conservative coalition government in Italy intends to allow exiled male members of the royal family

back onto Italian soil. In 1946, Italians voted to expel the House of Savoy by constitutional amendment for "collaborating" with Mussolini. (In fact, the Crown had tried to circumscribe Mussolini's power, and the dictator declared a "social republic" in the waning years of the war.) Now the Italian parliament is considering repeal of that 1946 amendment. Crown Prince Victor Emmanuel, son of the last king, expressed satisfaction