

RESEARCH UNCOVERS METAL BAND'S ABILITY TO BOOST LISTENERS' INTEREST IN HISTORY

- Sabaton is a Swedish metal band from Falun whose music focuses mainly on historical events
- After the release of the band's latest EP, *Heroes Of The Great War*, an interesting worldwide trend was picked up on by the Sabaton team
- This report explores the question: Does fact-based music encourage learning about history?

A CONTAGIOUS PASSION FOR HISTORY

Swedish metallers, Sabaton, have been on the metal scene since 1999. Their influence and popularity cannot be argued with. The band's DSP streams speak for themselves (they have over 3 million monthly listeners on Spotify alone), as do their millions of social media followers.

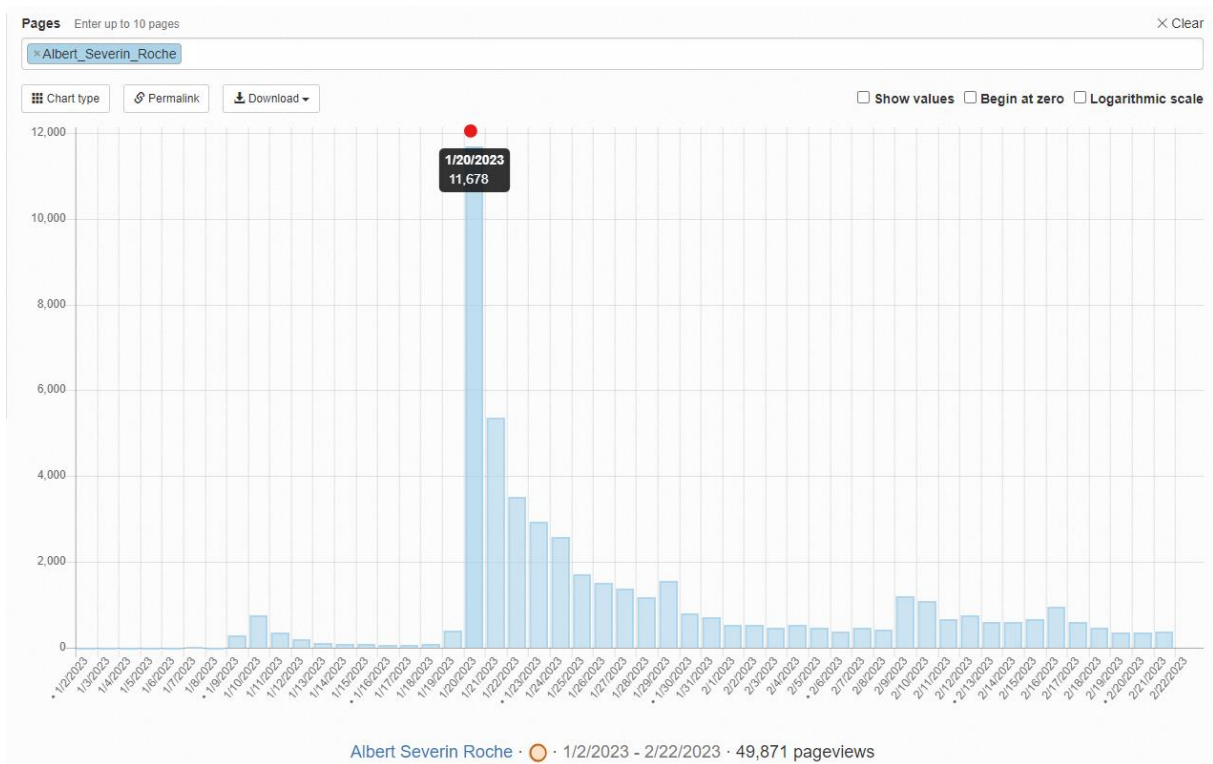
Sabaton carved out a niche from the very dawn of their existence, and this niche is something very specific: metal music infused with fact-based history. Not only are their songs incredibly catchy but they are also educational and accurately depict the happenings of various conflicts from a neutral standpoint. History is their lifeblood, and their mission is to educate; to spark an interest within fans, young and old, and make them delve deeper into conflicts and happenings that are sometimes ignored or perceived as boring history lessons.

A recent finding by the Sabaton team confirmed that this interest has indeed been sparked, and that spark has transformed into a bright flame. Following the launch of the band's most recent singles, a huge spike in interest on two historical figures was noticed on the English language Wikipedia.

Sabaton's most recent single entitled '**The First Soldier**' is a song about France's Albert Severin Roche, a WW1 figure. On the launch day of the single, the Internet exploded with listeners searching for more information on this person. The same thing happened with their single, '**Father**', which spurred great interest in Fritz Haber, a very controversial figure.

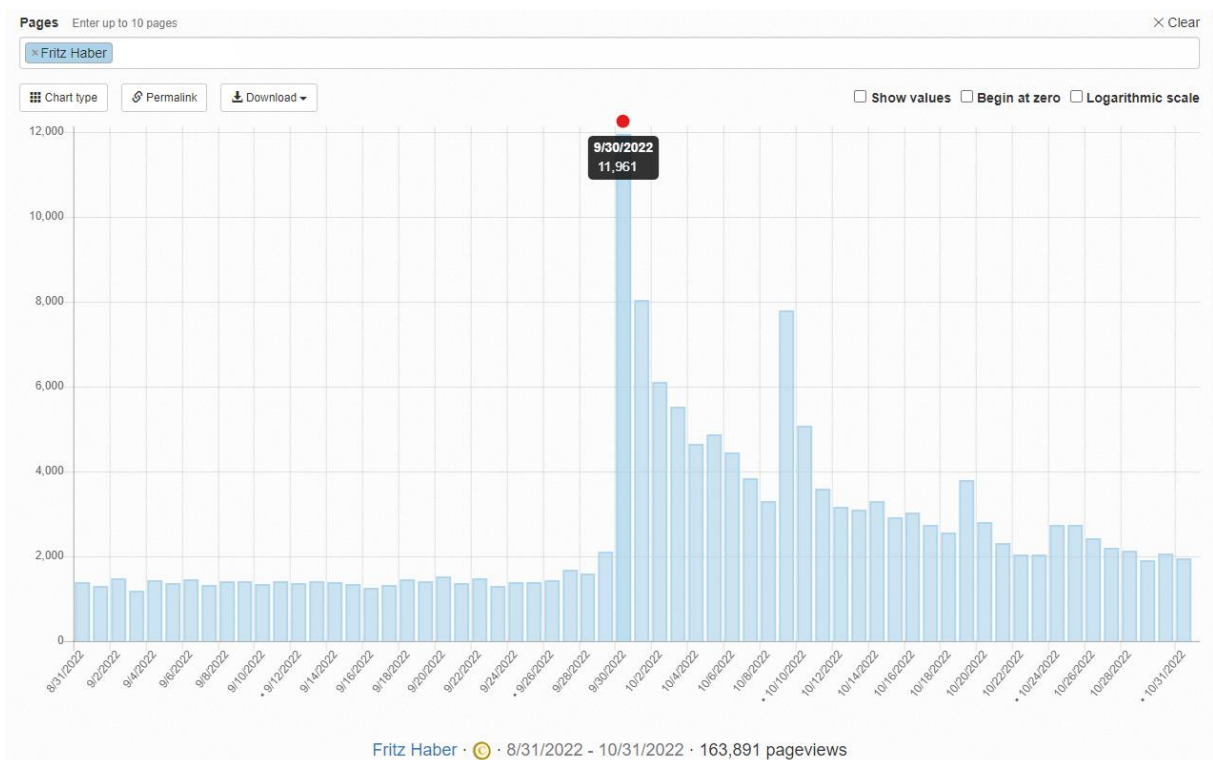
Clearly, listeners wanted to find out more, and began delving further into the stories behind these two new tracks. For Sabaton, their mission was accomplished.

The Wikipedia Page view statistics are solid proof of this. On the release date of "The First Soldier" (January 20, 2023), a very noticeable rise in page views for Albert Severin Roche presented itself to the Sabaton team. The day before launch, a mere **392** were recorded for this figure. On launch day, **11,678** page views were recorded for Albert Severin Roche, marking a **jump of 2,879%**. See the graph below.



(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics¹)

Meanwhile, on September 30, 2022, the date Sabaton released their single, ‘Father’, the Wikipedia Page view statistics indicated a sharp rise in interest on Fritz Haber (see graph below). The day prior to the launch (September 29, 2022) witnessed a total of 2,096 page views. On the day of the release, the page views shot up to **11,961**, representing a rise of over 470%.



(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics²)

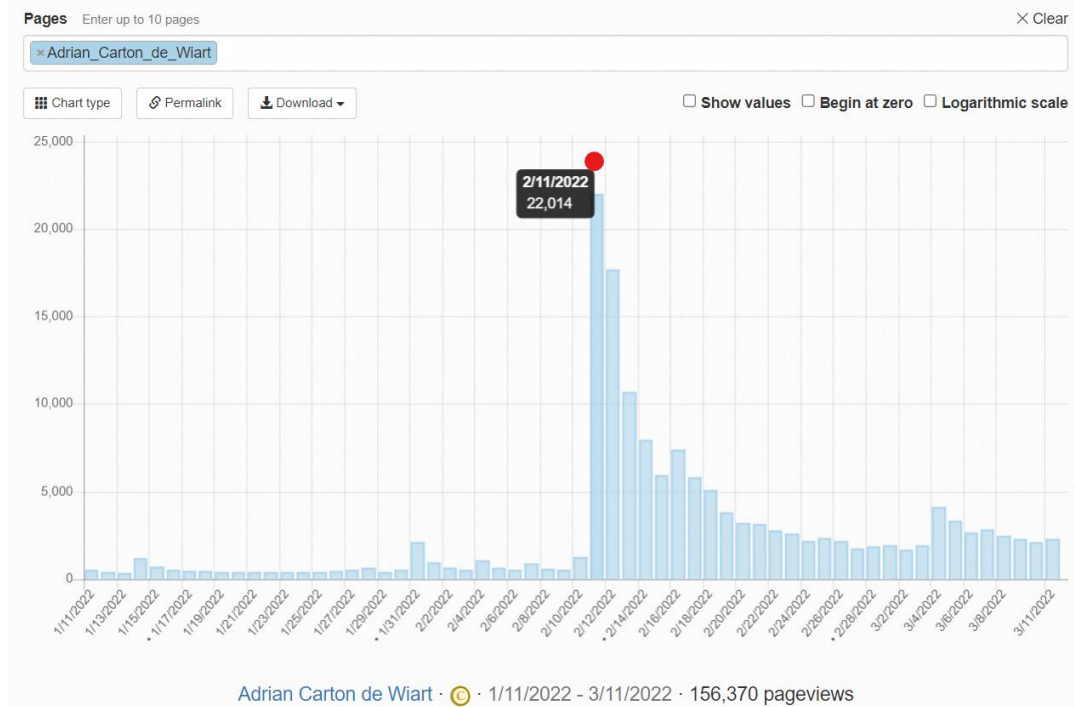
¹ <https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2023-01-02&end=2023-02-22&pages=Albert Severin Roche>

² <https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-08-31&end=2022-10-31&pages=Fritz Haber>

DELVING DEEPER INTO THE DATA

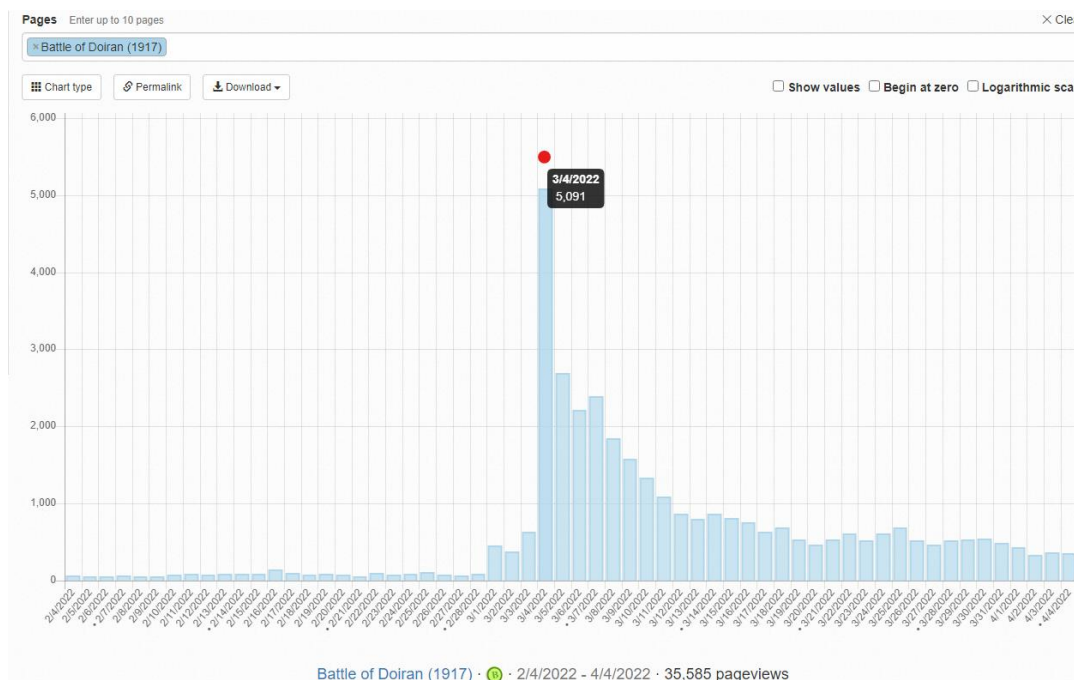
Eager to examine this further, the Sabaton team wanted to find out whether this trend was ongoing or just a fluke. They sought out evidence to see if the band's music really was influencing people to learn more about the historical figures and happenings on their own terms and of their own accord.

The day before the release of Sabaton's **'The Unkillable Soldier'** track, which was written about Adrian Carton De Wiart, only 1,248 Wikipedia page views for De Wiart were recorded. On the day of the single release though (February 11, 2022), there were **22,014** views on De Wiart's Wikipedia page, marking **an increase of 1,663%**. The rise in curiosity continued for several more days post-release.



(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics ³)

The day before the release of Sabaton's track **'The Valley Of Death'** about The Battle of Doiran in 1917, only 633 page views were recorded for the Battle of Doiran. But on release day (March 4, 2022), a noticeably larger number was recorded. **5,091** to be exact, marking a **704% increase**.

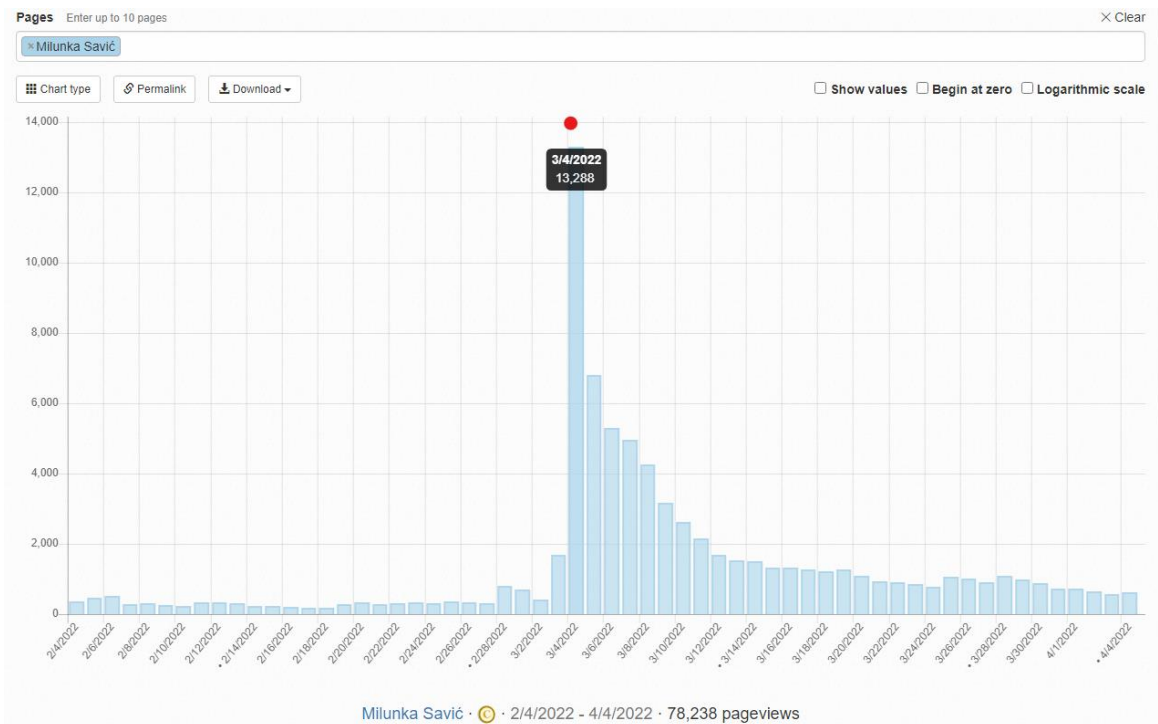


(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics ⁴)

³ [https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-01-11&end=2022-03-11&pages=Adrian Carton de Wiart](https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-01-11&end=2022-03-11&pages=Adrian%20Carton%20de%20Wiart)

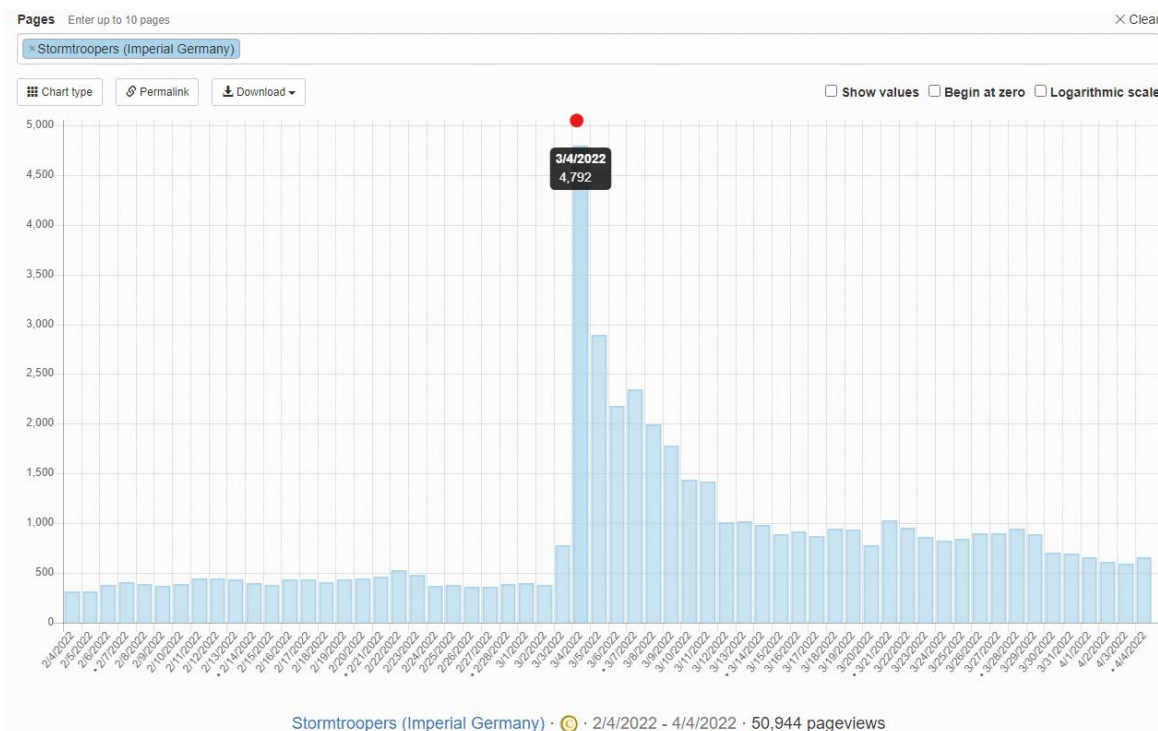
⁴ [https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-02-04&end=2022-04-04&pages=Battle of Doiran \(1917\)](https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-02-04&end=2022-04-04&pages=Battle%20of%20Doiran%20(1917))

The same trend was witnessed for the popular track ‘Lady Of The Dark’. On the day of the release (March 4, 2022), a total of **13,288** page views were recorded on Milunka Savić’s page, the figure the song was written about, marking a **690% jump** on the previous day, which saw only 1,681 page views.



(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics ⁵)

Sabaton’s track, ‘Stormtroopers’, which was written about the Stormtroopers of Imperial Germany, followed a similar trend. The day prior to the release saw 779 page views. The next day (March 4, 2022), this rose to **4,792**, marking an **increase of 515%**.



(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics ⁶)

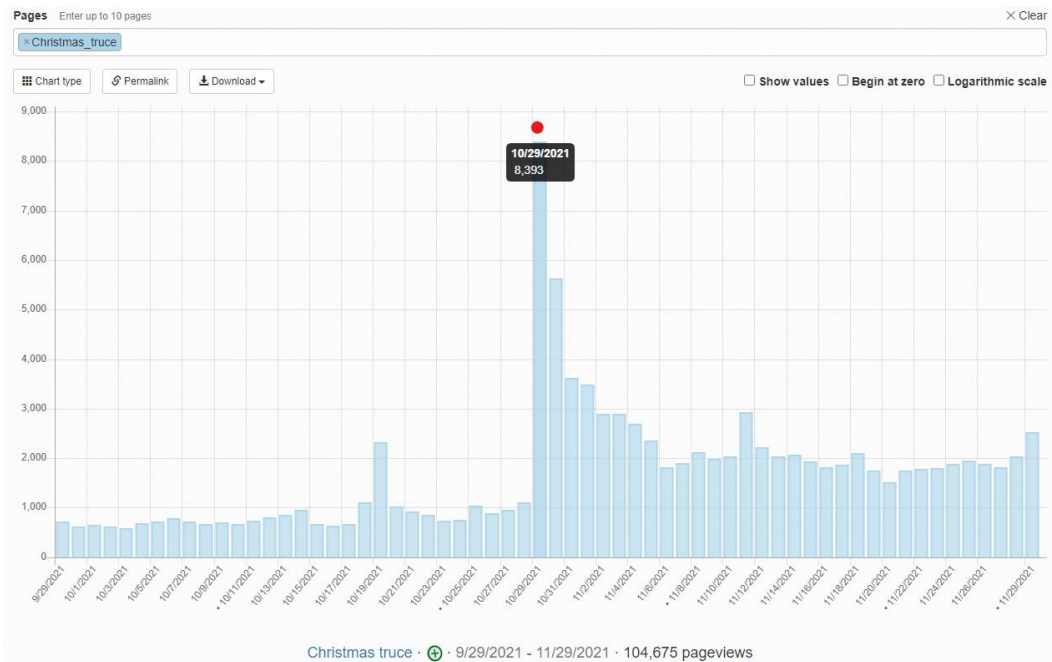
⁵ [https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-02-04&end=2022-04-04&pages=Milunka Savi%C4%87](https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-02-04&end=2022-04-04&pages=Milunka+Savi%C4%87)

⁶ [https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-02-04&end=2022-04-04&pages=Stormtroopers \(Imperial Germany\)](https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2022-02-04&end=2022-04-04&pages=Stormtroopers+(Imperial+Germany))

GOING BACK IN TIME

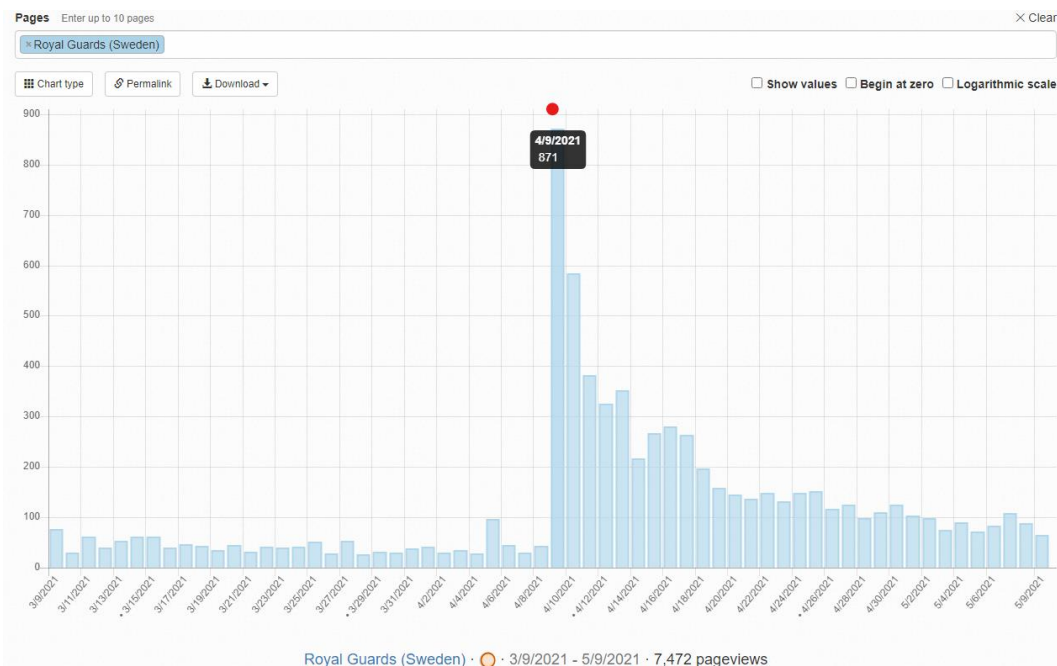
In order to ensure that this simply wasn't a 'happy coincidence' for the year 2022, the team decided to go back in time.

The song 'Christmas Truce' (see graph below) was released on October 29, 2021, and was written about the Christmas Truce of 1914 during World War I. The day prior to the song's launch only saw 1,110 page views for the Christmas Truce of 1914. But on the day of the release, **8,393** page views were recorded, marking a **656% increase** in interest on the topic. The rise in curiosity continued for several days post-release.



(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics ⁷)

Next up, 'The Royal Guard' was released on April 9, 2021. The day prior to the song launch saw 43 page views for the Swedish Royal Guard. The following day, this jumped to **871**, marking a **1,925% increase**.

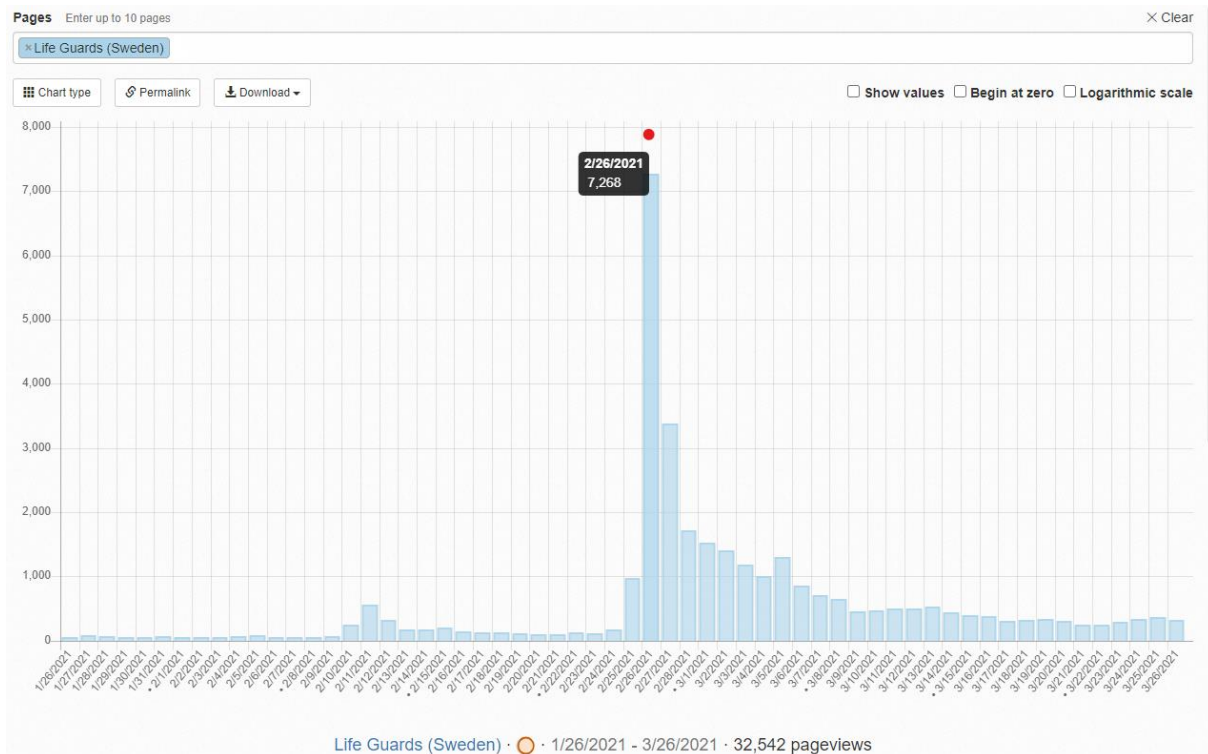


(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics ⁸)

⁷ https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2021-09-29&end=2021-11-29&pages=Christmas_truce

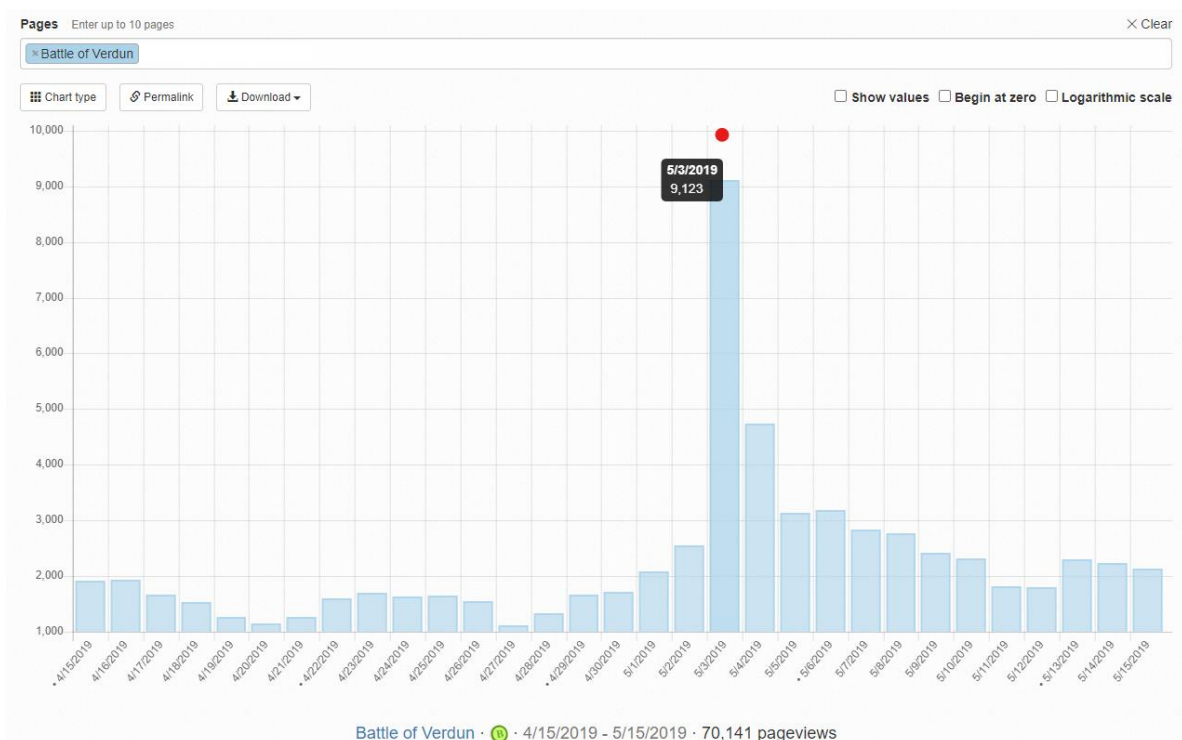
⁸ [https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2021-03-09&end=2021-05-09&pages=Royal_Guards_\(Sweden\)](https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2021-03-09&end=2021-05-09&pages=Royal_Guards_(Sweden))

Meanwhile, **'Livgardet'**, the Swedish version of The Royal Guard song, was released on February 26, 2021. The day prior to the song's launch saw 983 page views. The following day, **a 639% jump was registered with 7,268** page views.



(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics ⁹)

Moving on, **'Fields of Verdun'** was released on May 3, 2019, and was written about The Battle of Verdun. The day prior to the single witnessed 2,555 page views for the Battle of Verdun. The next day, this jumped to **9,123** page views, marking a **257% increase in interest**.

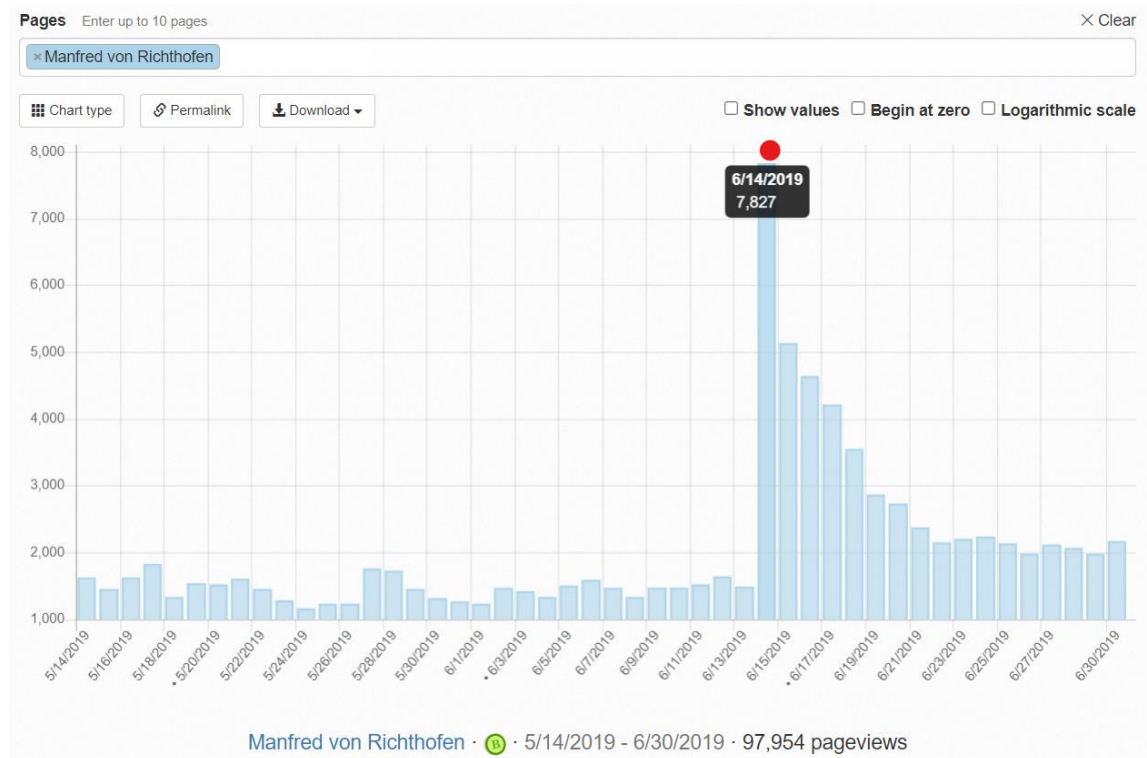


(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics ¹⁰)

⁹ [https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2021-01-26&end=2021-03-26&pages=Life Guards \(Sweden\)](https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2021-01-26&end=2021-03-26&pages=Life%20Guards%20(Sweden))

¹⁰ [https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2019-04-15&end=2019-05-15&pages=Battle of Verdun](https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2019-04-15&end=2019-05-15&pages=Battle%20of%20Verdun)

Finally, Sabaton's song, **'The Red Baron'**, was released on June 14, 2019, and was written about Manfred von Richthofen. As predicted, the same trend was noticed. From 1,494 on June 13, 2019, the page views for von Richthofen jumped to **7,827** on release day (June 14, 2019), marking an increase of **423%**.



(Source: Wikipedia, Page view statistics¹¹)

A TOOL TO INSPIRE LEARNING

There is an unquestionable power behind Sabaton's music. Not only are their fans enjoying what they are hearing and satisfying their thirst for heavy metal, but they are also being inspired by the stories and lyrics to dig deeper and learn. The band's music can therefore be labelled a useful tool that encourages learning and promotes history.

Although the music has organically inspired people to investigate and learn on their own terms, it has often come to the band's attention that their songs are being utilised by history teachers in schools as an alternative method of storytelling and a way to motivate and encourage interest in the subject.

Chantelle from Las Vegas, who previously taught history, remarked: "I have been a Sabaton fan for three years and during my lessons I used the song 'The Price Of A Mile'."

'The Price Of A Mile' is about the Battle of Passchendaele, a conflict that took place from July 31 to November 10, 1917, between the Allied forces and the Germans in Flanders.

"I believe music is a useful tool. It can spark an interest, and students may feel inspired to learn more," Chantelle added. "I am no longer teaching. I have become a school counsellor, but I am, however, very close to my history teachers and have shared Sabaton's music with them."

Meanwhile, Teun, a history teacher from the Netherlands, explained that he uses two songs in particular to teach his students.

"I use the song 'Great War' when I am teaching about World War I," he said. "I play the song during class and show the lyrics on the board. The assignment for the students is to find out what the real feeling was about the war at the front."

¹¹ https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&redirects=0&start=2019-05-14&end=2019-06-30&pages=Manfred_von_Richthofen

The second song Teun uses in his classes is the English version of ‘Carolus Rex’. He explained why: “I use this song right before I am going to talk about absolutism. When the students have the lyrics in front of them, I start the song and they have to mark all the bits they think are about absolutism. After the song is over, we discuss the lyrics and I start my lesson. The song very clearly talks about the elements of absolute rulers, such as believing they have been appointed by God and wanting to have power. The students almost always pick out all elements. They love the use of music during the lessons and some individuals even start listening to Sabaton from then on and come to me to tell me about the songs they like.”

Teun is convinced that music can be a useful tool for teaching history, mainly because students appreciate alternative methods of educating.

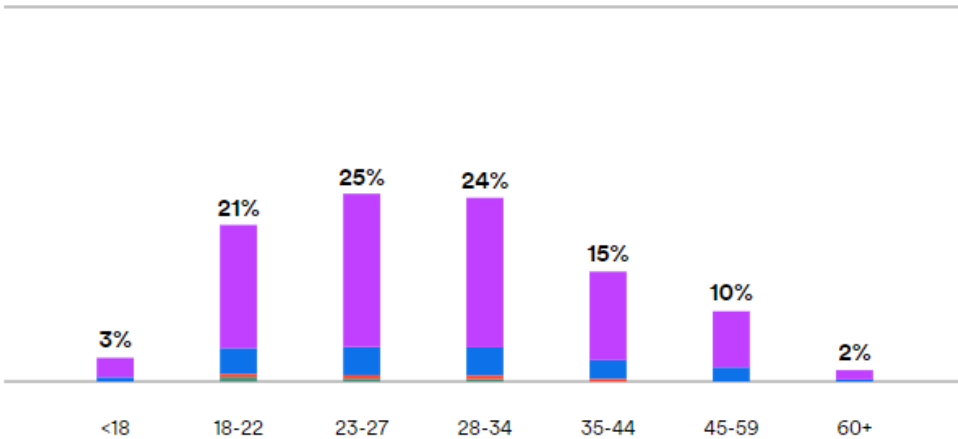
“Some may really learn while listening to music, and music can touch people on an emotional level,” he said. “When you hear a song like ‘Great War’, for example, you can feel the despair and doubt of the soldier. This gives you, as a teacher, the opportunity to ‘transport’ the students to that specific historical moment. Often the reality of historic events really sinks in with the students while listening to a song about said event or person,” he added.

Teun has been an avid listener of Sabaton for over 4.5 years and has confirmed that he will continue to use the band’s music during his lessons. But this tool isn’t simply something that can be used for children and teenagers who are learning a set curriculum in school. It is something that everyone can benefit from. It allows people of all ages to educate themselves on the stories from days gone by; to uncover tales that they may have never heard and broaden their knowledge of history. As the American philosopher John Dewey aptly stated: “Education is not preparation for life. Education is life itself.” Learning should be an ongoing process regardless of a person’s age.

The below graph highlights the age range of Sabaton listeners on Spotify. The majority of listeners are aged **18-59**, highlighting that the band has a broad outreach, with under 18s and over 60s still demonstrating interest in their catalogue.

Listeners’ age

Listeners • Last 28 Days • Worldwide



WHAT DOES SABATON SAY?

It goes without saying that the members of Sabaton feel great pride in their achievements and in their ability to pique their listeners' interest in their passion.

Sabaton's bassist, Pär Sundström, was asked how he felt about this trend. He responded: "Thanks to our decision to start singing about history almost two decades ago, we have gained a good understanding of the world that we live in. We understand more why people speak, think, vote and make wars as they do. That is why history is important. We need to know where we come from so we can make the right decisions for where we are going. If we can help even a few people down that line, I am happy about our lives' work."

Frontman, **Joakim Brodén** also opined: "I'm impressed with the figures. Our listeners could just take our music at face value, but witnessing their hunger to learn more means that they are genuinely interested in the stories we tell and not just in the music we release. I'm very proud of us as we work hard to ensure that the facts are straight, and it's a lot of pressure on all of us to tell a story in a way that won't be deemed biased or incorrect. But quite honestly, I'm just proud of our fans. They're clearly on the same wavelength as us and that means everything!"

OTHER EDUCATIONAL ENDEAVOURS

A lesser-known fact about Sabaton is that the band doesn't only use music to educate. They have found other innovative ways to spread the word on history.

Wanting to take things up a notch, they launched the carefully researched Sabaton History channel on YouTube in 2019 with the help of historians, Indy Neidell (who also hosts each episode) and Markus Linke. Filmed in an informal documentary-style manner, the purpose of the Sabaton History YouTube channel is to take viewers on an educational yet enjoyable journey through the history, the creative process and the untold stories behind the tracks, providing an informative and carefully researched platform for those wanting to get to the nitty gritty and learn more.

The channel already has over 330,000 subscribers and over 100 documentary-style videos, and is rapidly growing in both content and subscriber numbers.

Complimenting this, Sabaton's official website also features full-length, detailed articles that take readers through the stories behind their songs.

Armed with their unending passion for history and a gargantuan platform to share their music and knowledge, there is no doubt that Sabaton will continue on their quest. With new releases on the horizon for them, this is a band to watch and a band to learn from.

When asked what's next for Sabaton, Pär Sundström said: "We will continue to share the stories we believe need to be heard, so the song writing will continue, and we always love hearing what our fans would like us to write about. We've paid a lot of attention to World War I and have one more topically related EP on the horizon that we will be releasing this year to complement our recent 'Weapons Of The Modern Age' and 'Heroes Of The Great War' EPs. Who knows what will be next? We have yet to decide, but one thing for certain is there will be more."

As for other forthcoming projects, Sabaton will be releasing "The War To End All Wars – The Movie" in 2023. This will be a full-length musical motion picture featuring songs from the band's 10th studio album, 'The War To End All Wars', which focuses on World War I.

This film, an action-packed metal musical, will give fans and viewers a much deeper understanding of what Sabaton's songs on the album are about.

"I can't wait to hear what people think and see how people react to this movie. Music, written articles, a video documentary series and now a movie. These are all branches that make history more easily accessible," Pär concluded.
