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Book review

Popular Music Fandom: Identities, Roles, and Practices, edited by Mark Duffett

Lucy Bennett

Independent scholar, Cardiff, Wales, UK

[0.1] Keywords—[[Please supply some keywords.]]

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Mark Duffett. *Popular music fandom: Identities, roles, and practices*. City, ST: Publisher, 2000. \$0.00 (000p) ISBN 000-0-00000-000-0. [[Please provide publication information, price, page count, ISBN.]]

[1] Although scholarship on popular music fandom has bloomed slowly over recent years, the fandom has yet to receive the focused attention in the fan studies field that it deserves. **[[The original text said that the scholarship had not received due attention, but I think you mean that the fandom has not received due attention; OK as edited?]]** This new anthology, *Popular Music Fandom: Identities, Roles, and Practices* (2014), edited by Mark Duffett, addresses this gap in research, highlighting the complexities, challenges, and rewards surrounding the investigation of music fandom. The collection dynamically explores a range of perspectives on, and studies of, music fandom, perceptively unraveling it "both as a changing popular construct" and as an "emergent research object" (1). As Duffett outlines in his introduction, contemporary popular music fandom "can center on *a number* of different practices and a variety of different objects, but *the ways that these combine and relate* can make it different in each case and therefore such a fascinating object of study" (8). It is the combination and relation of the different practices and objects within music fandom, then, that drives this collection, with intriguing and fruitful results.

[2] The collection features an introduction by Mark Duffett, an afterword by Joli Jensen, and ten chapters covering quite different elements and practices of music fandom, such as record collecting, electronic dance music fandom, grieving processes, domestic musical activity, and jazz fandom. Three themes emerge overall: how popular music fandom can be approached as a powerful cultural phenomenon, how it can inform and be intertwined with social and cultural identity, and how technological developments are impacting some of its practices and processes. These themes do not dictate the

organization of the chapters; instead, they are allowed to develop naturally throughout the volume.

[3] To begin the collection, Matt Hills, in his chapter "Back in the Mix," explores fans' affective reception of industrially produced music. He considers how popular music fans relate to industrial creation and how they "make sense of the fact that the music they love is produced...engineered and mixed," (17), suggesting that fandom "*makes visible* a range of production personnel and collaborators, beyond merely focusing on performers" (18). This is an important argument, since scholarship on popular music fandom has tended to downplay fans' relation to, and negotiation of, music as an industrially produced entity, in favor of focusing on personalized relationships between fans and individual artists. Hills calls for music fan scholarship to consider a more fluid form of "intermediary" fandom, rather than restricting fandom, both empirically and theoretically, to notions of attachment to one artist, performer, or band. Such restrictions have led researchers to downplay intertextuality and sequential forms of affect. Hills's focus on fans' experiences of the music industry is an important addition to music fan studies, which have largely tended to overlook the relations between music fans and industrial creators.

[4] Nedim Hassan, in his chapter "Hidden Fans? Fandom and Domestic Musical Activity," also focuses on groups of people who are often overlooked in fan studies, such as those with learning difficulties. He illustrates how inequality of access shapes music fandom, and argues that researchers should consider "how to access and explore fan-related experiences that are less obviously interpreted as fan activities" (58), including everyday domestic activities such as listening to CDs and singing. Hassan argues that these domestic listening and performing practices can be significant ways of expressing identity (especially for those who have learning difficulties and may have problems with verbal communication) and thus require more attention within music fan scholarship.

[5] Cornel Sandvoss considers how belonging and place manifest themselves alongside and within music fandom. Sandvoss questions whether it is possible to be a fan of a place as much as of a text, given that they are both "*socially constructed through symbols, discourses and representations*" (115). Because of this, he argues that places can also be understood as texts. This understanding is especially significant for music fandom, since place can often shape and inform the experience of music and affective engagement with it, on both individual and collective levels. Focusing on Ibiza because of its strong music and dance culture, and using an online discussion forum devoted to the island, semistructured interviews, and participant observation in Ibiza as sources for analysis, Sandvoss demonstrates that "music and place are both part of the same textual field out of which subjective fan objects are formed" (138). This sociohistorical study explores how sustained affective ties and engagements can manifest between fans and a place, such as a tourist site, with music being rooted and anchored within these ties.

[6] Moving on from notions of place, two chapters in the collection offer particularly useful and revealing insights into fan identities. Firstly, Rebecca G. Adams, Amy M. Ernstes, and Kelly M. Lucey, in their chapter "After Jerry's Death: Achieving Continuity in Deadhead Identity and Community," explore Grateful Dead fans' responses to, and ways of coping with, lead guitarist Jerry Garcia's death. The authors illustrate how the Deadheads worked together to gently maintain continuity in the community and also maintain their identities as fans, organizing events such as local gatherings and annual celebrations. They conclude that it is "through dependence on and further development of an already existing infrastructure and renewed efforts to achieve continuity by both the band and their fans that the Deadhead community has survived Jerry's death" (203). Thus, this chapter emphasizes how a strongly developed music fan community can collectively and actively respond to loss and grief in a manner that preserves and strengthens its identity, ensuring the community's continuity and thereby survival. This is a significant contribution to our understanding of how fan identity is affected by, and how it can be protected in the wake of, crisis and change.

[7] Secondly, Roy Shuker's chapter on collecting in music fandom argues that the identities of the music fan and record collector, although sharing common ground, should be approached as distinct because of the differences between their "emotional and physical investments" (183) and their practices of consumption. These differences, he explains, are due to record collecting being a "more focused and intellectually rationalized activity than fandom" (166). Shuker's exploration of collecting delivers an insight into fans' contemporary collecting practices, most particularly into their notions of stereotypical and pathological depictions of what is viewed to be the "typical" record collector, such as the obsessive compulsive. **[[Please clarify this sentence; your meaning isn't clear. It will help to avoid the passive voice ("what is viewed as" obscures *who* views it that way), to avoid turning verbs into nouns ("depictions" obscures *who* depicts them that way) and to avoid stacking prepositional phrases ("into...of...of"). Do you mean something like "Shuker's exploration of collecting delivers an insight into fans' contemporary collecting practices. Additionally, scholars often depict collectors as obsessive-compulsive or otherwise pathological, and Shuker reveals fans' opinions of these stereotypes"? But note that even this rephrase fails to specify what fans' opinions of these stereotypes actually are.]]** Shuker observed, through interviews with collectors, that they pursue cultural capital, hinged with desire, pleasure, and obsession through consumption **[[What does "hinged with" mean? This is not an idiom in American English. Also, is it cultural capital, or fans' pursuit of cultural capital, that is "hinged with" desire, pleasure, and obsession? Please clarify.]]** (183). These are important observations that highlight the differences within music fandom and how, for some fans, patterns of consumption and identification are strongly intertwined.

[8] Considering the overall picture of fandom, Mark Duffett, in his chapter "Fan Words," reconsiders a term central to fan studies, *love*, suggesting that we must closely explore and reassess the terms fans use to describe their fandom. He asks, "What does it mean

to say you 'love' your favourite musician? Can you actually 'love' anyone that you have never met?" (146), and instead proposes several new terms, such as "imagined memories" and "symbolic economy," that may prove valuable for future studies and conceptualizations of fandom. Duffett's theoretical ponderings on fan use of *love* and his conclusion that fans use the term "to self-identify, to naturalize their passion, and to feel united as part of a fan base" (161) remind us that we must attend to key terms such as these, because they can offer insight into how fans articulate their affective ties.

[9] Ending the collection, Joli Jensen's afterword reflects on acafandom, offering a thought-provoking assessment of the term and its categorization. Writing over a decade after her influential chapter "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization" in Lisa Lewis's *The Adoring Audience* (1992), Jensen asks, "Are fans and scholars really different versions of the same thing, and if so, what are we scholars up to when we engage in fan research?" (207). Jensen did her doctoral work on Patsy Cline fandom in the early 1980s, and she recalls meeting a fan who provided her with detailed information and "insider" knowledge, displaying to her how a fan/collector could be a "vernacular scholar" (209) despite having no easy means to publish his work. In this instance, Jensen "legitimated" the fan's knowledge and expertise with her scholarly credentials and helped his work reach a wider audience. Jensen considers how the stakes of music fan studies have changed in light of technological developments, most especially the Internet and social media. Searching for Cline fandom online, Jensen is astonished at the wealth of material she finds: "For years dedicated fans had been posting information I didn't know and images I had never seen. It is blindingly obvious—curators and followers of Internet fan sites are far more Patsy Cline experts than I am" (210). She concludes, "Fans and scholars are doing very similar things, and the Internet helps us see this more fully" (210), although, as she later admits, there certainly remain "unresolved questions" surrounding the identities and negotiations of both parties.

[10] Overall, this is an insightful and compelling volume. As I indicated earlier, there are still relatively few studies of popular music fandom, and we especially lack empirical investigations that question and observe music fans themselves in order to unravel and understand their practices and affective experiences. However, this collection offers some solid contributions to the field. There is a strong sense articulated across all the chapters that music fandom is vibrant and that it is curiously formed and practiced, and that it therefore demands further study. I do feel that contributors could have devoted more attention and consideration to social media (for example, how are music artists and fans connecting via Twitter, and what are the implications of this connection? Are social media platforms affecting connections among music fans, and if so, how?), but nevertheless, this is an important and compelling collection for anyone studying popular music fandom and the identities, roles, and practices within it.

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