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## The Ashgate Research Companion to Fan Cultures

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### Music for (Something Other than) Pleasure: Anti-fans and the Other Side of Popular Music Appeal

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# Music for (Something Other than) Pleasure: Anti-fans and the Other Side of Popular Music Appeal<sup>1</sup>

Liz Giuffre

## Introduction

This chapter explores popular music fandom as a form of complex cultural engagement. While all fandom is nuanced, so far popular music fans have tended to be considered in only relatively simple terms, almost exclusively in terms of musical approval. However a large part of engagement with popular music is the ability to critically assess music that is *not* approved of – music that audiences judge as somehow substandard in terms of skill, expression or artistry. Many of these assessments come down to questions of taste (and in popular music in particular, assessments of success and proficiency are much more subject to this than they are in, say, Western art music), however there is a significant gap in the existing literature about popular music fandom. This gap is anti-fan shaped, that is, where fandom in popular music exists, I argue, there is also room to consider anti-fandom – processes of engagement and participation with music that is not just positive endorsement. This chapter seeks to address this problem, showing that anti-fandom is a fundamental piece of the popular music fan puzzle that is not defined often or clearly enough. Without an acknowledgement of anti-fandom, the conventional, approving fan has no point of reference.

Here I present three levels of anti-fandom: personal and field examples, industrial examples and creative and artistic examples. In doing so, I engage a research methodology that targets a small but diverse set of local, mainstream and historical cornerstones. Like fandom (and anti-fandom) generally, these case studies reflect my experience of being moved, one way or another, to react to particular popular music texts. While the effect of this movement is not always static, I use the frame of fandom and anti-fandom as a way to understand how this process of attention grabbing has occurred. These case studies are included as provocations to the reader – first steps towards finding more examples and more complex ways to consider popular music fandom and engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> The idea for this chapter first emerged as an occasional paper for IASPM AUS/NZ in Sydney 2006. Many thanks to who have helped with suggestions and assistance during the way, particularly Adrian Renzo, Peter Doyle, Mark Evans and Ian Collinson. Last but not least, I am particularly grateful to Bruce Johnson for his keen and swift attention to the final draft of this work.

## Fans and Anti-fans: the Story so Far ...

Fan studies scholars across many disciplines emphasized the importance of fandom in the creation and assertion of personal and communal identities. Iconic field markers include Jenkins' work on science fiction fans (1992), Radway's work on readers of romance novels (1987), Ang's exploration of television studies (1985) and more recently studies of sports fandom such as King's focus on European Football Fans (2000), Parry and Malcolm's examination of English cricket fans (2004) and Duncan's examination of video and online gaming fan cultures (2012). From gender and class, geography and location, age and identity formation through community, these fan cultures in different cultural industries reveal a diversity of modes of participation.

This chapter is concerned particularly with anti-fandom, a system of community and identify formation based around an agreed upon disapproval of a particular artist, genre, movement or piece. While anti-fandom can be reasonably inferred in many fan cultures (football fans, for example, tend to be active fans of their team and simultaneously active anti-fans of the opposing side), the term was developed formally by Jonathan Gray (2003). Using anti-fans as a way to describe the diversity of reactions audiences displayed while engaging with the television show *The Simpsons*, Gray argued,

*Fan studies have taken us to one end of a spectrum of involvement with a text, but we should also look at the other end to those individuals spinning around a text in its electron cloud, variously bothered, insulted or otherwise assaulted by its presence. Anti-fans have long been fans' other.* (2003: 70–71)

Gray's articulation of the binary of fandom – the fan and the anti-fan – is an important acknowledgement of the complexity of this form of audience engagement.<sup>2</sup> While collections such as *The Adoring Audience* (Lewis 1992) laid an important critical foundation, Gray's articulation of anti-fandom was a significant milestone in the field in the following decade. Gray continued to explore online anti-fandom in an additional study of the website *Television Without Pity* (2005) and then, in the edited collection *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2007) Gray and others also explore anti-fandom across different audience and media groups (see also Chapter 5 of this volume) including examinations of anti-fandom in sport (Theodoropoulou 2007), celebrity (Click 2007; Sconce 2007) and general discussions about institutional anti-fandom (Johnson 2007; Alters 2007). While such collections demonstrate that anti-fandom studies are growing, they are still relatively marginalized (with these chapters appearing at the end of the collection and still only representing five out of 25 chapters in the collection).

Similarly, genre-based collections such as Hills' *The Pleasures of Horror* (2005) have also started to examine the place of anti-fandom, but again from the margins. Offering a bit more insight into anti-fandom via an exploration of reality television and anti-fans of *Survivor*, Forster argued that 'anti-fans love to hate *Survivor*, only their pleasure is derived from the cultural activity in [and] around the series' (2004: 277). Forster notes that the time and energy investment made by anti-fans (particularly in the development of online spoilers and other publications) was comparable to the commitment by conventional fans in many ways and he concludes that the attention of both groups ultimately helped to ensure the programme continued on air: 'although all of these sites are fan (or anti-fan) constructed [by the audience], CBS clearly benefits from all this narrative speculation' (Forster 2004: 277).

<sup>2</sup> Gray's nomination of something of a middle ground in the form of the non-fan also begs further inquiry, but is beyond the scope of this study.

More recently, in a study of *Twilight* audiences, Strong came to a similar conclusion in terms of the benefit of positive and negative appraisals of cultural texts. Although she doesn't use the term anti-fan, she noted the role of fan groups who displayed disapproval, with this helping to ensure the cultural capital of the text as 'cultural hierarchies are not just created through certain forms of culture being praised, but also by the denigration of other forms' (Strong 2009: 5).

## Popular Music Fandom: a Different Industrial and Disciplinary Animal

Popular music fan studies are different to other disciplinary approaches. Primarily, this is because of an overwhelming emphasis on the gaining of positive outcomes through music, an effect that the godfather of popular music studies, Simon Frith, once famously described as a focus on *music for pleasure*.<sup>3</sup> *Music for pleasure* differentiates popular music from, for example, *music for ritual*, *music for education* or *music for therapy*, and since the early 1980s in particular, many scholars in the field have followed Frith's ideological lead here. Given that popular musicians and their work have often been central to media-led moral panics (from accusations of The Beatles' influence on mass murderer Charles Manson in the 1960s, to suggestions that the musical Manson, Marilyn, influenced the teenaged killer in Columbine in the 1990s),<sup>4</sup> there seems an unspoken expectation that popular music scholars should counter these by presenting positive examinations of their subject. Working on an 'if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all' type of principle, large areas of popular music engagement, then, have been overlooked by academic commentators. As Johnson and Cloonan noted in their ground-breaking exploration *Dark Side of the Tune* (2008), exploring negative reactions to popular music may have once been seen as 'do[ing] the dirty' on the field (2008: 8), however they argue that such work is necessarily so 'as to contribute to the growing maturity of PMS [Popular Music Studies]' (2008: 9).

As Cavicchi notes in a particularly insightful overview of the issues that plague typical profiles of popular music fans, negativity has often followed popular music fan studies and has traditionally stemmed from the connection between fandom and consumption, as the fan is considered alongside darker narratives of mass media and audience vulnerability (1998: 6). The type of fandom Cavicchi refers to here is that of the stereotypical screaming teenage girls and it is, indeed, a display of extreme emotion. Beyond apparent social disturbances that such outbursts may inspire (and debates about what actual harm, if any, was caused by these practices),<sup>5</sup> fan-fuelled behaviours in popular music have been literally deadly (most famously, with the assassination of John Lennon by music fan Mark Chapman in 1980). Other than these extremes, though, popular music fans have tended to be characterized in more gently negative terms: as slightly eccentric, immature, undignified and perhaps (wilfully) gullible.

Grossberg notes the construction of identity that occurs through fandom generally, arguing 'a fan gives authority to that which he or she invests in, letting the object of such investments speak for and as him or herself' (1992: 59) and this acknowledgement of the

3 Notably, Frith named an academic/journalistic collection of essays *Music for Pleasure* (1988).

4 For more see on such connections see Wright (2000: 374–5)

5 While much has been written about this type of gendered fandom and its effects, see in particular Ehrenreich's (1992) excellent examination of Beatlemania and the contextual reception of young women in the 1950s and 60s.

role of fandom in a broader cultural context is important. Fandom is not merely personal engagement or private consumption, but can also be considered a form of deliberate, public, engagement and interaction. This also identifies significant differences between fans and mere consumers, as a fan's contribution to popular music cannot *just* be measured in economic terms, but also in emotional transactions. As Kibby writes with explicit reference to popular music, 'despite the increasing gap between music production and consumption, fans retain a belief in the bonds between themselves and the performers' (2006: 296). While she does not specify that this bond is positive, the implication is clearly that this model of popular music fandom expects the fostering of a beneficial engagement of identity and expression. Thus, popular music fandom in emotional terms has begun to be understood as positive rather than harmful, but still in relatively simplistic terms.

By 2004, popular music's value beyond pleasure was acknowledged with a bit more diversity thanks to collections like *Bad Music: The Music We Love To Hate* (Washburne and Derno 2004). While positive affirmation was still a crutch (as the title suggests, music to hate is still part of a process of ultimately gaining *love*), nevertheless, a more nuanced description of negative receptions of popular music was developing. In the opening chapter Frith does move beyond *music for pleasure* significantly by describing a polar opposite for traditional fandom, noting the importance of this position in providing a framework to value music and fandom generally: "[B]ad music" is a necessary concept for musical pleasure, for musical aesthetics. ... This is a necessary part of fandom. A self-proclaimed rock or rap or opera fan who never dismissed anything as bad would be considered as not really a fan at all' (Frith 2004: 19).

Working with Frith's reasoning, to be a popular music fan is to also be an anti-fan, that is, to assert the quality of a particular piece of music or musician one must also be able to recognize the lack of quality in other pieces or musicians in comparison. Basically, to be a fan of a particular music is to also be against music considered a threat or of lesser quality than that of your fandom. The question that remains, however, is how do we value the music that we use as a yardstick? As I will show below, the value of this music is to be found not with the individual tracks, artists or genres, but in the reactions they inspire in audiences and musicians.

## Anti-fandom in Popular Music: Finding a Home in the Discipline

In practice, popular music fandom is much more nuanced than is outlined in the profiles above. Anti-fandom, as an acknowledgement of the relative displeasure to be found in popular music, does need to be formally admitted to popular music studies. In describing how fans engage with Springsteen in a wider popular music context, Cavicchi carves out a value system based on both positive and negative feelings towards Springsteen and other artists: 'However fans may feel about many rock stars, they do not, on the whole, feel that way about Springsteen. In fact, they often characterize Springsteen as having qualities that are opposite to those of the typical rock star' (1998: 65–6). For Cavicchi and his subjects, popular music fandom involves some type of argument. Springsteen is worthy of fandom as a direct result of what he is not (not part of the star system), as much as what he is (a different type of star). Other studies of popular music's effect more generally have acknowledged the ability for individual artists to polarize audiences, such as Brown and Schulze's analysis of responses to Madonna videos in terms of *fans* and *haters* (1990: 94), Wald's acknowledgment that a few years later that 'the Spice Girls phenomenon, from the start, has been accompanied by the anti-Spice Girls backlash' (1998: 586) and Bryson's sociological study of *musical*

*dislikes* focused around what could be called metal anti-fandom (1996: 884). Little analysis, however, is conducted into what the value of such *hating* or anti-fandom might have.

The term *hater* has become increasingly popular in informal discussions of fan discourse and perhaps functions as a viable alternative to the term *anti-fan*. However it is important to acknowledge that unlike hate, which is arguably a destructive process, anti-fandom can be a constructive form of engagement. For example, while a hater may throw something at the DJ and ultimately end the session if a disagreeable song was played, an anti-fan's vote with their feet might encourage the performer to choose a new musical direction to get the audience back again. Or, to acknowledge the practice in the digital space, both fandom and anti-fandom seem equally valid as ways of gaining attention first (which is of fundamental importance here – if a listener does not know your name, they cannot Google you). The importance of infamy, as well as fame, in this fan versus anti-fan context was demonstrated famously by the attention given to Rebecca Black in 2010 with the song *Friday*.<sup>6</sup>

## Spotting Popular Music Anti-fandom in the Field: Personal and Spontaneous Expressions

While anti-fandom is yet to be engaged with in any depth in popular music studies, in practice it can be easily observed. Anti-fans yell requests to the solo guitarist who has played one too many ballads, we make nuisances of ourselves at dinner parties and in cars where the wrong music is played in the wrong way and, most spectacularly, anti-fans have burned records when they no longer agree with an artist's stance (although this form of protest may be less effective in coming years and deleting iTunes playlists is less likely to capture headlines).

In my case, I will argue that Bob Dylan should never have been allowed to put his mouth to a microphone. I do not like his tone or his attitude as he performs and the only time I saw him live was at an open air festival in the early 2000s during which he refused to allow the organizers to zoom in on his face on the large screens, it seems mine was not the only anti-fan position: 'Give us a close up, you vain bastard!' screamed someone behind me. Many others left before he finished. As you read this, you may react strongly, agreeing or disagreeing with my stance. But this reaction demonstrates that anti-fandom, like conventional fandom, is a relatively normal process of engagement with popular music. Fans and anti-fans have lots in common and are often fuelled by the same sense of community, identity and passion for music. These types of critical interplays happen in informal popular music discourse all the time (arguments at pubs, in lounge rooms, in mosh pits, in cars over playlists). However they have not made a significant dent in popular music academia, except as a way to obviously challenge cultural history studies such as in Wald's (2009) *How The Beatles Destroyed Rock and Roll* (which focuses on American musical activity that has otherwise been overshadowed by the British band).

In addition to personal expressions of fandom and anti-fandom, the popular music industry has also come to incorporate such forms into its formal structures and industrial models. Contemporary competition television shows like *Idols* and *The Voice* invite the audience to comment on the best and worst popular music performance. Fandom is not a simple, life-long and unproblematic relationship, but one where positives and negatives, fandom and anti-fandom are often present all at once. As Waksman notes in a study of

<sup>6</sup> See Rossman (2011) for an overview of Rebecca Black's *Friday*, which drew the singer a swift rise to fame and many fans, but also an equally vocal online backlash which contributed to her infamy.

heavy metal and punk music, often the tensions between fans for these genres of music has inspired an important energy for the industry generally, with notes of approval and disapproval made by fans in forums like letters pages, providing a way to measuring genre developments genres over time (2009: 3–5).

Like Gray's original formulation of anti-fandom to explain the complex engagement of television audiences, I use anti-fans in a popular music context here to remind commentators that audiences are able distinguish between good and bad popular music and that this process is part of fandom (although its implication is often overshadowed). The analysis of good *and* bad music (often in a dialogue of comparison) is a key to popular music fandom, however it is something that is seldom considered. The other side of popular music's appeal, popular music *anti-fandom*, is fundamental to how popular music fandom works.

### Anti-fandom in the Popular Music Industry: Alternative Musics

Anti-fandom is present in live and online popular music discourse, but it has also been built into the popular music industrial infrastructure. Most obviously this comes with the marketing, creation and demarcation of *alternative* or *indie* popular music. The creation of these can be traced back to industry movements – attempts to engage those who were being left behind by dominant *mainstream* movements – and to collect them together based on a dislike, or anti-fandom. The result was the regaining of otherwise lost consumers back to the popular music market – something of a 'if you don't want to buy that, then you might want to buy this' idea. Popular music scholars have been clear about this process of negative association with these genres, with Kruse asserting that alternative pop 'refuse[d] the mammoth guitar solos of heavy metal, the life and death seriousness and sonic overload of hardcore, the techno-logical excesses of experimental music' (Kruse 1993: 36–7), while Hesmondhalgh described how indie music until the 1990s at least 'set itself against the concentration on "image" in the pop mainstream: important indie bands, such as the Smiths, refused to put their pictures on record sleeves' (1999: 38). Similarly, histories of punk have noted the genres' emergence as a reaction to apparently overblown forms like prog rock (Shevory 1995); Neal noted how 'anti-disco' arguments that gave rise to Album Oriented Rock (AOR) divided along racial and sexual orientation lines in the 1970s (1997: 126) and Cloonan outlined the rise of Britpop in the 1990s (and its predecessors) as a distinct form of 'anti-Americanism' (1997: 61).

More recently, alternative or anti-fan-type genres have even begun to emerge within subsections of the industry itself, notably with movements like *alt-country* (Fox and Ching 2008). Without using the term *anti-fan*, Duffett (2009) also explores the manifestation of anti-fandom in the live popular music performance space, acknowledging the role of heckling as a form of immediate audience engagement. Duffett argues: '[existing commentaries] might appear adequate at first, but [they] paint an extremely rosy picture. Audiences can be much more internally diverse and critical than [this]' (2009: 39), a way of showing what is left out of popular music scholarship that privileges pleasure.

Arguably, one of the most famous anti-fans of popular music was one of its first commentators, Adorno. While he did not use the term anti-fan, he made that he was not a conventional fan of the mass mediation of music generally. In *On Popular Music* (2002), Adorno argued that popular music was 'characterised by its difference from serious music' (2002a: 437) and his opposition to the dissemination and sonic and compositional

characteristics of popular music has been well documented.<sup>7</sup> Bannister even argued that Adorno's position can be aligned with more contemporary markers of genre-based disapproval, or industrial anti-fandom, as he declared 'Adorno is a punk rocker' (Bannister 2007: 82).

Anti-fandom can be observed in popular music since at least the 1950s. For example, Elvis Presley's manager Colonel Tom Parker sold both 'I love Elvis' and 'I hate Elvis' badges at his concerts, a masterful piece of 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em' marketing.<sup>8</sup> As well as this, early models of industrialized anti-fandom can also be traced back to perceived competition between bands as played out by the press, such as the famous 'The Beatles/Stones Dichotomy' (Kauppila 2005: 397), whereby fans aligning with one would be also be implying a rejection of the other. Similar competition was set up between bands such as Oasis and Blur in the 1990s in the UK press in particular, while recently they have also been applied to mega star pop queens like Madonna and Lady Gaga,<sup>9</sup> who again have been cast in opposing corners by the press (and by implication by each other's fans).

Other examples of industrial anti-fandom, where one artist is positioned as the direct antithesis of another, was notably harnessed in the labelling of Avril Lavigne as the *Anti-Britney* when she first emerged in the mainstream pop scene in 2002<sup>10</sup> and the naming of Garth Brooks as the *Anti-Hank* [Williams] in the alternative country music scene in America (Peterson and Beal 2001: 234). Following this, academic commentary of other types of artists have come to harness the *anti-wave*, such as Lovesey's examination of the success of singer Jeff Buckley, whom Lovesey described in terms of an 'Anti-Orpheus' position as a way of explaining Buckley's career in relation to that of his famous father, Tim.<sup>11</sup>

While it could be argued that such discussions of genre distinction are, instead, merely music criticism, the term *anti-fandom* allows a more fluid form of assessment. Criticism is too strong because it assumes there is an agreed upon benchmark (a critic has a clear idea of what is acceptable or not – even if it is guided simply by their professional experience). Fandom is not that rigid – fans can decide and negotiate their response to popular music in personally contextualized terms (if they are a *positive* fan or an anti-fan) based on taste alone.

7 For example, Middleton notes that 'Adorno's polemic against "popular music" is scathing' (1990: 34), while more recently works like *Roll Over Adorno: Critical Theory, Popular Culture, Audiovisual Media* (Miklitsch 2006) have directly used Adorno's negative, or anti-fan position, as grounds to continue explore popular music and its context.

8 For an account of this see Cole (2009: 24) and Nash (2003), with the latter noting Parker's push for the bottom line before any press for goodwill: '[Parker] didn't care what the newsmen said as long as they said it – and paid their own admission to the shows' (2003: 125).

9 This has been well documented, a good overview is available via [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/28/madonna-lady-gaga-express-yourself-born-this-way\\_n\\_1550655.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/28/madonna-lady-gaga-express-yourself-born-this-way_n_1550655.html) [accessed 20 June 2012].

10 Although I have been unable to find the original source of this label, she was described as such in numerous media including *Billboard* (Ault 2002: 2), *The New York Times* (Coco 2002: 5) and *Adnews* (Lippert 2002: 16) and further discussion of this by Vannini (2004: 59–60).

11 Notably, Lovesey argued: 'In his career, Jeff Buckley searched impossibly, through a kind of transcendental anarchism or a mimicked "dance insane" (as he called it in "Dream Brother") to narrate a similarly oppositional, anti-heroic, anti-oedipal non-narrative or post-narrative, and to outmaneuver the historical, emotional and existential pasts inevitably conjured by musical memory, and especially the memory of his father and his father's generation' (2004: 332)



## Anti-fandom and Artistic Statements: an Alternative Method of Gathering an Audience

As these examples have shown, fandom not only exists with varying levels of intensity, but often apathy and dislike are expected and even encouraged. Here I am not exploring artistic expressions of rebellion or political protest,<sup>12</sup> but an active engagement with other music (and an expression of fan and anti-fan sentiments by musicians themselves). Artist engagement with an audience's critical reception of their own work and the work of other artists can also be seen as a form of anti-fandom. While there have been many scattered examples of artistic engagement with what can be called fandom and anti-fandom (that is, artists expressing their own likes and dislikes of other music via new works), I want to offer a couple of examples here to demonstrate how anti-fandom has been directly incorporated into the creative process.

First, P!nk's release, *Stupid Girls* (2006), is what can be considered to be lyrically (and visually with its music video) driven by the artist's own anti-fandom. Here the artist harnesses a rejection of existing musical stereotypes for female performance in particular and although her music functions as a form of parody, as well as anti-fandom (P!nk performs a clumsy bikini-clad carwash similar to Jessica Simpson's appearance in her music video for *These Boots Are Made For Walking*), the song's lyrics also show anti-fandom – a clear ideological rejection of other music and artists.

Here P!nk specifically wants to capture the audience that does not identify with the Stupid Girl and is using rebellion against these icons, using a type of anti-fandom, as her artistic statement (and marketing point). In particular, this anti-fandom is clear in the verse as she suggests that:

*what happened to the dream of a girl president,  
she's dancing in the video next to 50 Cent.  
They travel in packs of two or three  
With their itsy bitsy doggies and their teeny-weeny tees  
...  
Porno Paparazzi girl,  
I don't wanna be a stupid girl  
(Stupid Girls, P!nk 2006).*

Here P!nk is overt in her expression against other artists, notably those women she considers to have sold their own potential short so as to serve the interests of others ('dancing in the video next to 50 Cent'). This process of asserting her own dislike of these artists serves not only to define her own identity, but also draw audiences who share her dislike.

Similarly, Australian indie punk band Frenzal Rhomb articulated a clear anti-fandom in their song *Russell Crowe's Band* (2003). Notably, the song's lyrics clearly targeted their displeasure with the Australian actor's musical career, setting up a clear divide between Frenzal Rhomb's and Crowe's musical careers.<sup>13</sup> For example, in the song's first verse:

<sup>12</sup> The place of protest in popular music has been well documented by a variety of respected popular music scholars. For a good background see Street (2001) and Weinstein (2006).

<sup>13</sup> Although never named in the song, Crowe's band was named Thirty Odd Foot of Grunt during the time of the Frenzal Rhomb's release and has since been reconfigured as The Ordinary Fear of God.

*I don't get a million bucks for getting out of bed,  
I don't get a million fucks when I punch folks in the head,  
And even if we know we never get a billboard top 10 hit,  
At least we know Russell Crowe's band's a fuckin pile of shit*  
(Russell Crowe's Band, *Frenzal Rhomb* 2003).

Although perhaps not Shakespeare in its complexities or delivery (sung in a short, sharp, almost nursery-rhyme like punk draw with simple overdriven guitar to support), the artistic statement of anti-fandom is clear. Frenzal Rhomb draw a clear comparison between themselves and another artist and by implication they assume their audience will do the same. In academic terms we could describe this as an artistic comment on the often unfair and easily manipulated music industry, an industry that is in many ways extremely exclusive in what it accepts, although does so based on existing money and status rather than artistic merit. In less academic terms, it could be seen as blind jealousy. However, the creation of a division between the two types of music, and the two bands in particular, is vital. In many ways this answers the often-posed question about independent or alternative music, specifically, what is it alternative to? Here, Frenzal Rhomb is very clear with its response.

Beyond these, Eminem's single *Without Me* also uses artistic anti-fandom to gather a sense of community and to assert his own musical identity in terms of musical anti-fandom. Eminem defines himself in terms of what he is not, but in doing so also articulates a subgenre of hip hop – along racial and ideological lines. Dawkins argues, in singles *Without Me* and *Just Lose It* in particular, Eminem appears as 'a rapping superhero and celebrity impersonator who saves us all from taking hip hop too seriously' (2010: 469), noting Eminem's criticism of certain artists who he favours and those he does not. She continues: 'He is conscious of his position as the Other in the predominantly African-American and Latino world of American hip hop' (2010: 469), but is also clear about rejecting what he does not agree with: 'On his track "Without Me", he articulates his nightmare, an industrial attack of the clones as the new marketing strategy' (2010: 480). This critical and artistic marking of difference is one that Eminem and his critics have acknowledged and used as a way of marking his influence, again noting what he is NOT as much as what he is:

*Unlike Vanilla Ice, for instance, Eminem's investment in hip-hop comes across as the sort of genuine passion of a lifelong fan ... Unlike the Beastie Boys, Eminem comes across as someone who cares as much (if not more) about maintaining the overall integrity of hip-hop culture as he does about his commercial success (Rodmanon 2006: 110).*

Ironically, this commentary also describes Eminem's own fandom (his passion for hip hop as a long term, non-commercially motivated force). What this shows is the close relationship between fandom and anti-fandom: between approval and disapproval in the process of receiving, but also making music. Like the other examples listed, lyrically especially, Eminem has made his position (his anti-fan position) clear. As he sings in *Without me*, his disapproval of other artists is uncomplicated (accompanied by a similarly disparaging parody in the music video), targeted at particular mainstream pop artists like Limp Bizkit, Chris Kirkpatrick and, in particular, Moby, whom he also impersonates in the song's film clip by wearing a skull cap to emulate the singer's famously bald head.

In a curious but ultimately successful piece of marketing, even the notion of an 'anti-tour' was developed this year, with Australian pop musician Kylie Minogue launching a short series of underpublicized, underproduced (by her normal arena standards) shows in March 2012. Minogue's so called 'anti-tour' was a boutique series of intimate shows that

were held in Sydney and Melbourne in March 2012. They were also shows where Minogue promised to perform something other than her *hits*, including B-sides, album tracks and covers that seldom make it into her bigger international shows. During these shows she also presented only minimal staging and costume changes, clearly seeking to engage different audiences from those who would normally attend her tours – or to at least allow for a different type of engagement by the same fans: an engagement that is different from or ‘anti’ to an arena.<sup>14</sup> Minogue’s own reactionary stance against the large-scale productions that have come to characterize her work was reflected not only during the performances, but also in the relatively small run of merchandize produced to support it.

Minogue’s stance may just be strategic, as, arguably, such a small tour would be much easier to organize than the arena-style performance she is now known for. However, this harnessing of the idea of an ‘anti-tour’ is also a curious acknowledgement of Minogue’s personal and artistic development during her 25-year career. First entering the music industry via a cover of Carole King’s ‘Locomotion’ in the late 1980s, Minogue later gained significant international success (notably in the UK). During this time she has experimented and changed musically, with these changes gaining her the support of many fans during this time, but also losing others. While it was never expressly stated in the lead up to the short tour, it is useful to consider – was Minogue’s choice to return to smaller scale, less theatrical, less mainstream music and production an act of anti-fandom in itself?

Working as a music journalist for the independent music press in Sydney during the time of Minogue’s Anti-Tour, I was able to cover this artistic acknowledgement of her diverse audience first hand (and engage my own anti-fandom).<sup>15</sup> As the review ran: ‘called the “Anti-Tour”, [the show] was a proud collection of B-Sides, rarities and otherwise “anti-big show” tunes, allowing the hardest of hard core to out themselves, but also offering a real in for those of us who may have given up on her’ (Giuffre 2012: 55). My engagement as a professional critic, but also as a fan working for a specific readership, was to harness the anti-mainstream idea Minogue seemed to be displaying here. While the publication I write for is relatively broad in its coverage, independent and less pop-oriented artists tend to be given preference in its review pages. I was not directly encouraged to convey this by my editor for this review, however I was aware in accepting the job I would need to be mindful that the likely readership would share a similar opinion of Minogue’s arena shows to mine. Personally and professionally, my anti-fandom of Minogue’s large-scale tours is what attracted me to her here at all – I would be reluctant to attend a ‘normal’ show. As such, here anti-fandom can be seen as a form of engagement for musicians that perhaps have gained too much exposure – a way to gain the attention of audiences who may otherwise have lost interest.

Notably, in an interview reproduced on Billboard online, Minogue also noted the tour was a way to differentiate between different fan groups in her audience: ‘[it’s] really just for super fans. There’s not going to be hit songs in that show, but it’s a good balance to something like (the) Aphrodite [arena tour]’ (Minogue in Caulfield 2012). While she has not harnessed the negative connotations of ‘anti-fandom’, her use of the term for ‘anti-tour’ suggests at least some level of opposition.

<sup>14</sup> For a review of Minogue’s Sydney performance see Palathingal (2012).

<sup>15</sup> I note here that I work as something of a professional fan and anti-fan (as an academic and as an independent arts journalist). One model for understanding this dual nature is Henry Jenkins’ famous Aca-fan (academic fan) model of ‘a hybrid creature which is part fan and part academic’ (Jenkins 2012, <http://www.henryjenkins.org/aboutme.html>, [accessed 20 June 2012]), however I will still maintain a stronger alliance with Jenson’s (1992) earlier notion of professional and amateur fandoms as being drawn from the same practice base, notably the position of ‘the aficionado as fan’ (Jenson 1992: 23).

## Conclusion

This chapter has sought to sneak popular music fans past the bouncers so as to engage with popular music discourse in more complex terms than previously allowed. The articulation of anti-fandom in popular music should promote lively, impassioned and energetic discussion. Just as the study of fandom allows for the examination of more complex elements of popular music reception and provides scope to articulate music's cultural significance (and often the process of creation), the nomination and formal acknowledgment of these negative types of fandom, of anti-fandom, allows for a larger scope again. Like traditional fan models which acknowledge the community, identity and semiotic consequences of fandom for positive engagement, I have shown popular music anti-fandom exists at a personal, industrial and creative level, and helps inform how we understand and value popular music texts, performers and audiences.

A good place to continue this exploration is to re-evaluate existing commentaries on popular music fandom, noting how these can be interpreted and challenged beyond *music for pleasure*. For example, in *Key Terms in Popular Music* Shuker describes 'popular music fans [as] people who avidly follow the music and lives of particular performers/musical genres' (2005: 97). This commitment to *follow* music can be shown by a fan's passive observation through secondary media consumption (like buying magazines and watching or listening to media reports and interviews), as well as active engagement (through attendance at concerts and fan conventions, for example), but this definition could just as easily be applied to the fan who follows music for more general acknowledgement of the field: to gain a better sense of what is available so as to appraise the good and the bad that is available in the industry. Just as fans have become comfortable with a full range of responses to music (including enjoyment, as well as disappointment and disapproval), so too should fan studies scholars explore a more diverse experience of popular music engagement.

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