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Music Fans as Mediators in the Age of Digital Reproduction

Arturo Arriagada and Victor Cruz

Introduction

'Fans': A Category in Transition

In their recent *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2007), Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington note two levels of analysis that have shaped fan studies. At the 'micro level', fan consumption has focused on the relations between fans and their objects, as well as individuals' motivations (2007: 8). Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998: 138) likewise define fans as 'people who become particularly attached to certain programmes or stars within the context of a relatively heavy media use'. Considering the importance of individuals' attachments to various cultural flows, such definitions treat fans as engaged but individualised consumers of media products, without considering the social relations and shared values that congeal around them. Indeed, contemporary fan studies for the most part remain wedded to the notion of the fan as a 'prosumer' of texts, that is, as defined by their desire and ability to endlessly circulate and 'remix' cultural objects in a variety of social forums (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). Yet despite the term's implication of a more active relationship between fan and object, that relation is not figured as a mutual process of cultural creation, and the different practices through which those texts are enacted in different social contexts also tend to be left out (Miller 1995). In short, on this model, fans and cultural producers act in parallel, relatively autonomous from one another.

As Busse and Gray note, 'the rise of the internet has led to a revolution in how individuals can access the fan community' (2011: 430); indeed, we would add, the Internet revolution has affected social relations at each and every stage in the movement from production to consumption. Fans today have a decisive role in the production, circulation, connection and consumption of large-scale cultural flows: their relations with objects, texts, agents and spaces, all mediated through websites and social media, work to maintain the existence of scenes themselves. Fans' direct relation to 'macro level' cultural production necessitates a departure from past and even more recent conceptualisations of fans, which have tended to reduce them to: always already resisting dominant power structures (Hall and Jefferson 2006); creating new and exclusive hierarchies of 'taste' (Bourdieu 1984; Thornton 1995); or as lone consumers with their own singular ways of engaging with cultural products (Gray et al. 2007).

We also agree with Busse and Gray's further point that stresses the need for attending to the persistence of 'exceptional fans', those who, for instance, manage to organise themselves and more casual fans into 'communities' (or, in our case as we will see below, 'scenes'):

from this perspective, we can grasp how fields of cultural production, and the fans and cultural objects which populate them, intersect with social structures such as class, race and sexuality, as well as 'the power balance between conglomerate and audiences, the space between marketing concept and semiotic democracy' (Pearson 2010: 86), and the elusive but no less important 'dialectic between the global and the local' (Gray et al. 2008). In the case of music scenes, an expanded approach would consider the important role fans are playing in the construction of circuits of value (both social and economic), the production of meanings and the performance of classifying distinctions.

This chapter is based on a case study of the independent music scene in Santiago, Chile; drawing on this research, we suggest that certain key concepts in cultural sociology must be modified in order to better reflect the state of contemporary fandom. In the following section, we turn to changing perspectives on cultural producers.

Cultural Producers and Subcultures

From its beginnings, fan studies has attended closely to the ways in which new media blur the lines between fans and artists, or in a related idiom, consumers and cultural producers. Music and music scenes have been on the cutting edge of these developments. Indeed, in what might be considered a seminal text in the discipline, 'On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening', Theodor Adorno analysed the impact of radio – particularly the corporate-owned, commercial-driven radio of the United States in the 1930s – on both musical forms and the habits of listeners. His conclusions were notoriously bleak: forced to capitulate to the commercial imperatives of the 'culture industry', both music and listeners were being systematically dumbed-down. A great symphony by Beethoven is reduced to its 'catchiest' moments – say, the opening bars of the fifth – and then crudely instrumentalised to signal a moment of drama in a radio play or provide the soundtrack for all manner of unrelated advertisements. Since all music distributed through these channels must conform to aesthetic standards determined by ratings and profits, the listener's horizon of expectations is narrowed in turn. As Adorno saw it, claiming to 'like' the music on the radio 'corresponds to the behavior of a prisoner who loves his cell because he has been left nothing else to love' (1971[1938]: 40).

Such is the schema according to which a kind of proto-fan studies operated: the monolithic 'culture industry' has the power to manipulate the consumer willy-nilly; as Adorno's analogy illustrates, there can be no question of the latter's 'agency' in this situation. Yet the broad economic, political, technological and cultural transformations that took place in the US after World War II (Keynesian regulation and the welfare state, newly affordable consumer goods, the movement for African-American civil rights, television) forced scholars to reconsider this model. From the fifties – that saw the birth of the United States as a global hegemony, and, in Europe, the ideas of existentialism contend with the bureaucratic horrors of Stalinism – the question of agency became increasingly urgent.

The term 'subculture' surfaced in this moment to signify the pervasive phenomenon of marginalised groups forming coherent and relatively autonomous alternatives to the dominant culture (Gelder 2007). The second half of the century thus saw a series of subcultural formations flourish, galvanised by music, from rock and roll to disco, punk, new wave, rap and rave. The question of agency was most explicitly and famously answered by punk's 'Do-It-Yourself' ('DIY') ethic, which encouraged fans of the music to form bands, to write, record and distribute their music themselves. This ethic was carried forward by the various subcultures that proceeded in the wake of the initial punk explosion through post-punk, hip-hop, grunge and rave (Marcus 1989; Reynolds 2005; Clover 2009), and a variety

of contemporary scholars were thereby lead to rethink the Adornian model, of a one-way transmission of the reigning ideology of the market, from the products of the culture industry straight to the hearts and minds of the enfeebled and dependent masses (Hebdige 1979; Chambers 1985; Gilroy 1987; Reynolds 1998; McRobbie 2000). Events had proven that a more expansive definition of fans would have to include agency and take seriously the diversity of productive and challenging relationships forged between producers, new media and consumers; complex relationships that could never be predicted or determined in advance.

'Fan studies' proper came into its own through this reconsideration of agency in the wake of one-way models indebted to Adorno and the Frankfurt School (see Deuze et al., this volume). Studying fans of music in particular, however, reveals the limits of the text-based approach to fandom that has dominated the discourse in recent years. As Deuze et al. argue, the varieties of fan behaviour and their history are better charted along a continuum, one that could encompass a range of more or less productive activities and various degrees of political and affective investment. This is especially the case with music fans, as technology, always a crucial factor, from the first vinyl record to the digital MP3, continues to transform the industry and permeate fans' lived experience. Napster's breakthrough in 1999 heralded the era of the MP3 the digitisation of music culture on a global scale. The more recent rise of social media, along with ever-increasing broadband speeds, have further transformed the terrain of culture into a multiple-mediated space where clashing interests, actors and objects, ideas and aesthetics, proliferate and come together in new, hybrid forms, and where the lines between structure and agency can no longer be clearly discerned.

After Subcultures: Music Fans in an Age of Digital Reproducibility

Recent research on music 'scenes' – a term that allows us to grasp that continuum of fan practices and degrees of engagement – has described them as networks of producers that share common aesthetic dispositions with regard to a musical style (Lloyd 2005); as social spaces that configure the music produced in them (Becker 2004); and as 'clusters of musicians, producers and fans' that share common tastes, making distinctions from others (Bennett and Peterson 2004). In short, the concept of 'scene' has displaced that of 'subculture' for two reasons. First, the word itself does not assume 'deviant' behaviour from the 'mainstream'. Second, the actions of participants in the scene are not necessarily dominated by 'subcultural standards' (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 3) of authenticity, a dynamic reflected in the model of resistance/incorporation used by previous scholars of fan cultures (Hall and Jefferson 2006). 'Scene', then, does not assume that the variety of practices bound up with music are inherently political, in the sense of antagonistic to the symbolic or political-economic status quo. Indeed this shift in scholarly terminology maps closely onto the development of music scenes in Anglo-American contexts themselves, from the explicitly oppositional counterculture of the 1960s, through the strident libertarian streak that ran through 'alternative' music scenes from punk to rave, to the plethora of independent musical cultures that have developed around the world in recent years, and which, perhaps by their sheer volume and diversity, cannot be said to represent a singular political perspective or set of social relations (Grossberg 1997: 48).

Nevertheless, music scenes the world over continue to self-identify as 'indie', a term that does not so much describe a genre, style or sound; indeed it tends to refer to the means by which scenes, often comprised of an eclectic range of styles, distance themselves from the economic and aesthetic constraints of 'mainstream' cultural industries, by employing a particular organisation of cultural and commercial practices, what have, since the seventies, come to be known as 'DIY' (Hesmondhalgh 1999; Azzerad 2001; Bennett and Patterson 2004;

Oakes 2009). DIY stands for Do-It-Yourself, an ethos that arose out of the early punk movement and that encourages 'regular' people to 'make culture', rather than remaining confined to commercially produced cultural goods (Spencer 2005). Independent music scenes traditionally encompass small-scale micro-economies based on the production and consumption of cultural goods (for example music, related merchandise, fanzines), targeted to niche audiences (McRobbie 2002).

There is a tension, then, between the present configuration of cultural fields, one which has been described and analysed by scholars as 'post-subcultural' (Muggleton 2003) and which corresponds to large-scale social, economic, cultural and technological shifts all together known as 'globalisation', and the persistence of 'indie' as a mode of self-identification. In this context, the meaning of 'fans' and the content and scope of their practices undergoes significant changes as well.

Thus, to the extent that fans are proficient in their use of a variety of digital technologies, they come to acquire a new status and function in the field of cultural production. That is to say, today's technologically mediated fandom entails much more than simply 'writing back' (Jenkins 1992). In the following section, we draw on and modify concepts from Pierre Bourdieu and Actor Network Theory in order to understand how these changes affect the position and practices of fans in the field of cultural production, thereby suggesting ways that scholarship on fans as a whole might proceed in this new era.

Expanding the Category: Mediators and Digital Capital

Recent reconsiderations of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural intermediaries', alongside Bruno Latour's theorisation of 'mediators' (2005: 106), provide an opportunity to update notions of fans and fandom. According to Bourdieu (1984: 326), 'cultural intermediaries' have a significant role in the reproduction of consumer economies, particularly because they stand between the production and consumption of goods, acting as 'shapers of taste and the inculcators of new consumerist dispositions' (Nixon and Du Gay 2002: 497). Bourdieu's conceptualisation allows him to chart how taste judgements are related to structural positions in the social field, themselves determined by varying degrees of social, economic and cultural capital.

As Entwistle (2009) notes, cultural intermediaries are in charge of 'bringing a range of cultural things to market: goods, images, taste, and aesthetics' (Entwistle 2009: 15). Inevitably, the work of cultural intermediaries becomes attractive to market agents. Mapping how value is attached to new music, as well as the kinds of practical knowledge necessary for bringing things to markets, thus becomes a crucial element in any analysis of cultural production. One must ask who cultural intermediaries are and what kind of identities and values define their practices. In Bourdieu's scheme (centred on French culture), cultural intermediaries are typically a segment of the *petit-bourgeois*, who work to frame particular cultural products as legitimate and, thus, as valuable (Smith and Matthews 2010); the very products the bourgeois and aristocratic classes classify as 'low' culture. It is a struggle for power over who gets to define cultural or symbolic value,¹ what Bourdieu describes as 'the canonization of the non-legitimate'.

1 Several case studies have traced these processes of valorisation of goods, particularly in the context of different fields of cultural production. From advertisement (McFall 2002, Nixon and du Gay 2002, Nixon 2003, Cronin 2004), the music industry (Negus 2002), and fashion markets (Entwistle 2009).

As Entwistle (2009) suggests, Bourdieu's analysis is limited to the extent that it focuses solely on French culture, in particular the rarefied world of art critics. The processes he describes do not map neatly onto the practices of contemporary music scenes, thoroughly postmodern (that is, rejecting distinctions between 'high' and 'low' culture; Jameson 1992), and suffused with digital technology as they are. For a start, the dimension of class conflict is not so straightforward – that is, the products of popular culture are less in need of legitimation than they were in more culturally stratified times. In addition, in major cultural cities like Santiago (but also New York, Berlin, London, Barcelona), cultural intermediaries do not operate in a vacuum, but relate and are related to multiple actors in the scene, creating far-flung 'circuits of value', simultaneously generating and converting 'buzz' into different types of capital. In short, the dynamic outlined above – where the intermediary transmits between opposing, class-determined aesthetics and culture – is less applicable to places where such distinctions are far less rigid, and where as a result the practices of mediators, markets and fans are more dynamic.

We argue that Latour's concept of 'mediators' better approximates this situation: here actors and 'actants' (human and non-human, respectively) 'transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry' (Latour 2007: 39). For our purposes, we can say that individuals as cultural mediators make explicit efforts to shape the music scene in ways that are attractive to specific ('niche') audiences as well as increasingly important market agents, often making use of new media to do so. This assemblage of actors and actants – the Internet, as a set of technologies to facilitate the production, reproduction, distribution and consumption of information about a scene, and a group of active mediators who both document the scene and make it attractive to market agents – thus acquires an important role in the growth and dynamism of contemporary cultural production.

Before getting into our case study, we want to return briefly to Bourdieu's lexicon for a moment, and suggest that music websites themselves are the result of a mixture of mediators' various forms of capital, as well as 'digital capital', which we understand as practical fluency with the assemblage of technologies necessary to produce and maintain not only a website, but also a social network linking of an array of actors with a diversity of interests. In a world deeply permeated and sustained by digital technologies, digital capital becomes as important as social, cultural and economic capital – indeed it becomes integral to all three. As we will show, mediators' accumulation of digital capital transforms the scene and their roles within it. It allows them to link up with advertising agencies and brands; to act as 'curators', giving meaning and value to its cultural goods, mediating identities, tastes and lifestyles and converting them into valuable objects for commodification and consumption; and, perhaps most importantly, to extend the scene itself beyond the borders of the local metropolis, expanding and contracting a variety of cultural times and social spaces.

Santiago's Indie Music Scene

In February 2011, the Spanish newspaper *El País* published an article about the indie music scene in Santiago, Chile, which celebrated the creativity of Chile's cultural production, referring to it as a 'paradise of pop'. One explanation for this renaissance, according to interviewees, is Chile's 'isolation' from the rest of the world. Yet while geographical isolation may have partly contributed to the unique sound of the Santiago scene, interviewees also emphasised the importance of the boundary defying technology of the Internet. As the creator of one of Chile's most respected music websites observed, 'Our purchasing power is not even half of what it is in Europe ... That 70% of the Chilean population that has an account on Facebook speaks volumes'. He and a friend, both students of journalism, and

obsessed with the slow, immersive genre of UK post-rock known as 'shoe-gaze', created Super 45,² posting music and album reviews of indie music bands from around the world, occasionally including news and reviews of Chilean bands. Last year Super 45 celebrated 15 years of activity. The *El País* article was an important, if belated, celebration of a thriving scene by the mainstream press, but more importantly, it was gesture of recognition to websites like Super 45.

Multinational record labels were crucial during the nineties, especially after the censorship that characterised the scene during Pinochet's dictatorship in the seventies and the end of the eighties (Solis 2010). A properly independent music scene began to take shape towards the end of 1999, with the disappearance of the local branches of multinational record labels like EMI, SONY, and BMG, and the spread of Internet access, MP3s, Napster and file sharing (Jofre 2011). In this context, a host of producers, bands and independent record labels flourished, using the Internet primarily for music distribution, and strategies for production, commercialisation and consumption of music began to change.

The scene as we know it today emerged between 2002 and 2005, with the creation of the record labels Algo Records and Quemascabeza. The former began publishing records from different rock bands, whose style made reference to the grunge and garage rock sound of nineties 'alternative' rock from Seattle, Manchester and New York. Guiso (Sintonizar el Ruido 2002), Perrosky (Anejo 2011) and Ramires! (Rock Guerrilla Vol. 1 2004) were the first bands to record for Algo Records. Quemascabeza started publishing in 2003, but it was not until 2005, with two important records by Gepe (Gepinto 2005) and Javiera Mena (Esquemas Juveniles 2006), that the scene started to expand in earnest: live performances increased, leading to more available venues, these situated in Santiago's downtown, especially in the northeast side. A ticket for those gigs might cost between 3,000 and 5,000 Chilean pesos (between £4 and £7) and the attendance varied (for example 20 to 250 people). Today, Bar Loreto (founded in 2010 by members of the bands The Ganjas and Perrosky) is one of the most important venues in the scene, due to its daily live performances by a variety of indie bands.

In the midst of all this activity, some labels developed relationships with mainstream outlets for the purposes of promotion, particularly Gepe and Javiera Mena; others, like Neurotyka or Pueblo Nuevo – called 'net labels' because of their use of the Internet to operate and promote music – started promoting the work of their artists through smaller performances in places like restaurants, pubs and private parties in Santiago and Valparaiso. In 2008, Cazador, another net label, started recording and promoting the work of pop-rock band Fother Muckers, and have since worked successfully with seven more bands, expanding the scene even further. Today, labels like Quemascabeza, Cazador and Pueblo Nuevo, amongst others, are working with a catalogue of more than 50 bands and artists.³

Santiago's indie music scene has been prolific, especially in the last three years. There is consistent growth in the number of records published by independent labels, varied in styles and artistic forms. However, in the last two years, an interesting process has been transforming the scene, which centres on the relationship between the bands, fans and established market agents. Because the scene is a pastiche of different styles and artists, which blends traditional and non-traditional music and modes of performance, it has attracted national and international media attention. Along with the *El País* article, *The New York Times* wrote about Santiago as the Number 1 place to visit in 2011, arguing that the city is an interesting cultural capital because of its innovative artists and musicians. Thus coverage has attracted advertising agencies who, working on behalf of brands (Corona,

² www.super45.net.

³ For a detailed history of Santiago's indie music scene between 2000–09, see Jofre (2011).

Heineken, Puma, Adidas, amongst others), have begun organising marketing events with musicians and labels (Algo Records, Cazador and Quemasuzabeza). The scene is thus in a state of transition, moving from that relatively distant position vis-a-vis major labels and other corporate interests according to which it could call itself 'indie', towards embracing more mainstream modes of production and consumption.

Tironi (2010, 2012) argues that the Santiago scene is made up of multiple spatialities, such that its identity is being permanently redefined. One of the reasons for this is that 'the "buzz" of the scene, far from being enacted through the immediacy and closeness of face-to-face interactions, is performed virtually, via decentred, distanced, technologically-mediated and global communications' (Tironi 2012: 225). Thus the scene as a whole cannot be approached as a fixed entity, comprised of fans with fixed roles; nor can it be considered autonomous from other fields in processes of cultural production. On the contrary, the scene (and perhaps even the term itself suggests a coherence which is lacking) exists as a result of a varied set of technologically mediated interactions between different entities –musicians, fans, producers, record labels, corporate brands and advertisement agencies. The fluidity of the Santiago scene is due in large part to the Internet, and websites are the key means of making and connecting this diversity of activity to a range of locales and, perhaps more importantly, to market agents.

Building on Tironi's observations, the following case study illustrates some of the ways in which fans' practices are being redefined through their appropriation of digital technologies and social networking sites, all within a rapidly changing socio-economic and cultural context – that is to say, how fans within this dynamic scene become 'mediators' through their exchange of digital capital.

Case Study: Corona Clash

Method

An ethnographic approach allowed us to contrast individual narratives with an observation of everyday practices, and involved an 'intensive engagement with the every life of the inhabitants of the field site' (Hine 2000: 63). Through long-term observation it was possible to contextualise individuals' relationships with cultural and technological objects, and to understand how these are mutually constituted through reflexive practices. The events described took place between May and June 2011, over the course of the Corona Clash event. We interviewed two brand managers, two brand consultants (the creators of the Corona Clash) and a group of five music fans who are also the creators of four music websites covering Santiago's indie scene: Paniko, POTQ, Pousta and Disorder.⁴

Alta, the Creation of Corona Clash and the Role of Fans

Corona Clash was a marketing event organised by Alta, the advertising agency of the long-established beer company, Corona. Events such as these are increasingly frequent in Santiago and have been previously staged by Puma, Converse and Americanino. They are explicitly oriented towards a small cadre of consumers. Market agents put up the economic

4 The list of websites presented in the study is: Paniko: www.paniko.cl, POTQ: www.potq.cl, Pousta: www.pousta.com, and Disorder: www.disorder.cl.

resources necessary to stage the event and, in return, they see their brands linked into the flow of cultural goods circulating within the space. Music events thus emerge as 'spaces of mediation', where market agents, mediators, musicians and fans exchange and circulate economic, social, cultural and digital capital; while the boundaries of this space are finite in the physical sense, the real-time use of social media like Facebook and Twitter extends the experience across a potentially infinite network of participants.

The Corona Clash campaign involved ten live music performances in different venues in Santiago and throughout Chile, and included some of the most relevant bands in the indie scene. According to the Director of Alta and the Brand Manager of Corona, the aim of the campaign was to give the bands the opportunity to associate themselves with the brand (and reap the monetary rewards that come with such association), and at the same time to create a legacy in the Chilean cultural scene for young people.

Alta is well-known as a marketing agency whose main focus is the organisation of events oriented away from traditional modes of mass marketing and towards the construction of 'niche brands'. Corona Clash was created in order to connect the relatively tiny social world of the indie scene with an equally small niche of young consumers, which they justify as supporting the 'creativity' of music producers. As an executive of Alta explains:

E: Corona doesn't want to be involved in massive campaign actions associated to other brands ... we don't want to be part of large music festivals. Instead, we want to be part of a small group of people, a niche, different to the masses, who like pop-alternative music and have sophisticated tastes. So we approached emerging talents that are not necessary supported.

For promotional purposes, Alta considered advertising the brand and the event on music websites like POTQ, Paniko, Pousta and Disorder. These sites were thereby given an important role in promoting the campaign to consumers, and received a fee for their services. As spaces that feature new trends, the websites are seen as partners with the agency and the brand:

E: Those websites are key actors during the campaign. They present information about music and are aligned with the brand. At the same time, they are always presenting new things to their audiences, who are interesting for the brand too. The creators of the sites are people worried about new things, always looking for something new, interested in new music, searching in different places. They are our consumers.

The live performances were arranged as collaborations between different musicians performing covers of well-recognised Chilean songs from the nineties. The idea was to create 'experiments' between different musicians, who had perhaps never established any kind of working relationship with each other; hence the titular 'clash'. The idea was inspired by the British television series *From the Basement*, 'a podcast turned television programme created by music producer and engineer Nigel Godrich that features live performances from various musicians, without a host or audience' (Wikipedia 2012). The performances were recorded by Vicente Sanfuentes, a well-recognised Chilean music producer, for an album that was sent as a gift to different people, from consumers that attended the series of events, to various radio stations, as well as the creators of the websites through which the events were advertised. Apart from selecting the songs, brand executives gave the musicians total freedom to work on their own versions:

E: Freedom and creativity were fundamental for our campaign. We were not making commercial 'jingles' or music for TV ads; it was different. We were experimenting ... To differentiate and found the personality of our product with that music, we created an atmosphere of openness and experiment between musicians. A sense of humour and irony were fundamental.

The brand agency here distances itself from mainstream, mass-cultural practices, strategically appealing to the values of 'freedom and creativity' by granting aesthetic and performative carte blanche; in this way, they avoid alienating key players in a scene that has hitherto prided itself on its independence from mainstream market agents and mass-cultural tactics.

The Internet and social media perform a crucial function in this strategy, having a practical material role in the organisation events, and establishing networks of potential consumers. To begin promoting Corona Clash, the branding agency uploaded a music video to YouTube featuring a performance between two popular indie-rock and pop musicians, Carlos Cabezas and Francisca Valenzuela, who recreated a classic Chilean song from the eighties. This video was posted alongside invitations to the editors and creators of the websites. The event was also promoted through Corona's Facebook and Twitter pages, generating further 'buzz'. Javiera, Alta's community manager and 'voice of the brand online', shared links, wrote about the performances, uploaded videos of the participating musicians and created contests for people to win tickets to the various gigs.

Ultimately, for the brand executives, it was important that the campaign relate the 'values of the brand' to music fans and potential consumers. As the brand agency told us, Corona values 'happiness' and 'relaxing': their brand slogan declares simply, 'Corona can transform people's moments'.

Through this assemblage of technological, social and cultural practices, market agents and mediators assemble and represent Santiago's scene to a particular and exclusive group of people, which we can call a consumer elite. For mediators, such events not only offer an opportunity to perform cultural distinctions and taste classifications in traditional 'fannish' way; they also are an occasion for accumulating social and economic capital, in exchange for 'digital capital', that is, the work of articulating brand content with the music events through websites and digital platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

Mediating the Corona Clash

The launch took place in an old-fashioned two-floor local; a very popular club during the mid-nineties located in Bellavista, Santiago's bohemian area. It was a private event, accessible only via invitation or a place on the guest list. When asked about the criteria for this list, the agency explained: 'nice people that are there because they are beautiful, to be photographed by the media'. Another executive elaborates, 'nice and beautiful people, opinion leaders on Twitter, with lots of followers, people who appear in magazines and fashion websites'. An event assistant told us bluntly that there were no 'ugly people' in the place. 'Everybody wants to be part of this event, but not all of them are invited'. Alta's authority is based in their knowledge of Santiago's nightlife: they maintained that the guest list was essential, as it became a resource through which the agency could validate its work to Corona, as well as connect the brand and its products with potential clients. Attendees thus included actors, musicians, journalists and advertisers.

Inside the venue, we observed a variety of social connections amongst participants. We identified three kinds of groups: 1) individuals who provide services during the event, for example musicians, mediators, technicians, visual artists, bar staff and security;

2) individuals who are related to the brand such as executives, branding agency workers, journalists and people from the websites; and 3) invited guests. The majority of the people providing services were familiar contributors to Santiago's indie music scene.

Having been regularly involved with parties organised by the website Super 45, Alta hired visual artists Casa Liebre for the Clash. The duo created and projected visuals during musicians' performances in accordance with the brief to represent 'happiness, and relaxing' moments. The videos were shown on a big screen behind the stage. Several images appeared, beginning with an extract of an old Bollywood film showing a group of Indian women dancing. Another showed a young couple driving a car along the highway in the middle of the summer. They stop the car and start walking through a country field. The man is wearing a light red shirt and grey shorts, the woman a light dress, and both are sporting Wayerfayer sunglasses. People at the event were dressed in a similar fashion. It was winter in Santiago, but the video dutifully evoked summer, vacation and relaxation. After the performance, we spoke with Casa Liebre. They were happy because these kind of branded events are well paid, but also because Alta showed interest in hiring them for future events. This change will be a transition for them, from the independent, 'DIY' mode of production, towards something more professional and mainstream.

During the event we met Max (co-creator of the website Pousta) at the bar. He was excited because earlier that day he met a Chilean photographer who had briefly lived in New York City. Max is a fan of his work and told us he is big on the alternative circuit, mainly for taking pictures at debauched parties. Max admired him for 'doing everything he wants to do. Partying, taking pictures, living in a global city'. Max had never been to New York, but constantly talked to us about events that were happening in other, similar cities; indeed for him, the bands at Corona Clash were of comparatively little interest. We asked him about the difference between being at that event and being in New York doing the same thing. For him the difference is the people: 'everybody is different, that's different'.

Like Max, many of the mediators referred to cultural difference. It was common for them to remark upon the lack of diversity amongst Santiago audiences. Phrases like 'every place is the same', 'it's always the same people' were frequent. Behind this view lies a critical judgement about the event such as these, which, if nothing else, provide audiences with an opportunity to classify and judge others, and indeed each other. As Sergio, a cinema director hired by Alta, who produced a couple of videos for the event, said:

S: Marketing agencies work doing niche campaigns, something very representative of Chile and Chileans. I don't like going everywhere and meeting people I already know. The reason for me moving abroad is that ... here everybody is paying attention to each other, looking each other ... Chileans are classifying others all the time.

There is a particularly class-bound dimension to such feats of classification. Rossana, who works in the net label Cazador, filled us in on one of the bands, Astro. She said that lots of people make fun of them because they are considered *cuico*.⁵ Similarly, Max and Pancho told us the event was full of hipsters and *pelolais*.⁶ They were thus keen to distance themselves on the basis of perceived class differences. Such classifications have a double meaning. On the one hand, it is a way to differentiate oneself from others, classifying them in terms of differences with the classifier. At the same time, it locates the individual in a particular position within the social and cultural field. As Bourdieu (1984: 6) famously said, 'Taste

⁵ A commonly used pejorative term that denotes upper-class privilege.

⁶ Derived from 'pelo-liso', literally 'straight hair'. A term used to refer to women who are considered upper class, but particularly thin, blonde women with long, straight hair.

classifies, and it classifies the classifier'. Max and Pancho's classifying practices during the event were sometimes contradictory, if not hypocritical. Their respective class backgrounds suggest that neither Pancho nor Max would be considered genuine *cuicos*; thus, through their classifications, they aspire to be different than *cuicos*. Yet despite their antagonistic attitude towards the *cuicos*, Max and Pancho want to be involved in events like Corona Clash, discussing brands, fashion and taste in music.

During the Clash, these and other mediators took to their Twitter and Facebook accounts to comment upon and judge the performances. These were usually positive in regards to the bands; significantly, they were often critical of the audience in attendance, who tended to be perceived as outsiders, not 'real' fans of the music. Through this running commentary, their followers were given vicarious access to the experience of the event, and by taking and uploading pictures of the audience, the mediators promoted the brand to ever larger audiences, while preserving the sense of exclusivity so important to Alta. Marcelo, an advertiser who works for the beer company Heineken, explained this process of valorisation:

M: Instagram allows people to touch up pictures converting any activity, common activities, into a 'social event'. Pousta [Pancho's Website] did that before Instagram and that is something valuable for our brand, so the site performs that role for us ...

After such events, it is common practice among mediators to thank, via Facebook or Twitter, those who invited them, especially the brand agencies. Their comments are public and as such reveal mediators' interest in being hired by brands for future events, as was the case with Casa Liebre. Mediators then post reviews and photographs on their websites. In cases where the sites are sponsored by the brand, reviews and comments about the performances and the event as a whole are invariably positive; nevertheless, it is common to find comments criticising the audiences for being 'hipsters' or 'pelolais'.

As Moor (2003: 51) suggests, the use of social media tools 'explicitly attempt to bring the work of consumption and the work of production (or at least mediation) into ever close proximity'. Indeed from this example we can see how mediators may occupy several positions at once, the sum of which exceeds traditional conceptions of the 'fan': as website creators, they are simultaneously producers and consumers within the scene, reinforcing its social and aesthetic boundaries; in addition, they may exchange 'digital capital' for economic capital by dealing with market agents, promoting exclusive, brand-sponsored events, producing and distributing images and commentary over the Internet in real time.

Conclusion

The case of the Corona Clash reveals the complex position of fans in Santiago's technologically mediated, globally extended music scene. Through the appropriation and use of digital technologies fans become an integral part of the production and circulation of value vis-a-vis cultural flows – they become mediators. As such, these fans put their livelihoods at stake to help the scene flourish, yet their reliance on brand agencies as a source of economic capital ultimately troubles the scene's desire to identify as 'independent' – the very source of that affective investment in the first place. This tension perhaps explains the sense of unease encountered in many of the mediators we spoke with, which manifested in the desire to judge nearly everyone apart from themselves as belonging to some exclusive, and in this case, contrived, social group.

What, then, constitutes 'indie' in the Santiago scene? Mediator-enabled corporate-sponsored events like Corona Clash introduce, or indeed exacerbate, the tensions related to this question, dramatically reducing participants' sense that they are a part of an independent community of like-minded fans. Hierarchies are pervasive and increasingly complex, comprised of competing forms of social, economic, cultural and digital capital. From the perspective of brand agencies, such events aim to produce an elite group of consumers, who need not be fans of the music, and whose mere inclusion in such spaces of mediation, through the likes of the guest list and other promotional endeavours, supplies the basis for the creation and traversal of value throughout a range of social networking channels, value which is then reappropriated by mediators, the agencies and the scene as a whole. The 'indie' ideal thus inevitably clashes with the ways in which mediators, or those fans most invested in the scene, come to deploy their digital capital.

We have argued that the category of the fan needs to be expanded to take into account the transformative effects of recent technological changes, particularly the permeation of the web and social media. As mediators, fans' roles within globally extended 'scenes' has taken on increasing importance, sustaining relationships within and between audiences, market agents and a global network of related music scenes, through the exchange and performance of digital capital. In the case of Santiago, this dynamic has produced contradictory effects and exacerbated local tensions. Due to the global nature of the underlying transformations (lack of state support; widespread use of the web and myriad digital technologies; the persistent desire for 'independent' cultural production) we may wonder whether fans in other 'global' cities are affected in similar ways. In any case, future studies in the field of contemporary cultural production should attend to the myriad ways in which fans, technologies and market agents intertwine and how, as a result, meanings and identities, cultural objects and scenes are disrupted and reconfigured in the process.

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