

# Borderless Sound, Bordered Reality: Crossfaith and the Dynamics of Transnationalism in Japanese Metalcore

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## Abstract

This paper examines the cross-border dynamics of Japanese metalcore, focusing particularly on the band Crossfaith, exploring how they navigate the complexities of global mobility, cultural identity, and transnationalism in their music. This study employs case study, using document analysis as the primary method. The data then was analyzed by identifying recurring themes, patterns, and relationships. The results show that while metalcore itself is already transnational due to its use of English, Crossfaith exemplifies the creation of a "borderless" sound that transcends national boundaries. Through collaborations with international artists, performances at the Nikkōsan Rinnoji Temple, and partnerships with local artists, the band manages to maintain a strong Japanese identity while appealing to a global audience. However, cross-border challenges remain, including linguistic barriers, visa restrictions, and cultural negotiations, which impact Crossfaith's international success, revealing the uneven access to global stages for non-Western artists. These challenges highlight the need for a more inclusive and accessible global music industry. Some key steps could be taken to address this issue, such as relaxing visa restrictions for musicians, enhancing cross-cultural communication through cross-cultural training to navigate linguistic and cultural differences more effectively, and creating platforms for artists from different cultural backgrounds to work together without bureaucratic or financial hindrances initiated by record labels and music festivals. These steps will ensure that diverse musical voices can fully participate in the global exchange of ideas, enriching the cultural landscape and promoting greater cross-border collaboration in music.

**Keywords: Japanese metalcore; cross-border; transnationalism; Crossfaith**

## 1. Introduction

Globalization makes transportation technologies and economies of scale have made migration more common and sped up the process of migration, thus people now have transnational experiences and identities, yet never completely leaving their places of origin and taking more of those places with them into their new locations (Clark, 2006). In this context, the term 'economies of scale' refers to the reduced cost of transportation as technology advances, making migration more accessible and widespread. This global movement has been accompanied by the widespread exchange of cultural products across the globe, including music (Moon Barnett & Lim, 2010, as cited in Verboord and Brandellero, 2018). In an era of increasing globalization, music often appears as a borderless medium, transcending cultural

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and geographic boundaries. This has allowed musicians to transcend national borders and collaborate across cultures.

Metalcore is one of the results of to fully-globalized metal in the 1990s, thanks to “the rising global economy and diasporic migrants to the West who came back to their home countries for visits and spreading the disease of the metal they found elsewhere” (Weinstein, 2015). Metalcore is considered as related genres from Heavy Metal which “closely connected to metal, yet is heavily contested or rejected as ‘true’ metal genres” (Hillier, 2020). Metalcore derived from melodic death metal - hardcore - crossover thrash (Hillier, 2020) and one of the "commercial metal styles" (Weinstein, 2015). Metalcore is played by bands mostly from the United States, such as Machine Head and Biohazard (Weinstein, 2011). Metal already reached Japan in 1970 yet metalcore was emerged as early as 1998 by Tokyo-based band, Maximum The Hormone (Metal Storm, n.d.). This later leads to some more metalcore acts during the 2000s and early 2010s, such as Crossfaith, with a surge of EDM influences into metalcore (Alternative Press Magazine, 2020).

Crossfaith was formed in 2006 in Osaka, Japan (Todd, 2016). The members are Kenta ‘Ken’ Koie in Vocals, Kazuki Takemura in Guitar, Daiki Koide in Guitar, Terufumi ‘Teru’ Tamano in Keyboard and DJ, and Tatsuya Amano in Drums. Their music has been described as “Slipknot tearing the Prodigy limb from limb,” fusing hardcore metal and EDM (Todd, 2016). The band released their debut album, “The Artificial Theory for the Dramatic Beauty” in 2009, followed by “The Dream, The Space” (2011), “Zion” (2012), “Apocalyze” (2013), “Xeno” (2015), and “Ex Machina” (2018) (UNFD Central, n.d.). Crossfaith has been nominated for Best International Newcomer at the Kerrang! Awards in 2014 and headlined the UK’s biggest rock and metal festival, Download Festival, in 2015 (Todd, 2016).

There are several research that explore intersections between globalization, music, and border theory. Prior works provide a foundational understanding of how music traverses cultural and geographical boundaries, influencing identity formation and cultural exchange.

In exploring the concept of transnationalism and cultural exchange across borders, Roberto D. Hernández’s (2012) discusses anti-border songs such as “Stolen at Gunpoint” by Tijuana NO with Frost, “Somos Mas Americanos” by Los Tigres del Norte, and “Decolonize” by Aztlán Underground. These songs, despite their distinct musical traditions and locations, share a common line: “We didn’t cross the borders, the borders crossed us!”. Hernández argues that this line articulates a shared critique of borders as mechanisms that compartmentalize the world.

Furthermore, Hernández interrogates the political implications of these songs, critiquing the European modern/colonial interstate system and its role in normalizing borders. He challenges the tendency of some Borderlands scholarship to uncritically blend the U.S. and Mexico into a hybridized aural identity. Instead, he emphasizes the need to address Mexico’s own marginalization of Indigenous people within its borders, complicating the slogan’s political trajectory. Furthermore, Hernández critiques “immigrant advocacy” that frames political discourse within the confines of national bodies, arguing that this limits the potential for a truly decolonized perspective on borders.

This study draws inspiration from Hernández's examination of music as a site of resistance to border norms. While Hernández focuses on U.S.-Mexico border politics, his insights on how music redefines and contests border dynamics provide a valuable lens for analyzing Japanese metalcore. These bands, through their global reach and transnational collaborations, similarly challenge geographic and cultural boundaries, contributing to a broader understanding of borderless music within a heavily bordered world.

Another study by Brenda M. Romero (2012) explores Lila Downs's "borderless" performance, focusing on her transcultural and musical communication. Downs, a vocalist and composer known for her mainstream debut with four song credits in the acclaimed film *Frida* (2002), incorporates a range of expressive device, particularly timbre, which is central to musical expression in many world cultures but often overlooked in Western music. Romero highlights how Downs's performance, shaped by her mixed-race, bicultural, bilingual, and bi-musical experiences, features tonal languages like rhythmic whoops, yells, wails and screams, illustrating the concept of "borderless" performance.

Lila incorporates indigenous languages and distinct timbres into her music, utilizing languages like Mixtec, Maya, and Zapotec. Her songs frequently tackle themes of social injustice and the complexities of identity in modern life, navigating the interplay of urban, rural, and class dynamics and their influence on musical styles. Beyond symbolic representation, her use of timbre demonstrates her capacity to connect with communities by communicating in a musical language that resonates with them.

Lastly, Clémence Perrin-Malterre (2024) examines the socializing role of cross-border mobility and its effects on the representation of borders, focusing on hikers who have completed the Tour du Mont Blanc, a 170 km cross-border hiking route in the tri-national Espace Mont Blanc (EMB) area. This study explores how cross-border hiking allows participants to experience the border as tangible, spatial reality. However, tourism, along with other forms of mobility, has contributed to a perception of the world as increasingly borderless or "unbounded" (Paasi & Ferdoush, 2022, as cited in Perrin-Malterre, 2024). This perception may be amplified in contexts of cross-border cooperation, where efforts to standardize facilities can render the border less noticeable to hikers. The experience of hiking within European cross-border cooperation frameworks can also shape hikers' perceptions and attitudes toward the European Union (EU), with such views being influenced by broader cross-border mobility experiences, particularly among younger Europeans (Mazzoni et al. 2019, as cited in Perrin-Malterre, 2024).

The findings reveal that hikers completing the Tour du Mont Blanc come from diverse social backgrounds and the degree of socialization through cross-border mobility among hikers varies based on their social backgrounds, with those from more privileged groups traveling more frequently, especially beyond Europe. Such cross-border travel experiences shape individuals' opinions and attitudes toward the EU and influence their perceptions of borders. For those who have traveled outside Europe, crossing borders often involves encountering customs and police checks, leading to a stronger perception of borders as obstacles. In contrast, the borders within the Tour du Mont Blanc are easier to cross due to the absence of significant physical barriers. Nonetheless, intangible barriers such as language and cultural differences persist. Additionally, hikers note variations in landscapes, and this cross-border hiking experience plays a role in fostering cross-border socialization.

Therefore, this study intends to focus on Crossfaith as a key example of how Japanese metalcore has evolved and gained international appeal. While the band has achieved success through global tours, collaborations, and releases on international labels, their experiences also highlight the complexities of navigating cross-border mobility and identity in a genre that is both globally connected and locally rooted. To explore these dynamics, this paper examines how Crossfaith engages with the global metalcore community while addressing the challenges posed by cultural and physical borders, including issues such as visa restrictions, linguistic barriers, and the negotiation of cultural authenticity in a global market.

### **1.1 “Borderless” Sound: Transnationalism in Music**

Transnationalism is a framework that emphasizes the “emergence of a social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (Schiller et al., 1992:ix). Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton argue that there is a new kind of migrating population that resulted in the new type of migrants as transmigrants (Schiller et al., 1992). Immigrants are seen as transmigrants because they develop and sustain multiple relations, such as “familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political- that span borders” (Schiller et al., 1992:ix). Transnationalism focuses on how their “involvements in both the home and host societies” and how they take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns within a field of social relations that links together their country of origin and their country or countries of settlement” (Schiller et al., 1992:ix).

In music, fans and musicians can develop connections just through email, websites, blogs, YouTube, and MP3 where in this process forged a new globally deployed music culture (Wallach et al., 2011). This leads to the border becoming “mobile and fluctuating, no longer bound to one specific geographic configuration; it belongs to a continental map of communities in motion and cultures in contact” (Hernández, 2012:23). Furthermore, Josh Kun (2000) discusses how music can transcend physical, cultural, and national boundaries by focuses on Gómez-Peña’s performance. Gómez-Peña’s performance creates a “borderless future” in terms of musical geography and sonic migration, while making a “key point of cultural contact—a sort of musical hyperspace—between Latino/a communities on both sides of the border” (Kun, 2000:20).

By analyzing the experiences of Japanese metalcore bands, this paper explores the paradox of 'borderless music' within the context of cross-border mobility and the persistent barriers that shape their global trajectories. Furthermore, this paper explores the ways they navigate and integrate their music across geographic and cultural boundaries.

### **1.2 “Bordered” Reality: Cross-border and Mobility**

While transnationalism emphasizes fluid cultural exchanges and global connectivity, the concept of “bordered reality” is reflected in the tangible constraints that shape and restrict mobility. Borders, in this context, are not merely physical divides but are also constituted by social processes that either enable or restrict the movement of people, goods, and ideas (Cunningham & Heyman, 2004, as cited in Ford & Lyons, 2006). Mobility and enclosure is “two points on a continuum of movement”, which mobility refers to “social processes that enable and induce” movement, while enclosure represents the “delimiting and restriction” of that movement (Cunningham & Heyman, 2004, as cited in Ford & Lyons, 2006:258). The

processes of enclosure “structured by ongoing social processes that permit, monitor, or halt movement” (Cunningham & Heyman, 2004, as cited in Ford & Lyons, 2006:258).

This concept of bordered reality underscores the tension between the aspirational “borderless” sound of Japanese metalcore and the socio-political realities that regulate their cross-border movement. It challenges celebratory notions of global music as a space of unbounded flow, instead situating it within the broader regimes of mobility and enclosure that define global cultural exchanges.

## **2. Methods**

Method that is used for this study is case study. Case study is a “design of inquiry [...] especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, or process” (Creswell, 2014:58). The analysis of a case is bounded by time and activity, in which the researcher “collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, as cited in Creswell, 2014:58).

This study employs document analysis as the primary method to explore the dynamics of cross-border interactions within the Japanese metalcore community, particularly focusing on Crossfaith. The qualitative documents that are collected can be public documents such as newspapers, minutes of meetings, official reports to “enable the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants” (Creswell, 2014:316). Given the lack of responses to interview requests, this method allows for a comprehensive examination of the cross-border mobility and identity of this band. The analysis will focus on content related to their international tours, collaborations, and social media communications to identify patterns of transnationalism in their music and performances. The analysis will also explore how issues such as visa challenges, global tours, and international collaborations reflect the bands' negotiation of cultural boundaries.

The data will be analyzed by identifying recurring themes, patterns, and relationships, particularly focusing on how these elements contribute to the bands' negotiation of cultural identity and the formation of cross-border connections. The analysis will involve coding and categorizing textual data to uncover key themes, such as transnational collaboration, cultural hybridity, and challenges in global mobility. The process will include a close reading of the documents to extract both explicit content (e.g., statements from interviews, social media posts, or press coverage) and implicit meanings (e.g., tone, context, or underlying assumptions about cross-border interactions). By triangulating data from multiple sources, such as tour announcements, promotional materials, and media interviews, the study aims to construct a nuanced understanding of how Crossfaith navigates the complexities of operating in the global music industry while maintaining their Japanese cultural identity. This approach will provide insights into the interplay between local and global influences in their work, further contextualizing the role of transnationalism in the Japanese metalcore community.

### **2.1 Scope and Limitation**

This paper explores the transnational dynamics of Japanese metalcore bands, focusing specifically on Crossfaith. Crossfaith was chosen for their significant international appeal, active participation in cross-border tours, and collaborations with global artists and music

labels. The study analyzes how these bands navigate the challenges of cross-border mobility, such as visa restrictions, cultural adaptations, and the logistics of touring and productions in international markets. The focus of this research examines the role of Japan as a cultural exporter of metalcore and the interaction of these bands with Western audiences and music industries.

This research is restricted to Crossfaith due to their relevance in the context of transnationalism and cross-border dynamic. Other notable Japanese metalcore bands, such as Maximum the Hormone or Rize, are excluded from this analysis due to scope constraints. Moreover, the primary focus is on the international appeal and cross-border activities of these bands. The study does not delve into their domestic impact or the reception of metalcore within Japan.

This paper does not provide a detailed musical or lyrical analysis of the bands' discographies. Instead, it focuses on their socio-cultural and logistical navigation of transnational spaces. Furthermore, while efforts have been made to gather primary data through interviews with band members or their management, the research relies significantly on secondary sources, such as existing interviews, media articles, and fan engagement on social media, due to practical limitations in securing direct access.

The findings of this paper are not intended to generalize the experiences of all Japanese metalcore bands. Rather, they provide a focused case study of Crossfaith as representative example of transnational and cross-border mobility within the metalcore genre.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Transnationalism in Japanese Metalcore**

Deena Weinstein argues that metal is like transnational capitalism, with “corporations located in the metropole but active in sites far afield” and it is deterritorialized, it did not speak from any country or culture (Weinstein, 2011:45). Weinstein highlights this with the example of that the German metal band from the 1970s, Scorpions, who sang in English despite the members speaking in highly accented and fractured English (Weinstein, 2011).

Similarly, Crossfaith chose to sing in English because their vocalist, Kenta Koie, was influenced by overseas music and aspired to tour globally:

“I have listened to overseas music and I don’t listen to Japanese music as well. I need to improve my English more better because we want to sing all over the world.” (Kenta in Rico, 2018)

This choice reflects the band's effort to transcend language barriers. Singing in English enables them to access global audiences more effectively. Their global aspirations are also evident in the production of their fourth EP, *Zion* (2012). Unlike their earlier works, *Zion* was recorded in New Jersey, USA, produced by Machine, known for working with iconic bands like White Zombie and Lamb of God (Japan Music System, n.d.). Keyboardist and DJ Teru elaborates on the process:

“[...]we asked Machine to record the songs that were completed in Japan. But this time we had a little less than two months, so we wrote songs together with Machine, recorded demos

and arranged them, and that's how it differs from the previous work.” (Teru in Muraoka, 2013 translated by Google Translate)

Kenta further adds that the band traveled to America “after about 95% of ‘ZION‘ EP – Extended Play – album was completed,” with Machine taking on the role of producer to refine the album (Koie in Muraoka, 2013). This collaborative effort in the United States highlights Crossfaith’s willingness to integrate global influences into their music while maintaining their creative vision.

Crossfaith further extended their global reach by signing with UNFD, an Australian-based independent record label, focuses on heavy music genres and operates as part of UNIFIED Music Group, a larger music company dedicated to artist management and label services. Crossfaith signed to UNFD for their debut in Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and the UK (MTRBWY, 2015). Their *Xeno* album, released on 18 September 2015, was their first under UNFD. They have headlined several major music festivals, such as Soundwave Festival in 2013 and 2015 in Australia, where they have become well-established. UNFD had been wanting to work with Crossfaith since 2011 due to their “incredible and bring so much energy and creativity to the genre,” according to UNFD A&R Luke Logemann (in MTRBWY, 2015).

The *XENO* album features collaborations with international artists, including Caleb Shomo of American band, Beartooth and Welsh singer Benji Webbe. Later, Crossfaith secured more prestigious collaborations with prominent international acts such as Rou Reynolds of the UK band, Enter Shikari and the British electronic duo, WARGASM. Such partnerships demonstrate the band’s growing reputation and their deliberate strategy to align with artists who resonate with more diverse audiences.

These collaborations are not just musical choices but also cultural statements, as they involve artists from different linguistic and geographical backgrounds. By engaging with global musicians, Crossfaith signals a desire to both assimilate and innovate within the broader metalcore scene. This blend of linguistic and cultural influences exemplifies how Crossfaith navigates their identity in a transnational space. By singing in English and collaborating with global artists, they reach beyond national boundaries, positioning themselves as a bridge between Japan and the international music community.

Kun’s concept of the “Aural Border“, a musical geography and sonic migration with borderless future that has been a key point of cultural contact (Kun, 2000), can be seen in how Crossfaith embodies this “aural border” by fusing hardcore metal, Electronic Dance Music (EDM), and global influences. They creating a cohesive sound that transcends cultural and genre boundaries. As Koie states, “[...] I think dubstep and hardcore breakdowns have a similar essence.” (in Todd, 2016).

### **3.1.1 Maintaining the Japanese root**

Although the band predominantly performs in English to appeal to international audiences, they occasionally incorporate Japanese elements into their music. This demonstrates their effort to stay connected to their cultural heritage while in global context. “None of Your Business” is a prime example of this, which features Japanese rapper Jin Dogg. The song merges metalcore with rap, showcasing a fusion of Western and Japanese influences. Koie emphasized the significance of this collaboration:

“We don’t need what we don’t need and we don’t need people yelping like a little kid. It’s not just anger, I’m tired of it. We made this video with Japan’s finest creative team, THINGS, and it features a great performance from our best friend Jake AKA Jin Dogg. Go feel it and unleash yourself with MADNESS.” (Koie, in Birt, 2020).

Koie’s words underscore the importance of collaboration with Japanese artists like Jin Dogg, who adds a distinctly local flavor to the track. While the song’s core message and language are global in their reach, the inclusion of a prominent Japanese rapper makes it clear that Crossfaith values their cultural heritage. The blending of metalcore and rap in this track underscores Crossfaith’s ability to integrate diverse musical styles, bridging the gap between Japanese cultural heritage and global music traditions.

Moreover, Crossfaith's engagement with their Japanese roots is not only reflected in their music, but also in the unique venues they choose for performances. A notable example of this is their #WorldHeritage show at the Nikkosan Rinnoji Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site, on 26 September, 2017 (Red Bull Japan, 2017). Reflecting on the event, Koie remarked:

“I think this is a truly historic moment. I think it is unprecedented for a rock band to perform in a place like this, to have a live audience like in a live music club. It is like being a part of history. I am truly honored to be a part of history” (Red Bull Japan, 2017 translated by DeepL).

The choice of this historical venue for a live show underscores the band’s commitment to their Japanese cultural identity, blending traditional heritage with the modernity of metalcore. Performing at such an iconic Japanese location contrast with their international endeavours, reinforcing their connection to Japanese heritage while expanding their global reach. By holding a performance in such a culturally rich and symbolic setting, Crossfaith bridges the gap between their Japanese origins and the global stage, creating a hybrid identity that transcends borders.

By featuring Jin Dogg and performing at Nikkosan Rinnoji Temple, Crossfaith creates a space where their Japanese identity is not erased in their pursuit of international success. Instead, it is integrated into their broader transnational appeal, allowing them to present a hybrid identity that speaks both to their Japanese roots and to the global metal community. In this sense, Crossfaith exemplifies the concept of 'borderless' sound while simultaneously remaining grounded in their cultural origins, navigating the delicate balance between being 'Japanese' and 'global.' This process of blending identities and navigating cultural differences can be understood through Bhabha’s idea of hybridity, where “the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (Bhabha, 1994 as cited in Kraidy, 2002:320). Furthermore, Crossfaith’s linguistic and cultural duality, evident in their use of both English and Japanese lyrics and their ability to blend Japanese cultural elements with global music style, underscores how Japanese metalcore bands navigate cross-border dynamics while contributing to a 'borderless' sound. Their ability to maintain their unique cultural identity while appealing to global audiences is a testament to how music can transcend borders, reflecting a complex negotiation of identity in a globalized world.

### **3.2 Negotiating Borders: Cross-Border Realities and Challenges**



While transnationalism emphasizes fluid cultural exchanges and global connectivity, the “bordered reality” concept is reflected in the tangible constraints that shape and restrict mobility. To analyze mobility, the concept of “mobility links” where “various forms of international mobility, such as holiday travel, visits, migration, and business and education travel are interlinked in people’s lives” (Frändberg, 2006, as cited in Perrin-Malterre 2024:6), is crucial. This leads to questioning the relationship between cross-border practices, particularly of Japanese metalcore band Crossfaith, especially regarding their touring.

### 3.2.1 Visa Restriction

Rock tours are a form of tourism because it is involving travel overseas, but they are not tourists, yet they are working, “whereas tourism proper has typically been analyzed as a leisure activity removed from the world of work” (MacCannell, 1976 as cited in Waksman, 2011:228). Touring involves many hours of productivity where “musicians engage in many of the activities that constitute tourism”, thus “in journalistic and popular representations, musicians on tour performed a sort of tourism for readers and fans. Through tales of their encounters with distant lands and exotic people, rock stars codified their own privileged status and acted as mediators between the familiar and the foreign, as figures who traversed boundaries that others did not have occasion to cross” (Waksman, 2011:228). However, is this always a “privileged status”?

Crossfaith has headlined some prestigious music festival, such as Soundwave Festival in 2013 and 2015 in Australia and the Hammersonic Festival in 2024 in Indonesia (Aban & Pangesti, 2024). However, institutional barriers such as visa restrictions, often complicate their international tours. For instance, Crossfaith was supposed to headline the Warped Tour 2015, the largest rock music festival in the United States since 1995 and successfully established artists such as Blink 182, No Doubt, Sublime, Beck, Katy Perry, NOFX, Limp Bizkit, Black Eyed Peas, Green Day, Eminem, Yellowcard, and Bad Religion (Events DC, 2024). However, Japan’s “US Visa system has been down for last few weeks” (see Figure 1), causing them to miss the start of the Vans Warped Tour.



Figure 1. Official statement of Crossfaith’s visa issue (Retrieved from Ghost Cult Mag)

Visa policies are “central to the regulation of cross-border flows” because “they serve to enable or impede desired or undesired mobility” (Brabandt & Mau, 2013:58). Since the potential travelers require to apply for a visa in their home countries, thus they need to approach the embassies and consulates of their destination countries (ibid). Therefore, “the institution of the visa allows states to decide well in advance whom they will grant access” (Guild, 2001; Guiraudon, 2002 as cited in Brabandt & Mau, 2013:58). In Crossfaith's case, the band's ability to tour internationally is directly impacted by restrictive visa policies, hindering their participation in major events like the Warped Tour. These restrictions limit their mobility and hinder their ability to fully capitalize on global opportunities, despite their widespread popularity and demand in international markets. Although the band has a significant fanbase and strong reputation, they face bureaucratic obstacles that can delay or prevent their involvement in important events. Thus, this limiting their ability to connect with global audiences.

As Czaika and de Haas (Czaika & de Haas, 2013 as cited in Czaika & Neumayer 2017) suggest, “visa restrictions may influence the volume and spatial direction of international travel to an extent which is still unclear”, especially for performers. Visa restrictions result in a global mobility landscape that varies greatly across countries and regions, creating uncertainties and inequalities for international travelers, including bands like Crossfaith. These restrictions, such as visa issues, influence not only the scope of their international tours, but also which countries or festivals they can access, limiting their global reach and the diversity of audiences they can engage with.

Borders are now seen as “processes, practices, discourses, symbols, institutions or networks through which power works” rather than fixed lines (Johnson et al. 2011, in Perrin-Malterre, 2024: 5). Crossfaith's experience with visa issues illustrates a broader issue in global mobility, revealing that borders are not merely physical barriers but also institutional ones that hinder international artists' careers. Visa restrictions are a recurring obstacle for many bands, particularly those from non-Western countries, as they must navigate bureaucratic systems that often favor artists from established, wealthier regions. These barriers, which are both literal and systemic, are not just about physical movement but also about access to key international markets. For bands like Crossfaith, who seek to expand their audience beyond Japan, visa issues limit their ability to perform at major international festivals, which are vital for global recognition. This creates an uneven playing field in the global music industry, where certain artists are denied opportunities simply because they cannot traverse national borders with ease.

Unfortunately, this reveals that visa restrictions are common experiences. However, it is worth noting that more established Western bands often enjoy greater mobility, demonstrating the unequal distribution of global opportunities in the music industry. These structural barriers can perpetuate cycles of exclusion for emerging international acts, leading to a disparity in career trajectories.

The implications of these systemic barriers are far-reaching for musicians, particularly in an era of increasing globalization. While globalization promises greater cross-cultural exchanges and collaboration, it simultaneously exposes the disparities in global mobility. In the context of music, this disparity can limit the flow of ideas and the ability to share cultural experiences across borders. Artists from regions like Japan, despite their growing international appeal, often face hurdles that undermine the full potential of this global exchange. Moreover,

these challenges not only affect their ability to reach new audiences but also impede the growth of global music communities.

### 3.2.2 Linguistic Barriers

In addition to the institutional barriers posed by visa restrictions, linguistic barriers also play a significant role in shaping Crossfaith's cross-border experiences. Communication across linguistic barriers is often filled with "potential landmines in meaning and undertones", connoting "power and status", and reflecting "cultural diversity" (Kedia & Reddy, 2016). These dynamics can lead to "dysfunction" and foster an "us vs. them" mentality (Kedia & Reddy, 2016), creating unique challenges for non-native English speakers like Crossfaith.

This linguistic barrier is evident in a compilation video titled "Crossfaith | Funny Moments 2" (2017), which appears to aggregate various clips of the band, the original source of the footage could not be independently verified. In one scene, the band struggled to understand the rules of a murder mystery game due to their limited grasp of English. Teru even relied on a translation application to communicate his message effectively. Kenta Koie himself has acknowledged this challenge:

"I need to improve my English more better because we want to sing all over the world. Our first overseas tour was last year and so when we can speak English, we can speak English not well. Right now it's a little bit better, but we need to improve our English skill." (Koie, in Pinnegar, n.d).

In another interview, the band mentioned their ongoing efforts to improve their English, noting that their progress has significantly influenced their songwriting:

"The main thing is that we can now speak English! This is a great thing that we have been really working on for many years. The sound has definitely progressed and our song writing skills have definitely improved as well. [...] This does directly translate to the music." (in Culpan, 2013).

This need to strengthen their English proficiency highlights how language impacts not only their ability to express themselves but also their connection with international audiences. The linguistic gap further complicates their cross-border dynamics and reinforces how language shapes identity and power.

### 3.2.3 Audience's Role in Defining Cross-Border Experience

As the band faces challenges in communication, they also encounter a cultural negotiation across borders. Cultural negotiation refers to "the ways that people from different regions come to agreement, or the processes involved in negotiations" (Sebenius, 2002:5). Determining a "yes" or "no" is different from culture to culture, not just in terms of legal technicalities but also in terms of behaviors and core beliefs (Sebenius, 2002). For instance, during Crossfaith's first experience supporting the American metalcore band Of Mice & Men on their UK tour in 2012, Kenta recalled that he nearly got hit by a bottle while they were setting up for the show (Koie in Herson, 2018). This act can be interpreted as a form of resistance or rejection of cultural exchange. It highlights the tensions that can arise when individuals from different cultural backgrounds meet in global spaces, such as concert venues, and underscores the complexities of navigating cross-border interactions in music.

These experiences of navigating borders, both physical and linguistic, illustrate the nuanced realities of being a global artist in an industry often idealized for its cultural exchange. For bands like Crossfaith, the journey toward global recognition is marked by significant hurdles that highlight the uneven playing field within the music world. These barriers, whether institutional, linguistic, or cultural, serve as reminders of the persisting inequalities in global mobility. Yet, despite these challenges, Crossfaith's resilience and ongoing efforts to bridge these divides underscore the transformative power of music as a tool for fostering cross-border connections and mutual understanding.

#### 4. Conclusions

Japanese metalcore, exemplified by Crossfaith, operates as a borderless medium, blending Western metalcore and hardcore influences while retaining distinct Japanese cultural elements. Through collaborations with international artists, albums signed under UNFD, and performances like those featuring Japanese rapper Jin Dogg at Nikkosan Rinnoji Temple, Crossfaith creates a hybrid sound that transcends national identities. This sound not only appeals to global audiences, but also remains deeply rooted in Japan, acting as a cultural contact zone that bridges local and international fan bases.

Furthermore, Kun's concept of music as a "musical hyperspace" aligns with how Japanese metalcore bands, like Crossfaith, connect their cultural origins with global audiences. Despite Deena Weinstein's argument that metal is transnational because it is deterritorialized, and thus does not speak from any country or culture (Weinstein, 2011), the limitations on global mobility, such as visa restrictions, linguistic barriers, and cultural negotiations, highlight the broader consequences for cross-border cultural exchange. These barriers limit the full potential of music as a universal language, impeding the exchange of diverse sounds, histories, and traditions.

Illustrating Crossfaith's experiences underscores the importance of addressing these barriers, particularly in creating a more inclusive global music stage. To address these issues, several key steps could be taken, such as relaxing visa restrictions for musicians, enhancing cross-cultural communication through cross-cultural training to navigate linguistic and cultural differences more effectively, and creating platforms for artists from different cultural backgrounds to work together without bureaucratic or financial hindrances initiated by record labels and music festivals.

By reducing restrictions on mobility and cultural exchange, the music industry could pave the way for a more equitable and dynamic cultural landscape. This would enable musicians from diverse backgrounds to collaborate freely and share their stories, enriching the global music community. Overcoming these challenges is crucial to ensuring that the flow of music, as a powerful tool for cultural dialogue, is not hindered by systemic obstacles.

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