'Against The Rest': Fanzines and Alternative Music Cultures in Ireland

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of fanzines in developing music communities in Ireland. It explores these fan-produced texts from the emergence of the first Irish punk fanzines in 1977 to the present, questioning their significance, while critiquing previous studies into fanzine cultures (Duncombe, 2008; Triggs, 2010). It looks at how 'authenticity' is a central construct in the design, content, and dissemination of these artefacts, establishing a 'dominant representational paradigm' (Hamilton, 1997) for the production and consumption of fanzines. Fanzines are primarily found in alternative music cultures, and this work situates the makers and users as members of local 'scenes' (Cohen, 1991; Straw, 1991), and proposes a more fluid or tribal (Maffesoli, 1996; Bennett, 1999) framework, where communities are formed through shared *taste* (Bourdieu, 1984).

Central to this work is the position of capital, particularly Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and social capital. It also examines the role of such capital in developing fan hierarchies, particularly in local music-making activities (Finnegan, 1989). This work crucially positions the fanzine as a fan practice, and the fans that made and consumed these works will be analysed to determine the range of (popular music) fandom (Duffett, 2014) in Irish DIY (do-it-yourself) cultures. Finally, this study explores whether there has been a significant paradigmatic shift in fan media with the emergence of new technologies.

This research incorporates extensive qualitative fieldwork with fanzine makers, collectors, and music-makers, along with a thorough study of various music fanzines. This data analysis finds that the fanzine was an important facilitator in independent music communities between the last 1970s and early 2000s, existing outside the mainstream, but is now an even more niche mode of communication.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or any other person, for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures

A Note On Style

For the sake of clarity, throughout this thesis, the following typographical style is utilised:

- **Band names** are in bold text.
- *Fanzines* titles are in italics.

Additionally, while the term 'fanzine' is used in this research to refer to these fan-produced publications, many informants in this study commonly use the shortened version of 'zine'. As will be explored in the introduction chapter, there are subtle differences when the 'fan' prefix is removed.

Chapter One - Introduction

It is some time in 2002. At The High Stool, a since defunct bar in Limerick (a relatively small city[1] in the mid-west of Ireland), a wave of feedback emanates from the smoke-filled room. It is a venue that I have come to know well over the past twelve months as I have begun to immerse myself in the city's DIY scene – I have seen everything from hardcore music from Hungary to hip-hop from New Jersey; on other occasions, I have watched seminal underground artists play last minute shows (Michael Gira of **Swans**) while a future 'freak folk'[2] breakthrough act (Devendra Banhart) is lying across a pool table during Gira's performance. It is the kind of place where just about anything can happen in a pre-smoking ban[3] Ireland. While the bar harboured ambitions to be a haven for local metal fans, it was instead home to a mixed bag of misfits, including bikers and those associated with various sub genres of alternative music. The bikers occupy the front bar, while around the corner, music fans (predominantly males in their twenties) face towards the stage, a glorified balcony that doubles up as a poolroom when bands are not playing. A local band plays first, followed by a band from Dublin, with the headliners coming from England; it is a fairly standard formula for what happens at such small concerts (or 'gigs' as they will frequently be referred to in this study). The night mixes punk, hardcore and indie music through a soundsystem that is far from professional, with each band sounding slightly less ramshackle than the previous. For the most part the music is loud and fast, and operated on a do-it-yourself (DIY) basis by non-profit local promoters. There is a shared understanding (and aesthetic) amongst bands, promoters, and regular audience members at shows in this venue – music that is written and performed adhering to that DIY aesthetic is welcomed and appreciated, even if it is not particularly good by conventional professional standards.

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[1] A population of fewer than 60,000 inhabitants, according to the 2011 Census. Information from: http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/populationofeachprovincecountyandcity2011/ [retrieved 23 April 2015].

[2] A folk genre of music, primarily using acoustic instrumentation but also interspersing psychedelic and avant-garde influences (for more, see Reynolds, 2011: 344).

[3] Ireland introduced a smoking ban to workplaces and enclosed public spaces in March 2004.

The lyrics of the second band are not entirely decipherable as they are shouted angrily by the frontman who, with microphone in hand, is positioned off the makeshift stage (with the pool table pushed back to make space for the band) thrashing his arms wildly. With a relatively small attendance at the show (no more than twenty or thirty people), I awkwardly try to avoid eye contact with this singer as he roams the room. In the midst of all of this, there is a tall man with bleached blonde hair and ears pierced, carrying a plastic bag that is filled with Xeroxed pages stapled together. These are editions of his latest fanzine and between sets he approaches various members of the audience. The publication features an interview with the frontman of the second band, and the fanzine is full of interviews with similar bands to those performing, as well as reviews and opinionated criticism of the social status quo. In the columns section (a regular feature of larger fanzines), two writers critique what they deem a misleading article on straight-edge culture in Ireland's longest running music magazine *Hot Press*. Elsewhere, columnists discuss travelling seven hours to Belfast for gigs, how loud and heavy they like their music, and how readers should embrace DIY culture and measure success in music through different ways than record sales or accumulated fortunes.

A combination of that content and the fact that the writer already knows most of the audience makes it an easy sell. There is a shared sensibility between his fanzine and the music that inhabits this space. A few weeks later, I make a trip to Dublin which includes visits to a number of independent record stores. In each of them, there are dozens of fanzines on display, including a copy of the fanzine for sale at the Limerick gig, demonstrating a wide network for these publications. The communication between customers and staff at the record store is equally informal as that of the fanzine writer attempting to sell the fanzine at the gig in Limerick. There is a sense that insider knowledge is important within this community of taste. For me, knowledge of the fanzine and of the Limerick scene gives me some credibility in my interactions with the staff, and we discuss recent gigs in the town as well as some of the bands featured in the publication.

This research looks at the role of such fanzines in music scenes in Ireland from 1977 until 2014, and as the above example indicates, there was a time when they were omnipresent in DIY cultures in Ireland. Thus, the dissertation asks three questions relating to their significance, namely:

1. **What are the defining characteristics of fanzine production and dissemination in Ireland, and what impact have they had on music communities?** Borrowing from Hamilton's "dominant representational paradigm" (1997), I will examine the technological, economic, social, and aesthetic factors that became significant in determining the style and texture of Irish music fanzines. Additionally, this research will be looking at Ireland's most noteworthy fanzines and their writers, exploring the motivations for establishing these publications and the subsequent impact they have had on the writers', readers' and (primarily local) musicians' sense of self-identity and collective identity as a community. It examines how fanzines are circulated, and questions whether these modes of distribution have a significant role to play in forging a sense of community. This research asks whether these publications actually helped build communities, or if they more interested in sustaining communities that already existed.

2. **What role do fanzines play as a conduit in facilitating a relationship between musicians and fans?** My research focuses on fanzine production as a fan practice, and in doing this, explores how connections between fans and music makers differ in DIY cultures from those in more mainstream popular culture. As indicated in my aforementioned initial encounter with the medium, interaction in this DIY culture is much more informal and less structured. Such experiences raise the question of whether there are clear distinctions between fans and performers in these alternative music scenes, at least in the conventional sense of mainstream popular music; and also what role fanzines play in facilitating less formal relationships and interaction.

3. **What impact have new technologies had on fanzine culture, and have changes in format led to changes in the ways in which community is experienced and discursively articulated?** This work considers how new methods of communication that have been fostered through online technologies- such as email, blogging, web forums, and social network sites (SNS) - have impacted on the culture of fanzine production and circulation in the past fifteen years. It suggests that a paradigmatic shift has taken place in how participants in alternative music scenes interact with each other. While the music has not changed significantly in the period, this study sets out to determine how the media used has changed and with what implications for

fanzine production, dissemination and the experience of fanzine culture and community. The dissertation will identify if fanzine production still exists in Irish DIY contexts, and whether such retention of the medium merely serves nostalgic purposes in an era of readily available information and interaction online. With fans now communicating in different ways, how, if at all, can fanzines still contribute towards a sense of community amongst members of local scenes?

Before dissecting these questions, it is important to historically and culturally locate fanzines. They are amateur publications that have been utilised in many different fields of interest (football, film, popular music, etc.) since the early twentieth century (Atton, 2002; Duncombe, 2008). Warner (1994) traces the etymology of the word 'fanzine' back to the 1920's when 'fan magazines' held a different significance as "newsstand periodical[s] which told avid movie goers about the personal lives of film stars, reproduced stills from current productions, and published advertisements for products alleging to provide purchasers with skin or hair as superb as those of featured players" (1994: 175). Thus, this first wave of fan magazines were publications aimed at the fan(atic), but not produced by fans. By the 1930's[4], that dynamic had shifted, with fans themselves writing and publishing their own 'fanmags' that would eventually become known as fanzines.[5] This initial flurry of fan publishing activity was confined to science fiction titles. While music fanzines differ textually and stylistically from science fiction fanzines – clearly, narrative fiction is the main feature in science fiction texts – they function in a similar way in terms of how information is shared with fellow fans.

Internationally, music fanzines have played a significant role in facilitating the flow of information and opinions about acts playing certain genres of music; in the mid-1960s, American titles such as *Crawdaddy* commenced as fanzines before transforming into fully-fledged professional magazines. In Ireland, there were precursors to the emergence of the punk (the music genre most associated with fan publishing in

[4] Warner adds that there were amateur publications such as *Recluse* (1927) but contends that *The Comet* (1930) was the first genuine science fiction fanzine.
[5] The term 'fanzine' was not introduced into fandom vocabulary until 1940 by science fiction fan Louis Russell Chauvenet.

popular culture) fanzine in the 1970s. While there have been fanzines produced about pop stars such as **Madonna** (Triggs, 2010) or **Elvis** for example, the works covered within this study are never artist-specific. They cover a multitude of artists and practices that primarily belong to such sub-genres of rock as punk, hardcore, metal, and indie. They are frequently referred to as 'zines' but as Atton (2001b) outlines, there are subtle differences when the prefix is dropped. The removal of 'fan' from the equation portrays a work that is not written from the fan's perspective (e.g. zines on politics, architecture, personal productions of literature or art), whereas this thesis focuses on printed pieces that are written by individuals who are fans of the music and the scenes they are part of.

These music fanzines are essentially homemade magazines about music, and as Roy Shuker points out, they were "a new media tailor-made for the values of punk with its do-it-yourself ethic and associations of street credibility" (2008: 168). They are for the most part printed in black-and-white, photocopied and stapled together, and even the fonts, imagery and assemblage[6] of fanzines clearly identifies that these are not mainstream music magazines. Distributed at gigs and independent record stores, they essentially exist because they cover material that cannot be found in the mainstream music papers, and because they are a voice for the fan community. In her memoir, former **Sonic Youth** member Kim Gordon recalls that an incendiary 1981 performance from **Public Image Limited** in New York was not captured by the mainstream media, and as it existed in a pre-Internet age, it was not an event that would feature on YouTube or other online sites; instead, the only people who documented the concert was a group of fifteen year old girls working on a fanzine (Gordon, 2015: 261-262).

Alternatives In Print, a bibliographical reference work in this field, views alternative publications such as fanzines as non-commercial (though not necessarily non-profit), that merge "social responsibility" and "creative expression" (cited in Atton, 2002: 13). As such they are publications produced through an obligation to the community they serve; to provide news and commentary in a participatory manner, and to do so in unique ways that are distinct from writing found in the mainstream press. They are free

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[6] Some fanzines used letters cut and pasted from newspapers to make the text resemble the construction of a ransom note, following the trend of Jamie Reid's album cover for **The Sex Pistols'** *Never Mind The Bollocks…(*1977).

from the editorial constraints of newspaper and magazine publishing, and often concerns such as sub-editing, and syntactic and structural exactness, are not major objectives for the fanzine writer. At least, this is the way that it is often presented, but as will be discussed later in Chapter Four, there are still rules in the production of fanzines to establish a "dominant representational paradigm" (Hamilton, 1997: 76). The commercial considerations of magazine publishing – staffing, costs, distribution, advertising, production – do not usually apply to fanzines. With their low-scale production and distribution, fanzines show that cultural artefacts do not necessarily need to adhere to the over-commoditised entertainment of what Adorno and Horkheimer termed 'the culture industry' (1972). There are, however, rare occasions when the term 'fanzine' is fostered by mainstream media: an example of this practice saw an Irish tabloid newspaper *The Irish Daily Star* twice include what it termed a "special souvenir fanzine" for the pop boy band **One Direction**, firstly in 2012[7], and subsequently in 2014[8]. A glossy pull-out, professionally designed and written, it was produced in order to capitalise on major Irish concerts for the band. The primary difference was that these 'fanzines' did not tend to feature content written *from* the perspective of a fan, but were produced for fans.

Outside of such examples, fanzines follow a similar template – material written by and compiled by fans that is subsequently distributed to fellow fans through methods not widely used by the mainstream press. As Frith claims, "the key to fanzine culture, what is common to all titles, is the assumption that there is no difference between reader and writer" (2002: 241). Many – though not all fanzines – are identifiable by their somewhat amateur appearance, in terms of content and very basic production values. There is a strong tendency for fanzines to be run by one individual – writer, editor and publisher all rolled into one – and they thus offer an opportunity for the writer to express their "own desires, opinions and beliefs on a chosen topic" (Atton, 2002: 55). To Irish fanzine writer and collector Willie Stewart, one of the key signifiers of a fanzine's identity is its amateur publication, arguing that "on a practical side, it [the fanzine] just has to be self-published" (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

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[7] *The Irish Daily Star*, 24 January 2012.
[8] *The Irish Daily Star*, 23 May 2014.

Despite their significance within localised music communities, fanzines have been largely overlooked in studies of both popular music and fandom. A possible explanation for the limited analysis of both the texts and their influence can be that fanzines did not undergo the same level of archiving as other periodicals. Secondly, it can be claimed that as these publications were primarily aimed at a niche and local audience, their dissemination was quite limited and perhaps of little consequence; in an Irish context, very few artists who regularly featured in fanzines became (commercially) successful outside of their own local 'scene'. Nonetheless, I argue that there is significant scope for investigating how fans and musicians interacted with these artefacts in these 'scenes'; they provide for a multi-faceted way of examining the behaviours, cultural preferences, and shared ethics of community participants. While this research can at times look backwards to a media that can be perceived now as somewhat antiquated, it provides a new direction for looking at alternative music cultures in Ireland.

Thesis Argument and Structure

This research project traverses a number of disciplines to present findings on hitherto unexplored aspects of Irish popular music culture. It does so by focussing on a medium that has been widely neglected in both media studies and popular music studies. However, it utilises techniques and theoretical case studies from both of these fields, whilst simultaneously adopting an ethnographic approach (partially through participant observation) in determining the significance of fanzines within DIY music scenes. By placing fans at the centre of the research and by focussing on the positioning of fans in alternative music scenes, the work also fits within the growing fields of fandom and fan studies[9].

Theoretically, the study leans on existing fandom research while also positing that there are significant gaps in popular music fandom, particularly in the latter's tendency towards a somewhat narrow focus on stardom. As I will examine in the next chapter, the textual analysis and field research carried out in this study are supported by a significant body of literature. Alongside fandom, the theoretical grounding for this

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[9] Duffett (2013b) notes that fandom and fan studies differ in that fandom scholars are far more interdisciplinary whereas fan studies "fan studies is a much narrower area […] Its practitioners aim to represent fandom in a positive light and tend to study fan communities and practices" (2013b: 2).

work comes from two key areas. Firstly, I transfer Hamilton's "dominant representational paradigm" (1997) to explain how there are certain patterns and codes in the production and consumption of these artefacts. Additionally Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualisation of social capital and cultural capital will help to make sense of the motives for the production of fanzines, and demonstrate how hierarchies can emerge in communities of taste. These three key theoretical spheres are somewhat interlinked. All feature prominently in this thesis, but none of them alone could adequately answer the research questions laid out at the start of this chapter.

The thesis will show that the various shared motives and methods in music fanzine production in Ireland share a similar sensibility and aesthetic with the DIY music movements that the medium supports. Furthermore, it will demonstrate that the fanzine has a significant role to play in this movement, but that its influence is not transferable outside small music scenes that are bounded by shared tastes and practices. It also demonstrates that there is a temporal specificity to this medium, and that its significance is waning as new communicative platforms emerge. My research findings indicate that fanzines, despite their amateur appearance, have been following similar patterns of production and dissemination since the mid-1970s, and that adopting a paradigmatic approach to analyse them demonstrates inherited and deliberate methods of production. While there may be a somewhat communitarian ethos in the communities that fanzines are a feature of, there is something to be gained through associations with fanzine culture, and this comes in the form of cultural and social capital. Fanzine writers are equally motivated to write these publications as it allows them to actively partake in local and translocal scenes; additionally, it provides them with the access to the bands that they are fans of, which demonstrates the significance of fanzine making as fandom.

Chapter Two looks at previous research conducted in popular music and fan studies, as well as from other relevant fields, to develop a theoretical framework to support my main arguments. It highlights significant gaps in literature around fanzine texts themselves, and the paucity of work done to date that explores the practices of DIY (do-it-yourself) music communities in Ireland. This leads to a need to unpack the term community and to also deliberate on other terms that are used in academia to describe the group practices of music makers and fans. Therefore, Tonnies (1964) and

Durkheim ([1893]1984) are considered in terms of traditional formations of community, with my approach favouring Bury's concept of an 'interactive community' (2005) over Anderson's 'imagined community' (1991) to describe those communities that may not be bounded geographically but have shared cultural taste (Bourdieu, 1984). Yet, there are other ways of describing this kind of activity, and this research leans towards the usage of 'scene' (Straw, 1991; Cohen, 1991; Shank, 1994) as a more fluid way of explaining the idiosyncrasies and mechanisms of these groups. Furthermore, this chapter examines the complexities of masculinity in these local scenes. The chapter presents three key areas for examining these artefacts and the community they serve that will run throughout this study: a production paradigm; the positioning of capital in such scenes; and the existence of fandom in DIY music.

Chapter Three sets out the methods that are used in this study to complement the range of literature briefly outlined above. It demonstrates how a mixed methods approach was devised, with a particular leaning towards qualitative and ethnographic techniques, to collate the data to support the findings contained in Chapters 4-7. This methodology section also presents a number of practical challenges that I encountered as a researcher, particularly in terms of how I framed my own connection to the study.

The primary concern of Chapter Four is to determine what are the paradigmatic aspects of fanzine production in Ireland. A semiotic and stylistic analysis of fanzines looks at the materials, generic features, and position of fanzines within localised music scenes. This chapter demonstrates the significance of the theme of authenticity inn fanzine production and consumption. Factors such as knowledge, content, design and economics are all contributors to the development of an authentic music fanzine.

Chapter Five finds out who these producers actually are/were, and why they publish(ed) fanzines. Its main purpose is to establish how 'capital' is accrued by producers, and how such capital can allow for fanzine creators and collectors to become taste gatekeepers, drawing on a range of theorists (Fiske, 1992; Thornton, 1995; Hills, 2002) all influenced by Bourdieu (1984). This chapter maps the make-up of the communities/scenes that the fanzine text was an integral part of, and how the fanzine provided a gateway into the scene for predominantly young males. It looks at questions of place and identity, and how social reciprocity is an important aspect of the

'participatory culture' (Jenkins, 1992b) that fanzines and their respective scenes foster. This chapter also encounters another vital group in fanzine dissemination and that is the collector, and this vital user of fanzines is covered in great detail in this particular chapter.

Chapter Five also positions the fanzine writer in a different way from other audience members, placing them as an outsider of sorts. This theme is continued in Chapter Six, which looks at where the fanzine writer is positioned in terms of scene hierarchies (Thornton, 1995), and more specifically, what type of a fan they are. Thus, the key focus in this chapter is the placement of fandom in DIY scenes, looking at the relationship between fans and musicians in these scenes, and the role of fanzines in these exchanges. By doing this, it queries a lack of literature in popular music fandom that investigates the complex nature of local fans. Featuring in-depth interview and focus group material with musicians adds a new perspective to this study. Music-makers give their opinions on how important the fanzine has been to developing the profile of their own musical acts and also for providing a platform for communication between artist and audience. Against this, the chapter scrutinises the objectivity of fanzine writers, who are often musicians themselves in localised scenes. With musicians ranging from their early twenties to early forties taking part in this study, I also look at the relevance of media like fanzines in an increasingly digital age.

This contemporary turn towards digital technologies provides the focus for Chapter Seven, which questions how the paradigm of production and consumption of fan media has shifted. Since the turn of the century, many different media have come to the forefront to replace the fanzine, and this section analyses which platforms have been most effective compared to hard copy publications. I query the authenticity motif that is so integral to fanzine production, and whether this carries the same weight in online platforms, such as blogging. The chapter also looks at a mini resurgence in fanzine publishing in Ireland, which some current authors represent as an 'anti-internet' discourse. The chapter considers how community is framed online, considering the theoretical works of Rheingold (2000), Calhoun (1998) and Castells (2001), and determining whether the concepts of community and scene need to be reconceptualised because of a new sociality that exists between fan and performer.

Finally, Chapter Eight critically summarises the main arguments put forward in this research, and flags other potentially other interesting avenues of research in this field that might come out of this study.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores some of the central arguments and themes that feature in critical literature related to music and media consumption, and fan practices. At its heart, my own research looks at the significance of producing, distributing and consuming fanzines, and to this end, I will examine the merits of conceptualising such a practice as a paradigm that encompasses the linkages between the cultural, social, technological and economic aspects of the music fanzines community in Ireland. A key factor in such a paradigm is the significance afforded to the shared sense and articulation of authenticity, and I will draw on ethnomusicological case studies to support my arguments as to why tropes of authenticity recur in music communities.

This will be followed by an extensive discussion on how forms of cultural and social capital are accumulated through fanzine production and collection, as well as directly through musical practices. This work positions the making of fanzines as a fan practice, and to this end, a significant portion of this chapter will be devoted to the area of fandom theory and research in order to determine where this study fits within that field. One of the more complex sections of this chapter explores how groups of music fans bond, and how shared media practices and musical sensibilities play a role in this bonding. It also examines how gendered these communities of taste are.

The chapter will deal firstly with two areas where there are significant lacunae in this research field – studies of Irish popular music, and 'outsider' works on fanzine production.

2.2 Gaps in Current Literature

<u>Irish Popular Music Studies – A Focus on Identity and Musicality</u>

Given that traditional music is considered a cornerstone of Irish identity, it is no surprise that ethnic authenticity[10] is an important consideration in the analysis of Irish popular genres. John O'Flynn (2007) outlines how discourses on Irish music place an emphasis on authenticity, and how "perceived Irishness" is encouraged not just through the music and performances but also through the projected personae of musicians and their engagement with specific cultural and social themes in Irish society (2007: 33)[11]. Nonetheless, research on Irish popular music studies in Ireland has been quite limited. As Gerry Smyth (2004) notes, the field of Irish Studies "has tended to be dominated by literary-critical and historical discourses" (2004: 3). In relatively recent times, the vacuum that existed in such literature has partly been filled, especially through the works of scholars such as Smyth (2004; 2005; 2009), and O'Flynn (2009). Smyth takes a particularly historical overview of Irish popular music (2005), with a focus on how music forms part of the Irish identity (2009). In the book reviews section of the journal *Popular Music* Smyth (2002) also heavily criticises the publication *The Complete Guide to Celtic Music: From the Highland Bagpipe and Riverdance to U2 and Enya* (Skinner-Sawyers, 2000) for the way in which the author presents herself as the expert in determining what represents the authentic: "Time and again, artists, performances and individual musical texts are celebrated or condemned in the name of an 'authenticity' which, like the 'spirit' which animates it, is ultimately unlocatable" (Smyth, 2002: 243). Smyth identifies how the concept of authenticity in Celtic or Irish music, is connected with notions such as 'spirit', 'melancholy', and 'feeling'. Certain self-styled Celtic music artists have mobilised these in the marketing of their music, thus creating unnecessary hierarchies in traditional music circles.

O'Flynn (2009) utilises a more ethnographic framework than Smyth's more historically-based works (2005, 2009). His fieldwork sets out to define Irish identity, its relationship with music, and what mix of signifiers constitute "Irish-sounding".

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[10] Authenticity as a concept in studies of popular music will be discussed in 2.4.
[11] O'Flynn utilises the example of **Sinéad O'Connor** to illustrate this point. O'Connor has been an extremely vocal commentator on issues such as politics, religion, and nationalism in Ireland during her career.

O'Flynn deals with a number of different genres of music, but has a particular leaning towards traditional Irish music, and some of the more successful acts in pop and rock music. Like many other studies of the Irish music landscape, it does not delve into the less popular genres of music or scenes based around small, underground venues. O'Flynn incorporates an element of audience studies, which is often overlooked in Irish popular music studies in favour of discourses on identity (for example, Campbell, 2011), nationality (for example, McLaughlin, 1999) and musicality.

Participants in music scenes who are not necessarily producers and performers of music are rarely the primary focus when Irish music is discussed. Hogan (2014a) deals with this from a youth culture perspective, and as useful as this research is, it is largely rooted in secondary research, offering accounts of ballrooms, traditional music, and Northern Irish punk rock. As such, it does not cover studies of more recent audiences. However, some research into audiences and participants in Irish music scenes is now emerging - at the 2014 IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music) UK & Ireland Conference in Cork, both Eileen Hogan and Jaime Jones presented papers outlining ethnographic research in scenes in Cork and Dublin respectively, with Jones' paper in particular examining the practices of more 'underground' or DIY networks in Ireland's capital city. Additionally, recent undergraduate work by Cross (2011) utilises a subcultural framework to analyse the 'straight edge' (see Chapter Four) scene in Dublin.

There is also a growing trend towards analysing music fandom, and this can be seen in works such as Gary Sinclair's (2014) investigation into the Irish heavy metal scene. Sinclair's work has relevance to my own research in two ways. Firstly, it moves away from a narrative in popular music studies of Ireland that focuses on either traditional music, successful rock music (and in particular **U2**; for example, Bradby and Torode, 1984), and music of the diaspora (Campbell, 2011). Instead Sinclair's participants are immersed in music with more Anglo-American influences, and a genre of music which has only recently received attention in academic circles (Walser, 1993; Berger, 1999; Weinstein, 2000; Bayer, 2009; Hjelm et al, 2013). The music genres featured in Irish fanzines are not discussed in any great depth in academia. By focussing on the audience for this type of music – Sinclair's research incorporates fieldwork at live concerts in Dublin city and analysis of music forums frequented by metal fans – he is

able to determine the differences between online and face-to-face communications in this scenes, something that my work looks at in greater detail in Chapter Seven[12].

Works like Sinclair's are the exception to the norm, where - as previously stated - a select number of financially successful Irish (and second-generation Irish) artists dominate Irish Popular Music Studies literature: **U2**, **The Corrs**, **Sinéad O'Connor**, **The Pogues**, etc. In a similar vein, Matteo Cullen's (2012) study of the development of Irish music in the late 1960s and 1970s, with a focus on the texts of rock music may offer a different perspective, but it does explore three of the most commercially and critically successful artists of the era in **Rory Gallagher**, **Van Morrison**, and **Phil Lynott**. Cullen considers texts as products of cultural hybridity (similar to McLoone and McLaughlin, 2000), and while this provides a useful model for analysing how contemporary Irish acts have been influenced by non-indigenous forms of music, it does not offer a framework for this particular research project as its focus is too centred on internationally renowned music-makers rather than others who participate(d) in Irish music communities.

Critical Studies of Fanzines

Likewise, there so far has been limited work in the scholarly sphere on the music press as a distinct medium. A notable exception is *Pop Music and The Press* (Jones, 2002), an edited volume focussing on issues such as genre (Chang, 2002), gender (Kruse, 2002), and nationality (Cloonan, 2002) in professional pop music criticism. The influence of the fanzine is perhaps somewhat dismissed by its non-inclusion in this book, with only Frith (2002: 24) referring to them as 'ideological magazines'. Furthermore, bar cursory considerations by Morash (2010), and the dissertation of O'Rourke (2010), there has been no thorough examination of popular music criticism in Ireland to date.

Perhaps it is understandable that fanzines have received minimal academic attention– after all, they do exist on the margins of the publishing world. Research carried out on music fanzines pales in comparison to the wealth of diverse literature available in other areas of popular music studies, according to Chris Atton (2010: 519), who has

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[12] Sinclair utilised the web-forum of website metalireland.com to find that his participants were far less 'civilising' online than 'in real life'.

contributed more than any other to scholarly research into music fanzines (2001a; 2009; 2010). Along with a handful of others (Perkins, 1992; Duncombe, 2008; Triggs, 2010), Atton traces the origin of the fanzine to the international growth of science fiction fandom in the 1930's. They argue that early fanzines can be considered a product of these user/producer communities. While Atton and these other writers have the same historical pinpoints for the development of fanzines, their approaches to analysing the texts differ.

Those who write academically about (fan)zines often tend to be – or once were – creators of these publications themselves, leading to questionable objectivity on the part of the scholar. One such account is from Stephen Duncombe (1997, Rev. Ed 2008) who gleefully pronounces that as "a punk rocker, left politico, and scholar of culture" (2008: 8-9), he fully submerged himself in the world of fanzines in the 1980s, making his own and trading with others to develop a collection. Even the font and design of *Notes From Underground…* has a decidedly 'zine'-like look (A5 size, typewriter-style font, black and white imagery) and feel to it, with the revised edition published by Microcosm, a publishing house that itself has published 'zines'.
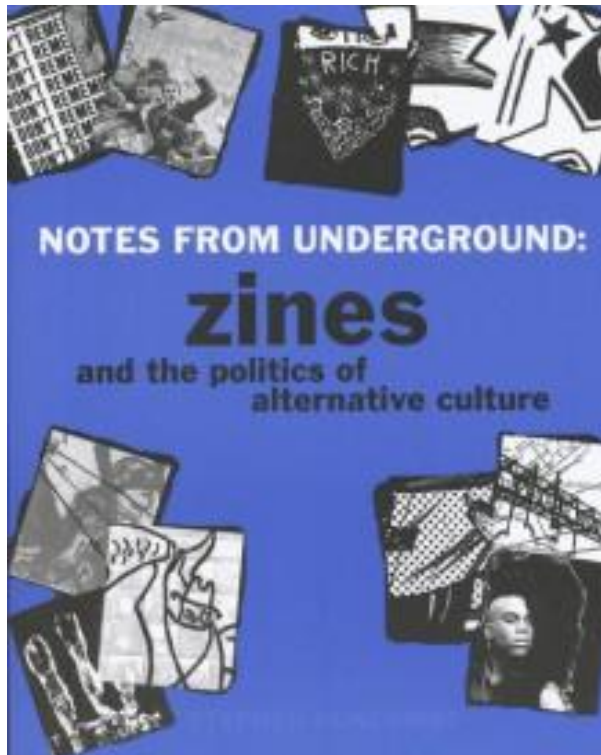
Figure 2.1: Cover image of *Notes from Underground*... (Duncombe, 2008)

As a former fanzine producer and collector himself, Duncombe argues that fanzine production is a significant community unifier and crucial networking device in 'underground' and 'DIY' scenes. Burt (1998) however feels that Duncombe's placement of the 'zine' as primarily a punk rock and rebellious manifestation (therefore stressing its political nature) ignores why many writers and readers of fanzines are attracted to the medium, i.e. to gather news and information not found in the mainstream media. As Burt notes: "Many zine writers and musicians have noticed the problem already, and tried to solve it, by finding ways to be "alternative" (i.e., creative, independent, original) without caring much about being aggressive, or oppositional" (1998: 151-152). There is value in Duncombe's hypothesis, as it is difficult to be original and independent without being oppositional in the process; those that position themselves within DIY cultures are defined not just by what they are but what they are not. This demonstrates a more tribal or subcultural nature to the community, and as Gelder suggests (2007), there is a key difference between subcultural and counter-cultural movements. Drawing on the example of 1960s hippies, he argues that counter-cultures believe that they can influence wider social change, in that "they imagine that society's values ought somehow to reflect or absorb their own" (Gelder, 2007: 22). On the other hand, subcultures (or 'tribes' as a possibly preferable term – see below) do not really consider "having social change on their agenda" (Gelder, 2007: 22).

This presents a difficulty with the application of a straightforward subcultural approach within my own research, as it risks ignoring the participatory pleasure that can derive from what is essentially a fan-centred practice (the production of fanzines). Following the conception of subculture as posited by scholars such as Hebdige (1979), Duncombe's focus is too centred on the oppositional nature of fanzines to mainstream society. While arguably music fanzines *are* subversive, there is disappointingly little concern from Duncombe for the role of the 'zine' writer as fan. There are other issues with Duncombe's work; while it offers interesting first-hand perspectives on fanzine production and networking in mid-1990s America, Duncombe fails to acknowledge a contemporaneous fanzine movement in the UK, only writing about British fanzine culture in the past tense.

In an Irish context, there is a clear gap in literature concerning the production and dissemination of fanzines. Morash's overview of the Irish media (2010) gives an otherwise comprehensive historical account dating back to the 1400s without once mentioning fanzines. The only occasions to date when Irish music fanzines have received analysis in scholarly research has been in two undergraduate dissertations - Clodagh Murphy's unattainable[13] 1998 thesis focused on the role of women in Dublin (and international) punk scenes and utilised fanzine texts; while Anthony "Anto" Dillon's work (2005), takes an historical overview of Irish music fanzines dating back to 1977, and includes case studies with several fanzine writers. Like Duncombe, Dillon does not attempt to position himself as the independent, objective scholar. As the producer of one of Ireland's longest-running fanzines *Loserdom* (1996 – present), and as an active participant in developing fanzine archival and celebratory hubs such as The Forgotten Zine Archive[14] and Independent's Day[15], he holds a uniformly positive view on the production of fanzines in Ireland and their subsequent impact on music communities, closing the thesis with the following statement: "With the freedom that zines enjoy, from commercial imperatives such as the maintenance of stereotypes and drive for financial profit; of literal creative, expressive and communicative autonomy; long may they continue!" (Dillon, 2005: 40).

Neither Duncombe nor Dillon explored factors – technological and sociological – that contributed to a downturn in fanzine production and consumption in the past decade. In their defence, both Duncombe's (originally 1997) and Dillon's accounts were written at a time when there was not a significant decrease in fanzine production. Duncombe acknowledges (in his revised edition, 2008) that the digital age should have had an impact on fanzine output, in that the Internet offers a hub for DIY media production (2008: 210-211). However, he also believes that fanzines will continue to have an audience due to the 'underground' nature of discovery, reinvention, and dissemination of fanzine content. Again, his scope is limited to US audiences and does

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[13] Murphy's (1998) …..*Women in the Punk Subculture through an Analysis of Zine Texts* thesis is no longer available via the DCU Library, the DCU School of Communications, or from the writer herself. In an interview conducted for this study, the author could not recall the main themes or findings of the research, but Dillon (2005) refers to her research in his study of Irish fanzines.
[14] An archive of various Irish and international fanzines housed at Seomra Spraoi, Dublin (Chapter 5).
[15] An annual event held in Dublin city where fanzine writers and producers display their work, and sell/trade content. Fewer music fanzines are appearing at this event, with zines focussing on areas of interest such as art and literature gaining more traction.

not consider how these networks can persist in smaller communities despite digital media.

Triggs's work on fanzines (1995; 2006; 2010) comes from a different perspective, with an emphasis on graphic and stylistic representations. The liner notes of one, *Fanzines: The DIY Revolution* (2010) describes her as "an avid collector of fanzines", but she was heavily criticised by fanzine writers for that publication. It combined visual content from fanzines with commentary that mixed historical information with some scholarly analysis. The backlash related to permission that was belatedly sought regarding the inclusion of images from numerous fanzines, as well as some factually incorrect information[16]. The fact that she did not explicitly seek this consent at an earlier time made her more of an 'outsider' to the fanzine community than Duncombe and Dillon who retained some element of cultural capital within the community of fanzine makers and readers through their own involvement in scene. It could also be considered that her role as an 'outsider' (Chapter Three) influenced the reception she received from the fanzine community.

While most studies focus on the punk fanzine (for example, Triggs, 2006; Worley, 2015), Chris Atton (2001a) includes publications beyond the 'classic' punk-influenced 'ripped and torn' assemblages. He looks at how progressive rock fanzines differ, in that they are works of fandom focussing on one particular band[17]. The common discourse on fanzines is that they are cheaply produced and amateur publications, whereas Atton's research contradicts that by highlighting that there are individuals who seek to make the most professional publication they can. This is useful in that it demonstrates that fanzine production takes a different form from the ripped and torn aesthetic so beloved by many practitioners. However, there is little discussion about scene-building within Atton's progressive rock research, and within an Irish context, the primary focus was the localised punk and hardcore communities. Thus, the gap my own work aims to fill relates to the positioning of fanzines within music scenes, and

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[16] A website fanzinesbytealtriggs.com was developed by disgruntled fanzine writers and a prominent zine writer (Wrekk, 2010) wrote that by her actions, Triggs did not understand the ethos of the zine community.
[17] In all but one case, the titles he focussed on devoted all their content to an individual act, e.g. **Yes**, **ELP**, **Gentle Giant**, **King Crimson**. It is fandom rooted in a specific act more than a scene.

how they need to be considered as fan works as opposed to simply articulations of rebellion.

2.3 A Production 'Paradigm'

Style is very much part of the 'message' that is intertwined with fanzine production. Subcultural theorists at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s brought style into discourses on relationships between youth, social class, and music. Willis (1978) adopted Levi-Strauss's concept of 'homology' in his study of bikers and hippies to demonstrate the relationship between the values and lifestyles of these groups. Style was seen as homological in that, for example, the studded leather jacket of the biker was a representation of toughness and outsiderness. Willis draws a homological connection between class and taste when he looks at how both bikers and hippies are drawn to particular types of music, thus removing individual choice somewhat from the selection process; this conceptualisation has been problematic for many popular music scholars, with Simon Frith noting that "the precise fit (or homology) between sounds and social groups remains unclear" (1996a: 120). Frith proposes instead a more fluid formation of groups whereby "they only get to know themselves *as groups* (as a particular organization of individuals and social interests, of sameness and difference) *through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement" (1996a: 111).

Hebdige (1979) offers 'bricolage' as an alternative concept to homology for describing style trends within the punk rock scene, where appropriated and manipulated images from everyday life were utilised to produce literally cut and paste artefacts, often to deliberately ironic and disruptive effect. The punk fanzine typically adopts a form of 'bricolage', which can be deciphered through a semiotic reading of fanzine covers, where collages of images and words, 'Letraset' lettering and rough photocopying contribute to a deliberate composition that represents tribal resistance against authority. Hodgkinson sees "the classic image of the fanzine [as] handwritten or photocopied, a cut-and-paste black-and-white format" (2004: 227), and the majority of Irish publications follow a similar pattern - produced by fans making artefacts that do not look 'professional', but hand-made. They can be seen as a metaphor for the 'do it

yourself' empowering spirit of punk rock, whilst also signifying distance from the conventions of mainstream print media.

However, the conceptual grounding for this research is drawn from an analysis of style, design and culture that is far from the topic of fanzines. Peter Hamilton's study into the paradigm of French Humanist Photography (1997) has been particularly valuable, and has links to Barthes's statement that "the photograph is not simply a product or a channel but also an object with a structural autonomy" (1977: 15). With recurring socially levelling themes such as La Rue (the street), children playing, the family, Paris and its sights, the empathetic photographers of post war France developed their own style. Some of the photographs had a spur of the moment feel to them and, taken on location, they seemed more naturalistic and rooted in the tight knit community of the working classes. For example, a photograph of a blind accordionist (Hamilton, 1997: 113) shows that the bystanders in the photo are modestly dressed, illustrating that the photography takes place "in the habitat of the *classe populaire*" (1997: 115). What Hamilton terms a "dominant representational paradigm" (1997: 76) emerges which is inclusive of contemporary technologies of production and dissemination in popular magazines. For Hamilton:

> The concept of dominant representational paradigm indicates that this photographic approach offers a certain vision of the people and events that it documents, a construction which rest on how they were represented by the choices of both photographers and the press (1997: 76).

Thus, the paradigm puts an emphasis on the aesthetic and political decisions that the producers make, and how this provided for a different way of viewing 'Frenchness'. As he elaborates:

> What the concept of paradigm offers us is a way into understanding how groups of photographers shared a common perspective on representation, how they clustered together in a way that ensure the dominance of the humanistic paradigm as a form of representation, developed a common agenda of central themes which expressed their 'world-view', and offered alternative images of French society which debunked and contested other forms of representation (Hamilton, 1997: 79).

Therefore, it is not simply a matter of form and aesthetics that is significant within this paradigm, but also 'representation'. Produced in the post-war context, often by photographers who were also members of the Communist party, these photographs

represented an ideological aspiration to rebuild France from its grassroots up, and favoured depictions of marginalised groups in society. The paradigm is not just based on the semiotics of the photographic image, but it also encompasses economic, technological and political factors, and takes into account how and where this media is consumed. Distributed in cheap magazines such as *Paris-Match*, these black and white photographs appealed to their working class audience as they represented their social and working cultures. They used cheap technology (just as fanzines do) not just on economic grounds but on aesthetic grounds also. Colour printing, while somewhat cost prohibitive, also symbolised ideas of luxury and stardom, ideologically at odds with the ethos of humanist photography. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, interview data collected during this project illustrates that fanzine producers have a very clear picture in their heads of what a fanzine should look and feel like, and how information should be presented.

Indeed, Hamilton's paradigmatic approach can be applied to research into the production and consumption of homemade music fanzines in Ireland. Broadly speaking, when fanzines are stapled together, feature imperfections, and look as DIY as possible, they are more likely to be embraced by a punk community that values local community production over professional publication qualities. As well as the paradigm demonstrating a formal deviation from conventional magazine practices, it also helps to make sense of practices of representation that take place in fanzines. Furthermore, as technologies evolve (Chapter Seven) there is upheaval within the community, and a paradigmatic shift occurs - if any one of the factors in the paradigm changes, they all do. As with the humanist photographs, there is a geographic and temporal context attached to printed fanzines. When they are removed from that context (for example, the humanist photographs hanging on the walls of an apartment in 1990s New York or in a coffee table book or at an exhibition), they take on a different meaning and value. This nostalgic value will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5 of this work when I examine the archival responsibilities of Irish music fanzine collectors. The period of time where the fanzine was a core aspect of DIY cultures has come and gone, and now as people start to consider them as potential collectors' items, the meaning of them has changed again. The use of Hamilton's approach is not one that I have seen applied to musical contexts, so will be unfamiliar to many, but I still assert that it is valuable for my research work. Hamilton's work

does not conceptually fit all of this study – it is not necessarily connected to displays of fandom or the accumulation of capital in alternative music cultures and thus is not always interlinked with two of the key conceptual elements (fandom and capital) of this dissertation – but his concept of a "dominant representational paradigm" is particularly useful as a comparison piece and model for examining the components of fanzine production and dissemination, and also in explaining the paradigmatic shift that has taken place with fan-produced media in DIY communities. This will be further elaborated on in Chapters Four and Seven.

2.4 Authenticity in DIY Communities

This paradigmatic approach also brings up questions of authenticity, a theme which runs throughout this research. The closer that a fanzine maker can be to the shared ideal of what a fanzine should look and feel like, the closer they are to being considered authentic participants in a music scene. Indeed, authenticity is something which is constructed and maintained within the music community itself, and for fanzine producers, adhering to the same DIY principles that shape the music helps in positioning them as authentic fans. Thus, it is important to examine how authenticity fits within scholarly debates in popular music studies over the past century. Adorno (1948) uses it as a concept to analyse the music of **Stravinsky,** whom he criticises for seeking to be authentic by regressing to the infantile and primitive. However, some writers have noted that authenticity is not a particularly pertinent term in popular music studies in post-modern times. As the usage of techniques such as sampling become more commonplace in music production (see Oswald's talk on 'plunderphonics', 1985), Born and Hesmondhalgh contend that "in an earlier phase of popular music studies the buzzword was authenticity, and this has also been consigned to the intellectual dust-heap" (2000: 30).

Nonetheless, I agree with Moore's (2002) affirmation that it still holds relevance in debates around popular music. While authenticity has at times been used to distinguish between genres of music which are considered less mainstream than others (for example, 'edgy' rock in comparison to 'commercialised' pop; see Frith, 1988a), I feel that it is best used as a focal point for the analysis of how forms of

'capital' (see 2.5) are generated within communities around specific genres of music. This perspective is evident in a number of writings: Reynolds (2006), in his analysis of jungle music remixes, equates authenticity with knowledge of the genre, in reaction to its popularisation of the genre as drum and bass in the mid-1990s, which saw 'real' devotees move further 'underground'; Thornton (1995) links collecting and specialist knowledge in clubbing communities to authenticity, while Turino (2008) finds authenticity in the 'cultural cohorts' that organise and experience contra dancing in the US; Frith (1988b) looks at how British media and experts in the 1930's started to view 'black jazz' as more authentic than 'popular white jazz'; while Middleton (1990) examines discourses around what legitimates folk music as authentic. Even, the bike boys in Willis's study (1978) preferred a particular format – 78rpm records over 45rpm records – as it was deemed to be more traditional and therefore more authentic.

Though it is difficult to know, by hearing, if any music is 'authentically produced', the discourse of authenticity is central in the commercial promotion of all recorded music and is observable in conversations fans have about musicians and the text objects present in music scenes. In Fox's (2004) in-depth ethnographic study of small town Texan life, he portrays country music as something that is seen as an authentic blue-collar practice by its practitioners; thus, for Fox, authenticity is inextricably linked to class. By focussing on the local honky-tonks that were central to this class-based community, Fox demonstrates that "the working-class claim on "country music" is coherent, justified, and ethical – that is to say, "authentic" – in a way that a musical commodity simply cannot ever be" (2004: 31). The song and speech of locals represents blue-collar culture in a way that crazes (such as the line dancing that was derided by Fox's informants) and commodities cannot. Just as fans of alternative music genres align themselves to specific music communities as a means of sociability and escape from the rigours of daily life, so too do the country music musicians and fans. For them, voice, character and identity are all important characteristics within this authentic construction, and the 'stars' are ordinary; for instance, the lead guitarist playing at the honky-tonk might be fixing up cars for audience members the next

day[18]. This construction of authenticity, just as it can be in DIY music cultures, suggests that authenticity is something that is maintained by insiders within the community and in opposition to the commercialisation and stardom of other popular music genres.

The respondents to my work frequently define themselves by what they are not (i.e. anti-mainstream); similarly, Fox's informants see themselves as *real country* because of their working class culture and because they do not consider themselves to be urban despite their proximity to Austin. In other cases, it is those from outside the community that attempt to characterise it; for instance, Schloss argues that critics of hip-hop "have never been shy about equating a lack of live instrumentation with a lack of musical quality" (2004: 76). Schloss's study of hip-hop producers also finds that the vast majority of those engrossed in sampling culture in the United States are male. This, however, is not the only similarity between this study and my research on male-dominated alternative music cultures in Ireland. For Schloss: "producers have developed an approach to authenticity that is characterized by a sort of aesthetic purism; certain musical gestures are valued for aesthetic reasons, and one's adherence to this aesthetic confers authenticity" (2004: 64). Those aesthetic values position sampling as the key authentic ingredient of hip-hop, with live instrumentation only accepted as a supplementary device in production and performance. This purism that hip-hop producers guard offers a particularly useful way of articulating the aesthetic patterns that define the fanzine production paradigm. Schloss also finds a rather sensual element in his work; the timbre of old analogue recordings that are subsequently manipulated by the Deejays is deemed to be more authentic than digitally recorded instrumentation for some of his respondents. The crackle and hiss of vinyl records, particularly in an increasingly digital culture, bears similarities to how the texture of the home-produced printed fanzine can be a signifier of authenticity.

The works of Fox and Schloss, in particular, demonstrate how authenticity can be constructed and maintained locally, culturally, and through practitioners of specific popular music genres. Yet, authenticity is not just a concern of music makers and their

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[18] This accessibility is the opposite of the reification described by Adorno (2002) in the culture industries. The musicians in the local country circuit are treated as 'real', and thus 'authentic' humans as opposed to 'stars'.

audiences. As Moore (2002) suggests, authenticity is a term that has existed in music journalism and fan writing for a number of decades, and it can also be argued that it "is central not only in writings on (pop, rock, and classical) musical value and significance, but also in recurring debates about the role of music journalism" (Weisethaunet & Lindberg, 2010: 465). This has particular relevance to my research as it is a concept that applies both to those *writing* fanzines and those that feature within them; they attain specialist knowledge and skills that not only portray them as authentic participants within the community but also help them to accumulate some form of 'capital'.

2.5 Capital Associated with Fanzines

It can also be considered that perceptions of authenticity play a role in developing the types of capital one possesses. Pierre Bourdieu takes a more empirical view of cultural taste than the somewhat philosophical perspective of mass culture that Adorno, Horkheimer and other Frankfurt scholars offer. Bourdieu (1984) identifies different types of capital as an alternative to solely economic capital, and the merits of social capital and cultural capital as analytical concepts will be discussed in this research, while I will also look briefly at the concept of 'symbolic capital'. Some writers on punk and DIY cultures argue that capital as a word should not be used in describing fan practises due to its financial connotations (Gordon, 2005: 163) but I maintain that that is a constrictively narrow understanding of the term. Additionally, in recent work on EDM (Electronic Dance Music) fandom, Beate Peter (2014: 40) suggests:

> It may be time to move from a class or capital-based analysis of culture towards an understanding of fan communities as entities with their own internal structures and with logics, entities that cannot easily be framed by traditional theoretical dichotomies.

Peter believes that Maffesoli's concept of 'tribes' (1996) provides a potential framework in understanding the fluid ways that cultural groups form in contemporary society. While such an application of tribes is a valid concept (2.7), I do not believe that it is time quite yet to dispense with formulations of capital from studies of popular music and fandom, despite the fact that the word capital has become a scholarly catch-all for describing knowledge, sentiments, or possessions garnered. Fan studies have

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utilised Bourdieu's concepts such as 'cultural capital' and 'social capital' (for example, Fiske, 1992) to help explain the cultural consumption of fans and how they attempt "to build up different types of fan skill, knowledge, and distinction" (Hills, 2002: 46). This section unpacks the work of Bourdieu to determine its relevance to this study, and subsequently considers how other scholars (namely Fiske, Thornton, and Hills) have appropriated Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capital.

As later chapters will show, the fanzine producer does not tend to reap much in the way of economic capital, with most fanzines being produced for little or no profit. Nonetheless, they are situated as knowledgeable and influential participants in the music community and can be viewed as gatekeepers of taste. Bourdieu looks at the role of taste as a core aspect of *habitus*, and it can be argued that different types of fans and different types of music communities are determined by their role in creating and appreciating their preferred type of music:

> It is in the relationship between the two capacities which define the habitus, the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste), that the represented social world, i.e., the space of life-styles is constituted (1984: 166).

For Bourdieu, individuals store knowledge, habits, and dispositions within their habitus that allow them to subsequently display their cultural capital at opportune times, thus enabling them to situate themselves in an elevated position within the social 'field' (Bourdieu, 1984). As such, knowledge is acquired in the practice of everyday life, so cultural capital is often accrued and displayed subconsciously; as Moore suggests, "people blow their cover if they make too much of an effort to seem rich or if they study the arts too strenuously" (2005: 233). In Bourdieu's articulation of capital, the dominated bourgeoisie, with lower levels of economic capital than the dominant class, nevertheless often displayed higher levels of cultural capital. In this grouping, he postulated that members of society such as academics or bohemians are more than likely well educated and have a shared taste in more high-brow culture. Thus, cultural capital is generally something that is accumulated through education, knowledge, and cultural awareness. For Bourdieu, the taste that forms one's cultural capital is a marker of social status, with the working class and 'petit-bourgeois' displaying low levels of economic, social, and cultural capital.

Recently, various fan studies have utilised the concept of cultural capital to demonstrate the non-economic capital that can be accumulated in fan communities; from fans of low-brow popular culture such as soap operas (Hobson, 1989) to aficionados of jazz (Whyton, 2014), cultural capital has been used as a tool to articulate the social status of fans within the taste community. However, fanzine producers are peripheral to the activities of the music and publishing industries, and it is debatable as to what level of cultural capital they have outside their music scene, just as it is questionable how the habitus of soap opera fans would be beneficial in an environmental external to their own clique. This provides a difficulty for popular music and fan studies that deal with marginalised cultural practices; some scholars have attempted to bridge the gap between what they term 'official' cultural capital (Fiske, 1992) or 'proper' cultural capital (Hills, 2002) and a cultural capital that is more engrossed in popular culture. As such, Fiske uses 'popular cultural capital' and 'fan cultural capital' almost interchangeably as more specific alternatives to cultural capital. He argues that amongst communities of fans accumulating knowledge is central to garnering cultural capital within the community. Knowing the right people, the breaking trends, the "lingo" of the community, can signify credibility and establish possession of 'fan cultural capital'. Like Fiske, Sarah Thornton limits the influence of education in the acquisition of capital in her formation of 'subcultural capital' (1995), which in theory makes it perhaps the most suitable variation on the concept of capital for the study of do-it-yourself cultures.

She articulates subcultural capital as a way of illustrating hierarchies that exist within the club cultures that she investigated in the mid-1990s in the UK. For her, access to items such as the latest white-label[19] helps to elevate one to the upper echelons of the clubbing hierarchy; while this may illustrate – to use Marx's term (1976) – a 'fetishism of the commodity', Thornton posits that these records "enjoy a kind of attenuated aura" (1995: 69). In her study, subcultural capital helps to distinguish between the insiders (the 'hip') with high levels of subcultural capital from the 'poseurs' (imposters with low levels). As such, there are advantages to using Thornton's subcultural capital

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[19] The 'white label' record was a fixture in 1980s/1990s clubbing circles, referring to pre-releases of 12" singles that appeared with simple white labels and no artwork. Distributed (as a limited edition) to clubs and DJs prior to release for promotional purposes, it was a device used by record labels to see if a track had potential for success prior to an expensive outlay on the pressing of a single for release Langlois (1992: 233).

framework for this project; chief amongst these is that authenticity is a central construct in the formation of subcultural capital, which ties in with a key theme of my own research. Secondly, subcultural capital is very useful for dissecting hierarchies with a fan community. It also deals with capital in a more localised manner, and thus the capital that is acquired is more limited, particularly when brought outside such a community.

Subcultural capital is less rigid a concept than cultural capital, with subcultural capital becoming diluted once the mainstream media shows an interest in it. As David Hesmondhalgh notes about the club and rave cultures investigated by scholars such as Thornton: "As with punk, the story of acid house makes it difficult to talk about the rise of an authentic subculture which was then co-opted by commercial interests" (1998b: 248). Herein lies one of the primary concerns with applying this framework to my study. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter (2.7), I am reluctant to frame the participants in this study as part of a subculture, be that a punk subculture or otherwise. It is also clear that Thornton had some concerns with the subcultural model, particularly the one proposed by the Birmingham CCCS which she deemed to be "empirically unworkable" (1995: 8). Post-subculturalist theorists bring the term away from studies of deviance or criminology, and Gelder argues that "the post-subcultures model turns away from a sense of subcultures as distinctive social groups" (2005: 14) with a stronger emphasis on the relationships between the participants, which makes it more of a fit for this research. In fact, Thornton's work almost paints the participants within her study as more of a tribal network (akin to Peter's later work) than a subculture. However, I would have another criticism of Thornton's model in relation to my own findings; she acknowledges very little recognition of fan cultures in her work. While she discusses hierarchies that exist around knowledge, access, and 'hipness', she fails to recognise that a "hierarchy of fandom level" (MacDonald, 1998: 137) exists.

By exploring Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, and its subsequent reimagining by Fiske and Thornton, it becomes apparent that there is not one exact fit for this study. It is a form of cultural capital that fanzine writers and enthusiasts gain through their involvement with these texts, even if that cultural capital is only valid within a relatively small community. Nonetheless, (sub)cultural capital as a concept taken in

isolation does not adequately explain how fanzine producers acquire status without acquiring economic capital. Because of this, another strand of Bourdieu's work needs to be considered, and that is what he terms 'social capital'. He suggests this concept as an alternative to material wealth, and as a way of bringing culture into post-Marxian discourse on class. He outlines social capital as:

> The sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Acknowledging that capital can take a variety of forms is indispensable to explain the structure and dynamics of differentiated societies (1992: 119).

Hills (2002) criticises both Fiske and Thornton for the emphasis they place on (fan) 'cultural capital' as he feels it neglects discussion around how expanded one's networks and social practices are, and the potential role that social capital can play in fan hierarchies. Hills argues that 'fan social capital' should be given more credence in research as it provides a frame for describing how one can potentially find a higher position in a fan hierarchy, largely through "the network of fan friends and acquaintances that a fan possesses, *as well as* [writer's emphasis] their access to media producers and professional personnel linked with the object of fandom" (2002: 57). For producers of fanzines, social capital is one of the ways they are compensated for their efforts – they develop networks within the fanzine writers community by sharing content, building up strong relationships with other fans, and have status within the taste community as a mediator between musicians and fans. Hills does acknowledge that 'fan cultural capital' and 'fan social capital' run interdependently; in principle, one needs the combination of cultural artefacts and knowledge to gain the social capital required. There is a difference in the fan communities that Hills speaks of from those that I investigate; he notes that the majority of fans partake in 'official fandom', through channels such as fan-clubs. This may apply to television programmes, celebrity pop stars, and science fiction texts, but in alternative music cultures, there is little scope for a more organised and official fandom.

Social capital may not be as important to them as to those seeking to climb the ladder of their fandom clubs to become what Hills terms 'executive fans'. Nonetheless, it does have a place in this research as it indicates a participatory culture where community members acquire status by not just what they know but also who they

know. Hills also proposes that Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital (2002: 57-58) can be applied to help describe how one's reputation and prestige increases. However, it is uncertain whether Bourdieu actually sees this idea as a separate form of capital, or merely as an extension of cultural capital:

> It [cultural capital] thus manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition. Because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e. to be unrecognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition (Bourdieu, 1986: 245).

This concept of 'symbolic capital' is more suited to a more organised fandom, and as such, the two primary elements of Bourdieu's framework that this work will utilise are social and cultural capital.

Capital, Collecting, and Ageing

Aside from the social capital that scene members acquire through their access to media and the producers of music, capital can also be acquired through the collection of media and memorabilia. According to Miller, "things make people just as much as people make things" (2010: 135); material objects are significant contributors to our social and emotional needs, as well as providing valuable reminders of times that have passed. Therefore the physical act of collecting needs to be investigated. Record collecting as a practice has a great deal of relevance as a comparison to this particular study, because a number of my informants had become collectors of fanzines. Roy Shuker (2004; 2010; 2014) has done more than any other scholar to explore and understand the nature of record collecting in recent times. He argues that 'completism' (2004: 320), the need to own an entire collection of something, is central to the mind-set of many collectors. The main irony, of course, here is that it is access to economic capital that can help elevate one to this position of gatekeeper. This is where Shuker distinguishes between the fan who 'completes' and the one who 'discriminates' (2004); taste dictates how one is selective in what they purchase and collect.

Collecting is a method of accumulating capital. Fiske notes that fans often tend to be collectors as well, and it is at the junction that cultural and economic capital meets (1992: 43). While this is useful in relation to my research, there is a difference when examining the collection of relatively ephemeral items, such as fanzines, that may have

little intrinsic economic value; this generates a paradox that there is some sense of (non-economic) value to cheaply assembled and often free artefacts. For many of these collectors, there is a sense of shared capital, that they have a curatorial responsibility to maintain these publications. This is echoed in the collectors of comic books that Tankel and Murphy encountered in their 1998 research, who they feel were partaking in 'curatorial consumption' (McCracken, 1988). However, a criticism of Tankel and Murphy is that they do not look beyond the archivist's own preservation of comic books; they do not consider how these comic books could potentially be archived for future generations. While Tankel and Murphy refer to it as a comic book 'community', what they actually present is individual collectors conducting a more solitary pursuit; instead of interacting with each other and sharing knowledge with a community, they are in competition with one another.

While accumulation is central to developing cultural capital, it needs to be considered as to what happens when capital is condensed. If 'goods' basically equal capital, ageing often brings change: we tend to collect things from our past but we start to separate from what Daniel Miller (2010) simply terms "stuff" as we get older; Miller's anthropological case studies showed individuals who shed possessions as they aged, keeping individual trinkets symbolic of different key life events. As Miller's participants grow older, the physical space they have shrinks so their collection of memorabilia becomes increasingly essentialised. Miller's ideas will be utilised to analyse ageing fanzine collectors, and how they become more selective, or discriminative (to use Shuker's terminology), with age. With notable exceptions such as Andy Bennett's (2006, 2013) studies of ageing punk rock fans, there is a rather limited pool of literature on fans of niche genres who are middle-aged or older.[20] Miller's research subjects prioritise ornaments that conjure up specific memories, and this emotional or nostalgic attachment to the artefact will be explored in much depth in Chapter Five, based on the evidence that has emerged through conversations with Irish fanzine collectors. To help present this empirical research on ageing and/or former scene practitioners, I will draw on Svetlana Boym's work (2001) on 'reflective nostalgia'; Boym speaks of an acceptance by individuals that a particular time has

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[20] There has been interesting research done into the life course of fans by Harrington and Bielby (2010), and Harrington et al (2011). Vroomen (2004) also has conducted extensive research work on older female fans of the solo artist **Kate Bush**.

passed by but they retain a wistful longing for a certain time and place. This is a particularly useful perspective when looking at those who retain collections of fanzines from a time before circumstances and ageing changed their personas and those of their peers. Interestingly, the retention of such collections is not seen by all as a display of fandom: Shuker (2014) argues that record collecting is a "more focussed and intellectually rationalized activity than fandom" (166) where the pursuit of cultural capital is central to his research subjects. Yet, collectors share many of the same characteristics as fans, including a desire and perhaps obsession to gather as much distinguishable memorabilia as possible.

2.6 Fandom

The people that are encountered in this research are actively engaged with their music communities, and can be considered practitioners as most of them are already involved in some output, whether that be music-making or promotion/production, fan-generated media, etcetera[21]. The fanzine producers are active fans in this participatory culture: they are the people who attend the DIY gigs in small venues, buy the merchandise from touring bands, and enthusiastically discuss the music of local bands in the scene. They acquire, produce and disseminate knowledge of the scene, using its own terminology and points of reference. As noted earlier in this chapter, previous literature on music fanzines has not spent enough time considering the writing of a fanzine as a fan practice, and has instead focused primarily on the fanzine as an act of rebellion. This may be because the position of the fan was not always taken seriously by the academy. A significant portion of this research looks at how fanzine production and consumption is a way of displaying one's personal fandom towards a particular type of music, or else how they (fanzines) act as a facilitator for fans to interact with the objects of their fandom. While Matt Hills (2002: ix) notes that "defining 'fandom' has been no easy task, despite (or perhaps because of) the 'everydayness' of the term", Shuker neatly describes it as "the collective term of the phenomenon of fans and their practices" (2012: 122). Within these music scenes investigated in this work, the role of

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[21] A quote from one Dublin musician in a focus group held in early 2014 succinctly sums up this phenomenon: "most people are already up to their necks in it anyway". This will be used later in this research (Ruadhan O'Meara, Dublin Focus Group, 31 January 2014).

the fan is central; it may be difficult to define the characteristics of fans in small and/or localised scenes, but they are present – they are the readers and writers of fanzines, those that organise and attend DIY concerts, and also performers themselves. As such, a wide range of literature related to fandom needs to be considered, and the trend set by the first waves of fan studies which veered towards science fiction and fantasy is starting to dissipate somewhat as scholars look at various areas of fan-centred interests such as sports, music, gaming, and online fandom[22]. Yet, it remains a rather limited pool of research, with popular music scholars generally preferring to focus on specific music communities and producers than their fans, according to Mark Duffett (2013a).

Before dealing more exclusively with fandom in popular music, I will analyse various other works in the field, as it is still a relatively recent area of study, with the first wave of fandom literature appearing in the 1980s (Gray et al, 2007: 3). Many early scholars in the field of fandom express a degree of gratitude towards Michel de Certeau, in particular his work *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). Henry Jenkins's key term 'textual poachers' borrows from de Certeau's idea of poaching, while Fiske hails him as "one of the most sophisticated theorists of the culture and practices of everyday life" (1989: 32). What de Certeau does well is to articulate how 'ordinary' people can organise those "practices of everyday life" that sometimes run in opposition to the boundaries of societal norms. Therefore, de Certeau offers a valuable insight into how people organise their leisure activities and hobbies, and in media terms, it looks at how individuals can read particular meanings into cultural texts, which are specific to the practices they engage in. This has since been adopted to show how personal fandom is organised, with Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* (1992b) seen as one of the first key texts to actually look at the practices of fans. Jenkins's work has frequently been concerned with science fiction and telefantasy[23] with the *Star Trek* fans that he discusses demonstrating textual poaching through the reinterpreting the text of the popular television programme. These fans can produce their own works based on minor elements of the original programme, and thus it provides an outlet for creative escapism for fans. This has relevance to my study as textual poaching is similar to

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[22] While there were still papers around fans relationships with texts such as *Star Wars* and the *Harry Potter* series, the 2014 Fan Studies Network Conference held in London, England, featured a diverse programme of papers covering varied cultural activities.
[23] Television programmes that either feature science fiction or fantasy, or a combination.

'bricolage', a practice that was part of dedicated punk communities and the subsequent production of fanzines. Additionally, framing fanzine making within the fandom sphere where fan productivity is considered not just as labour but as play (as it was for Jenkins's *Star Trek* fans) demonstrates a clear sense of pleasure that comes with involvement in these productions.

A great deal of earlier fandom research followed Jenkins's de Certeau-influenced and looked at specific texts and their audiences. Television programmes that attracted fanatical fans became the research subjects, such as *Doctor Who* (Hills, 2002) and *Star Trek* (Jenkins, 1992a; Jenkins, 1992b). Jenkins (1992b) himself noted that television fans were just one type of fan to be considered, and that he was unsure whether all fans groups should be treated in the same manner. A great deal of early fan studies, such as works by Jenkins and Fiske, were written by fans themselves. This is a trend that has continued with current fandom literature frequently written by authors with a vested personal interest in the subject of their fandom. This places them as insiders in the areas that they research and so brings up some concerns around their objectivity. However, the fan scholar also has a potential advantage in that they are already part of that fanhood hierarchy and thus, ethnographic participants are often more amenable to working with them.

As fans themselves, scholars sought to address a discourse that had been developed in the media and wider society about the nature of fandom. Prior to the 1990s, fans as a particular part of the audience had not been considered in great detail; following a Marxist perspective on popular culture, audiences were deemed to be deluded for their attachment to personalities and commodities (see Marcuse, 1964). Of course, the fan relationship is qualitatively different to general audiences. Fandom studies look at the role that relationship plays in the fan's own identity, offering a more post-modern approach to consumption, as it eschews a focus on mass audience effects, focussing instead upon the agency of the individual. Research has indicated that fans were often a source of ridicule for their obsessive behaviour (Yano, 1997: 336), and for their interests in popular cultural forms such as soap operas and pop music (Gray, 2003: 67), which are generally low status cultural areas, especially since Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) described them as mass produced commodities of the culture industries. Even the etymology of 'fan' conjures up imagery of obsessive individuals and groups:

Duffett charts the word back to the 17th century as a shortened version of 'fanatic' in relation to religious zealots of the era (2013b: 5). This public consideration of the fan was consolidated by how fans were patronised by the mass media for their practices, and were regularly characterised as engaging in "excessive, bordering on deranged, behavior" (Jensen, 1992: 9). Jensen describes the media articulation of the "frenzied or hysterical member of a crowd" and the "obsessed loner type" (Jensen, 1992:11): for the latter, she argues that over a decade after the assassination of John Lennon, news media were still frequently referencing Mark David Chapman in stories about "obsessive fans". In the last two or three decades, fans have assumed a more active role in media culture and industry; they are now a major consideration in how media corporations plan how they produce and market content. Far from being derided, the fan is now an integral part of the 'culture industries'; yet the field has only been taken seriously in academia since the early 1990s. The scope for interactivity afforded by social media has clearly influenced this development, as has post-modern theorisation regarding the agency of consumers.

Fans in DIY Scenes

Another concept that needs to be considered in this discussion is one that Jonathan Gray (2003) proposes: anti-fandom. Early research that he undertook on the television programme *The Simpsons* was often conducted with couples as opposed to individual respondents; he found that in many cases on of the couple was not actually a fan of the programme. While a non-fan of a text might be just indifferent to it, Gray found that his anti-fans were significantly well versed in the plotlines and idiosyncrasies of the show, and in many cases displayed as much knowledge as the 'fan' in the household. This knowledge gave them the capacity to discuss the programme critically and with a degree of (dis)pleasure.

Giuffre (2014: 53) is one of the few scholars to look at anti-fandom in popular music studies, suggesting that anti-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". Bonding can take place through mutual dislike of certain types of music, particular artists, specific songs played live, or selections made by a DJ in a club. This draws parallels again with the work of Bourdieu and his idea of 'distinction' and also how authenticity is construed within specific music communities

(for instance, Fox's (2004) country music fans who see themselves as anything but urban): individuals and groups identifying with something can also mean that they are identifying against something else. Duffett (2009) adjusts that viewpoint to show that anti-fandom can exist within a DIY punk culture; in fact, by his proposition, it would seem that punk music can be a major catalyst for anti-fandom. He argues that a nihilistic first wave of do-it-yourself culture was in direct opposition to the idea of stardom, and the boundaries that were removed between audience and music-makers encouraged heckling and spitting at acts. While the DIY scenes that remain today are perhaps tamer, there is a degree of truth in this anti-fandom sentiment. Irish audiences of local bands do not want to appear to be a 'fan-boy' (or girl) so they almost suppress their fandom as a result (for instance, turning up to an independent gig wearing the t-shirt of the band playing may be deemed to be too fannish a behaviour). There is an element of appearing to be 'uncool' by making this degree of fandom public knowledge.

Lisa Lewis's edited volume *The Adoring Audience* (1992) was one of the first major contributions to the study of fans and their practices, and in her introduction, she claimed that we are all fans, whether we realise it or not. Almost twenty years later, Paul Booth made almost the same statement saying "everyone is a fan of *something* [Booth's emphasis]" (2010: 20). Both Lewis and Booth strongly indicate that it is almost impossible to go through life without being a fan; however, it does need to be taken into account that while many people are fans, there are many that are not regularly *active* fans, hence demonstrating the broadness of the term. Some people engage with cultural activities on a regular basis – for example, watching a particular television programme every week – but they disengage with the activity outside of allotted times. Where they might accumulate some merchandise related to the programme, talk about it on online forums with other fans, or discuss it in great detail with friends, family, or work colleagues, we observe a qualitatively different degree of engagement. This more passive group of fans does not tend to feature in fandom literature in the same way that active fans do. As Duffett asks: "what does it mean to be a practicing fan? The term implies some kind of activity, rehearsal, art or craft, competency—the fan as practitioner" (2015: 1).

To return to one of my research work's key themes, there are also questions around the authenticity of their fandom when they are located within geographically and stylistically small communities. O'Rourke (2010) argues that many Irish music bloggers embark on a process of "cheerleading" as opposed to being music critics: i.e. they pick certain bands (that they often may know personally) and then write about them passionately. O'Rourke's argument is too one-dimensional, and does not factor in that while many "pro-am" (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013) writers are fans of the music they write about, the music is not always written about in a positive manner. The notion of "cheerleading" somewhat demeans them as producers of content. There is enough content, especially in fanzine texts, to suggest that these are not uniformly positive articulations of fandom; as such, anti-fandom can appear in online and physical fan-generated media, when writers discuss artists and music that they particularly dislike. I do feel that fan producers are vital components of a "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 1992b); Jenkins feels that all members of the community are encouraged to contribute, and that their participation should be valued by the rest of the community (2009: 6). Perhaps this is a somewhat idealistic hypothesis from Jenkins, as fan communities will inevitably encounter tensions, and as Hills (2013) suggests (and as elaborated upon further in the next section), there needs to be standards applied to fan labour.

A Shift in Popular Music Fandom

There have been many fine contributions to music fandom studies, including Daniel Cavicchi's in-depth ethnographic research on the fans of **Bruce Springsteen** (1998). Nonetheless, the problem with pieces like Cavicchi's is they are focussed on a group of fans of one specific performer, and this has left us with a scenario where fandom writing tends to primarily explore a particular performer who is relatively well known (both inside and outside academic circles) and has a wide global reach. Therefore, we get Smith and Inglis's (2013) study of European fans ("Deadheads") of the cult US psychedelic band **Grateful Dead**, Vroomen's focus on older female fans of the singer **Kate Bush** (2004), or research on the fans of US pop star **Lady Gaga** (Click, Lee, & Holladay, 2013; Bennett, 2014). This singular vision means that fans of obscure bands or movements regularly tend to be ignored in research; as Duffett asserts "there may be more to do in pursuing fan studies beyond the frame of stardom" (2013a: 302). Indeed, there is also more work required in examining the relationship between local fans and

'scenes'. Martin Cloonan (2005) spoke of a turn in popular music studies towards local practitioners with a focus on the "ordinary" music-maker (with reference to works like Cohen, 1991; Finnegan, 1989). Now, it follows that there should be significant research, not just on these local practitioners but also on their fans.

While the study of fandom in popular music is a growing area of interest, Duffett's (2014) recent edited collection of essays entitled *Popular Music Fandom: Identities, Roles and Practices* is one of the few dedicated volumes that exclusively focuses on fandom in popular music. It features new perspectives for analysis of popular music fandom; along with the previously discussed works of Giuffre (2014) and Peter (2014), it offers new focuses for the study of music fandom, from production personnel (Hills, 2014) to place (Sandvoss on Ibiza, 2014). Aside from the Duffett volume, there have been conferences and specific journal issues dedicated solely to the topic of popular music fandom. These have displayed an encouraging, if subtle, shift away from the celebrity performer. The first 2015 edition of the journal *Popular Music and Society* devoted its contents to the study of fandom, and showed the wide range of current studies that considered music fandom, varying from Brett's (2015) work on the avant garde electronic act **Autechre** to Colburn's (2015) article on fans who film concerts and upload them to YouTube in order to gain some element of cultural capital.

How fandom is manifested does change when fan practices move online, and we need to consider previous staple fandom texts in a new light as a result. Matt Hills (2013) dissects Fiske's (1992) idea of how 'textual productivity' can be used to describe the creativity of fan production. However, in the era of web 2.0, Hills contends that there are some problems in applying this term across the board – if it is, everything from Twitter 'hashtags' to Facebook 'likes' can all be deemed as 'textual productivity'. Hills also warns that there is an element of romanticism in Fiske's work towards fan productivity, similar to Jenkins's assumption discussed earlier that all such textual productivity should be welcomed and accepted within fan cultures. Hills rightly suggests that there is danger in this viewpoint as the textual productivity of fans "may well be adjudged incompetent, unconvincing and poorly executed within a fan culture, even while other fan productivity may be evaluated as more impressive than 'official' texts" (2013: 39).

As aforementioned, this research places fandom in a triangulated theoretical approach to looking at the role of fanzines in alternative music cultures. It offers new perspectives on fandom in popular music by looking at the practices of fans of local musicians and local music communities.

2.7 Framing Group Formation & Bonding around Musical Practices

Thus far, this chapter has looked at gaps in literature around fanzines and popular music studies, as well as collating literature on central aspects that frame this work. Within each of these sections, different concepts have been used to describe the various ways that people bond through musical practices. As this research looks at the role of music and its media in defining a community, it is useful to consider the different ways of describing enclaves of people communing through music and their practices. In a range of literature encountered, there has been quite a deal of overlap in discussion between what constitutes a community, a scene, or a network. As Sara Cohen notes, 'scene' "has generally been used uncritically or interchangeably with terms like "subculture" or "community"" and can also be "used to refer to music activity within specific geographical areas" (1999: 237). At various points in this research, all of these different terms have some applicability. Here, I will investigate them individually to determine what theoretical approaches best support each.

Community is one of the most complex terms in both sociology and popular music studies. In the late nineteenth century, Ferdinand Tonnies (1964) differentiated between two types of community to illustrate the rural-urban continuum and how modernity altered or disintegrated the structures of community. Tonnies[24] had two central concepts in this argument: 1) *Gemeinschaft*, generally translated as 'community' were close-knit societies with a moral and familial solidity binding them together, and were very much part of rural life; 2) *Gesellschaft*, loosely translated as 'association', portrayed a different type of community, one that was larger in scale and influenced by the spread of industrialisation, and did not contain the customs or sense of community as *Gemeinschaft*. This loosely links to the work of Durkheim (1984

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[24] Several texts also spell the surname as Toennies.

[1893]) and his ideas regarding 'organic solidarity' in industrialised societies, whereby 'community' was not bound by shared values or beliefs ('mechanical solidarity' in Durkheim's words) but instead there were interdependencies between individuals based on services they could offer. In practice, 'organic solidarity' could lead to 'alienation' amongst individuals who did not feel part of a 'community' or *Gemeinschaft*, as per Tonnies's description.

Tonnies's articulation of a rural-urban divide may not necessarily provide a framework for discussing community in respect of this project, as the majority of the research focuses on activities that take place in urban centres[25]. However, what it does bring to this research is that 'community' needs to be used to indicate a sense of belonging, and to show the different ways that communities identify themselves, function as a group, and evolve. The term has been increasingly used to describe groups of individuals with a shared identity and interest(s) that may or may not be geographically linked. As Kibby summarises: "communities exist through dialogue; through an exchange of past social history and current social interaction" (2000: 91).

Whereas a traditional discourse on community may be more specifically based on those geographic boundaries, my work examines communities forged by 'taste' (see Bourdieu, 1984) and also critiques Anderson's celebrated notion of 'imagined communities' (1991). Anderson argues that many of those who are part of these communities may never communicate with each other, but merely share common values and beliefs. However, in small music communities in Ireland, the majority of participants do know each other, whether that is in person or through a virtual community. Those that do not know each other, I will argue, often tend to have some knowledge of the other members of the community through the fanzine texts that they write and/or read. It is important for those participating within a community to have an awareness of being a part of that community even if they rarely have face-to-face contact with others. When dealing with small localised groups as this study does, the

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[25] Nonetheless, the term *Gemeinschaft* still has currency in contemporary debates in sociology and popular music for both researchers and research participants. In recent work on the Reykjavik music scene by Prior, one of his interviewees articulated the close-knit scene where everybody knew each other, and helped and/or collaborated with others, as a "creative *gemeinschaft*" (Prior, 2015: 91). The musician that Prior interviewed transposed a concept more specific to rural life to describe the scale of the city and the social reciprocity of its music community.

remit of 'imagined communities' perhaps stretches somewhat too far, as by Anderson's supposition, they deal with larger groupings (including nations). Another crucial difference is that those participating within the communities I focus on w*ant* to communicate with each other, which is not necessarily the case with Anderson's communities. Additionally, Hills (2002) takes some issue with applying the concept of 'imagined communities' to groups of fans, and instead proposes 'communities of imagination'. Hills suggests "the community of imagination constantly threatens to fragment" (2002: 180) as opposed to the more stable 'imagined community', and allows for more active engagement.

While DIY ethics very much focus on egalitarianism, there are still unofficial hierarchies within music (see Thornton, 1995) and fan communities (MacDonald, 1998). Simon Frith (1981) offers up a different take on the discourse around 'community' in popular music; specifically rock music dating from the1960s. He maintains that 'community' is derived from a "communal experience" but is nevertheless led by individuals (for example, **Bob Dylan**), and structured by capitalist enterprise. Frith sees a community such as this as more a "sensation" than a reality (1981: 164), and believes that the idea of a "rock community" is a myth. There is a great deal of currency in the argument; it is difficult to argue that a relationship formed on illusions of authenticity where there is in reality a massive divide between performer and audience actually constitutes a community. Nevertheless, Frith's article does not ponder the significance of 'community' to audiences or indeed fans (perhaps as it was written at a time when little consideration was given in academic circles to fan studies). Additionally, and of more pertinence to this research, 'myth-making' in my view is not as applicable to formations of communities in alternative music cultures. Differences of scale between the cultural level envisaged by popular music theorists and that inhabited by the Irish DIY community require an alternative approach.

The Move From Subcultures to Scenes

Since the 1970s, the usage of the term subcultures dominated the studies of popular music practices amongst young people and is still regularly used in both academic and everyday language. While academics at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary

Cultural Studies were not the first to use the term 'subculture', they are those most closely associated with its promotion as a sociological concept, and explain it as such:

> In modern societies, the most fundamental groups are the social classes, and the major cultural configurations will be, in a fundamental though often mediated way, 'class cultures'. Relative to these cultural-class configurations, *sub*-cultures are sub-sets – smaller, more localised and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks (Clarke, Hall, et al, 1993: 13).

It is important to debate the merits of this term that is still used in the field, especially when dealing with genres of music such as punk[26]. Subcultural theory was a feature of sociology long before the advent of popular music studies or ethnomusicology, and for the first half of the 20th Century, it was very much grounded in debates around deviance and youth cultures. The works of Marx (for example, Cohen, 1972) and Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971) certainly had some influence on the prevalence of the term from the 1970s onwards, particularly on the Birmingham CCCS[27] (Hall, 1980). Gramsci utilised the concept of 'hegemony' to illustrate how the 'power bloc' of dominant forces within capitalist society maintains power through the winning of concept rather than simply through coercion. In the CCCS applications of Gramscian thinking the media are seen to be key vehicles in the achievement of cultural hegemony, but they stress that this is historically contingent and is variously negotiated through the cultural practices of everyday life. Gramsci argued that there was potential for counter hegemonic activity, cultural resistance to the *status quo*. The CCCS saw various youth subcultures as ways of resisting ideological hegemony, as they were in opposition to the dominant power, and actively displayed a level of subversiveness; this can be particularly seen in their 1976 text *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). To the CCCS, these various groups that they had termed as subcultures, such as mods, rockers, punks, etc., were "treated at different times as threats to public order and as harmless buffoons" (Hebdige, 1979: 2).

Through his book *Subculture – The Meaning of Style* Hebdige (1979) looked at how different music forms had unique markings and style to form their identity, often

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[26] For example at the *Keep It Simple, Make It Fast! Underground music scenes and DIY cultures* inaugural conference in Porto, Portugal (2014), a number of papers still used the term 'subculture' either in their title, abstract, or discussion. Additionally, a network of scholars in the UK has recently formed under the banner of The Subcultures Network.

[27] The Birmingham CCCS was founded in 1964, and came to prominence for its work on youth culture, race, and subcultures, particularly through the works of scholars such as Stuart Hall.

through *bricolage* – a reassembly, frequently ironic or deviant, of prevailing styles - in order to demonstrate this opposition to the dominant power. Given the time of his writing, the punks in particular were of interest to Hebdige. As a result, perhaps part of the problem with attaching the idea of subculture to discourses on popular music is the narrow focus on punk communities by some scholars in the decades subsequent to Hebdige's text. Clark (2003: 223) terms punk as a "classical subculture" and "the last subculture", noting that the subculture died with an appropriation and commodification of the genre by the mainstream capitalist society. However, Clark contends that punk survived, but outside of the mainstream in a more disorganised manner, stripped from the signifiers that deemed it to be a subculture in the first place. Thornton (1995) sees the formulation of modern-day 'subcultures' almost in reverse to Clark; she argues that media representation now plays a role in developing identity for a subculture; for instance, a mixture of sensationalism in the tabloid press and hype in the music press established the framework for the clubbing subculture that she investigated.

There are contentious issues around the usage of subculture in popular music studies that have been flagged by other scholars. Middleton feels that there is a degree of mythology around subcultures with "their 'opposition' to dominant culture exaggerated" (1990: 161) by Birmingham scholars; as such, subcultural studies tended to focus more on deviance, and as Hesmondhalgh argues "subcultural analysis was in fact never able to offer much insight into the music" (2005: 31). Furthermore, he states that "there is no possibility of a return to the concept of subculture in any adequate sociology of popular music" (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 21). While I am not necessarily conducting a project about the music itself – it is the fan practice that becomes a conduit for information about the music that I am more concerned with – the Birmingham approach places too much of an emphasis on sensational style, and does not give enough credence to the role of taste in formulating social groups, or "field" (Bourdieu, 1984). Also, by defining individuals and groups by what they are expressing an opposition to, it neglects to focus on the pleasure that connects people to music. While the texts may be oppositional, the pleasure for people in my study was particularly manifested at the live gig; it was in being with like-minded people and reading about them in the corresponding fanzines.

Bennett finds that subculture has become "a convenient 'catch-all' term for any aspect of life in which young people, style and music intersect" (1999: 599), and this can be seen in how the usage of the term has varied drastically in different studies. For instance, Kruse (1993) applies the term to identify members of college music scenes in the US, moving the idea away from notions of working class identity; in her work, she looks beyond subculture being locally formed, instead casting it as a trans-local formation. Even the bands that ranged from polka-bands to Polish orchestras to fife and drum corps that Slobin described as "affinity groups" (1993: 98) - as opposed to bands in the traditional or more professional sense - are deemed to be "subcultural ensembles" with little regard for the youth and style dimensions that formed the framework of Hebdige, Hall, and other Birmingham scholars' version of subcultures. Slobin's only connection to the Birmingham approach was that minority ethnicity was the common factor in the formation of these social groups.

Another potential problem with the subcultural approach for this particular project is the emphasis on (in particular working) class in determining subcultures. It may not be a stated agenda but there is a political legacy of classless communitarianism in DIY music cultures; the people that I encountered did not describe themselves in class-specific terms but many of those who make and buy fanzines are middle class. Admittedly, on the rare occasions when class is discussed in fanzines, it is intertwined with a strive for authenticity, with writers and musicians either associating themselves with working class culture or distancing themselves from affluence. Groups have employed the notions of class, in its oppositional sense, to distinguish themselves, even if in practice, this was not true (for example, the Art-School (see Frith & Horne, 1987) punks at the centre of the punk movement in the mid-1970s). Clarke (1982) also critiques Hebdige's work by suggesting that punk was a movement that had as its central figures individuals who had come from art schools as opposed to the working class backgrounds that were perhaps romanticised by Hebdige et al. Other critics of the term, such as Kahn-Harris (2006), prefer the usage of scene over subculture – in looking at extreme metal, Kahn-Harris believes that the concept of subculture is too tightly constituted, with a narrow focus on male-dominated and resistant activities, thus alienating many practitioners within scenes.

Gelder and Thornton (1997) see subcultures as groupings that are organised around shared interests and practices, but this description could just as easily sit with many studies in popular music that have employed the concept of scene since the early 1990s (notably Cohen, 1991; Shank, 1994; Straw, 1991). Presented as a replacement for subcultures, scene suffers similarly to subculture because of its varied usage in academia, which resulted in Simon Frith referring to the concept as "a fruitfully muddled one" (1995: iii). Nonetheless, Bennett and Peterson, in the introduction to their edited volume on scenes, neatly sum up 'scene' as an outlet for academics "to designate the contexts in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others" (2004: 1), proposing that music scenes can be local, translocal, or virtual. The concept of scenes suggests more fluid boundaries than community, connoting something that is different to "uniformly populist practices" (Laughey, 2006: 191), and bears similarities with both the ideas of 'art worlds' (Becker, 1982) and 'field' (Bourdieu, 1984).

Will Straw (2004) argues that members of a scene require social interaction with each other. He also notes that scenes are distinguished by location or by the cultural form that brings them together. The idea of interaction is a significant factor in distinguishing scene from other concepts, and is the first way in which it is useful to my study. This work does not position the fanzine as a constructor of a scene but as a facilitator of information, occupying a key position in a limited cultural network. The individuals that we meet in this study belong to either current or retrospective scenes that are almost always localised; some by city (for example, the Cork scene) and others by nuances within the genre or style of music primarily associated with the scene (for instance, the Old Chinaman scene in Dublin – see Chapter Five). Cohen and Shank, through their respective investigations of the music scenes of Liverpool and Austin, Texas, focus on particular cities. Cohen's examination of "indie rock"[28] culture in

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[28] An abbreviation of independent rock music, to indicate that artists within the scene release music themselves independently or through independent record labels. However, it can be also noted that the term "indie" has been appropriated to describe particular styles and aesthetics related to music performance and production, and that that type of music is not always released independently. See Hesmondhalgh (1999) for further discussion. Kruse (2010) uses the term 'independent music' to look at how a growing wave of bands in the United States in the 1980s started to recording their own music, using primarily analogue 4-track and 8-track recording devices, as opposed to just playing it live.

Liverpool contends that "distinctions are made between being inside or outside the scene" (1999: 240-41). Thus, there is a hierarchy within such localised scenes, and the significance of social and cultural capital within these hierarchies cannot be estimated. Shank sees these scenes as essential for "the production of exciting rock 'n' roll music capable of moving past the mere expression of locally significant cultural values and generic development" (1994: 122); for the bands in Shank's study, authenticity is a central notion, and as such, scenes can be spaces within which individuals have licence to be more proactive and expressive. Given the discourses of authenticity which take place in music cultures (as discussed previously in this chapter), this provides further justification for the usage of scene as an analytical tool.

It is important to note that the music in Irish alternative music cultures does not exhibit any specific differences from what is heard in other locales; an effectively Anglo-American sound is appropriated translocally and this ties in with the work of Straw (1991). For Straw, what differentiated localised scenes was not the sound but just local idiosyncrasies, indicating that local music communities within alternative rock culture are essentially a localised version of a globalised culture. Shank similarly looks at how punk performances from international bands (e.g. **The Sex Pistols**) helped inspire and transform the Austin, Texas scene. This local manifestation of a global sound and style can be seen in both the bands that feature in the local Irish fanzines, and the type of production format adopted by the producers of fanzines.

A final reasoning for the usage of scene by many is that as a term used in everyday language away from the academy and by individuals participating in musical movements themselves, it has become a ubiquitous and accessible way of describing how groups of people congregate around specific music activities. It thus affords the researcher an element of insider knowledge. For O'Connor (2002: 226), its usage within the scene is defined as such:

> When punks use the term 'scene' they mean the active creation of infrastructure to support punk bands and other forms of creative activity. This means finding places to play, building a supportive audience, developing strategies for living cheaply, shared punk houses, and such like.

Yet, this usage of scene as a 'sensitizing concept' (Blumer, 1954) perhaps raises some problematic issues with the term, and as Hesmondhalgh (2005) suggests, there is never going to be a term or concept universally accepted for dealing with groups of individuals participating in specific cultural activities together. Nonetheless, there have been some valid alternatives proposed to the concept of scene that warrant some unpacking. Andy Bennett, himself a proponent of the term scene (see Bennett and Peterson, 2004; Driver and Bennett, 2015) suggests the usage of neo-tribes (1999), based on the post-modern tribes (or *tribus*) argued by Michel Maffesoli (1996). Maffesoli offers a more optimistic viewpoint on postmodernity arguing that tribalisation provides for the flexibility of modern life, where individuals move between communities and styles. Whereas a subculture can be considered as anti-mainstream, the 'neo-tribe' depoliticises this relationship by being more like post-modern tools for creating self-identity. A key ingredient of Maffesoli's hypothesis is that small groups of people are coming together voluntarily, but are not 'bonding' through more traditional structures such as family, class, or geography. The urban dance music scene Bennett encounters (1999) illustrates that 'tribes' are less rigidly structured with eclectic musical consumption taking place across the community, along with more individualistic stylistic selections by 'members' of the tribe. Crucially in Bennett's approach, identity is self-made rather than determined by class.

In a 2005 article, David Hesmondhalgh was critical of concepts such as subcultures (as already noted), scenes (which he deemed to be used in too many contrasting ways) and of Bennett's usage of tribes. Hesmondhalgh's criticisms of Bennett's usage of the term 'neo-tribe' were primarily situated around the positioning of consumerism in Bennett's arguments for these tribes; young people, according to Bennett (1999), utilise commodities to articulate their cultural leanings and define the lifestyle that they adhere to at any point. For Hesmondhalgh, Bennett is not critical enough of consumer culture, but this is something that Bennett (2005) rebutted in a responsive article to Hesmondhalgh. Bennett uses the example of hip-hop which originated as a street style as its proponents did not have access to mainstream consumer goods and practices to argue that Hesmondhalgh:

> …grossly underestimates the agency of youth in creatively resisting the
> circumstances of their everyday lives…youth consumption encompasses a broad

range of activities that, in addition to buying things, also includes dancing, listening to the radio, watching television, reading magazines, and so on - none of which demand particularly high levels of disposable income (Bennett, 2005: 256).

Hesmondhalgh also suggests that Bennett demarcates others who are interested and involved in popular music by placing an emphasis on youth participants and audiences. However, as Bennett points out, there was never "any intention to suggest that youth is the only, or the most important, audience for popular music" (2005: 257). Indeed, Bennett is one of the few popular music scholars to take an interest in older fans of music, with his studies of punks (2006).

I feel that Bennett's usage of Maffesoli's concept helps to explain the somewhat transient nature of music scenes, where individuals enter and exit as they please, and offers a more coherent concept than the more rigid idea of subculture. Neo-tribes, and indeed scenes, allow for individuals to have identities that are not bound by the scene. Similarly, the concept of articulation can be applied, which is one of the alternatives (coupled with genre) that Hesmondhalgh offers to the trio of scene, subculture, and tribe, in understanding the relationship between music and social process. Drawing on the work of Gramsci, the concept of articulation is used to analyse how "musical forms and practices [are] appropriated for use by particular classes" (Middleton, 1990: 8). Articulation is a way of understanding how social formations are formed, and crucially, as Stuart Hall explains articulation is "a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time" (1986: 53). Born (2000) also posits that articulation can help demonstrate how individuals can move between particular musical movements and scenes:

> Because of the ubiquity of music in the mass-mediated world, and individuals' subjectification and socialization by a number of different musics, each bearing different dimensions of both their existing and desired potential identities, rather than musical subjectivity being fixed and unitary, several musical "identities" may inhabit the same individual (Born, 2000: 32-33)

In this sense, 'articulation' is a useful adjunct to the concept of 'scene' for my study. In later chapters, I will meet with some participants in Irish music scenes who discuss how they were able to move between scenes, with relative ease. The scenes were sometimes loosely bounded by genre (or sub-genre), and Hesmondhalgh (2005) proposes that genre and articulation be used together. Hesmondhalgh draws on the

work of Stephen Neale (1980) on film genre. As Neale notes (1980: 5), the term 'genre' itself has been one maintained by the film industry for the promotion of cinema; in a similar manner, the recording industry has used genre as a way of packaging and marketing popular music. Hesmondhalgh praises Neale for looking at genre more broadly as a catalyst for linking "text, industry and audience" (2005: 32). Likewise, the work of Frith (1996b) can be drawn on – Frith sees genre not just as a tool for the music industry, but also as a method of music-makers and audiences to identify with specific types of music. Genre can be seen as the symbolic collective nucleus that draws members of the community together. I would tend to agree with Hesmondhalgh that genre alone is not substantive enough to adequately explain this phenomenon. While many of those involved in DIY music cultures associate themselves with punk music, they do not exclusively consume or perform punk music; while the subcultural approach is more rigid in terms of style and performance, many scene participants encountered in this study move between genres based on how pleasure can be attained. Even within localised scenes, a multitude of genres can be acceptable: for example, DIY non-profit collectives such as the now defunct Aspersion Music Collective (AMC) in Limerick hosted gigs from punk, metal, and hardcore bands, but also played host to alternative country, hip-hop, and electronica acts.

Taking into account the various perspectives outlined in this detailed section, the concept of 'scene' provides the most solid (if not perfect) platform for describing social groupings formed around shared musical interests and practices. It will be utilised through this research, and will be loosely intertwined with two other concepts – 'neo-tribes' and 'articulation' – which this research looks on favourably to explain these fluid social formations.

New Media and Online Communities
'Scenes' can also be used to help articulate virtual communities (see Kibby, 2000; Lee and Peterson, 2004). As the paradigm of production and consumption that runs through this work shifts when technological factors change (Chapter Seven), it is important to examine various theoretical perspectives on how new media and technologies affect the concept of 'community'. While for many, 'new-media' has become a useful catch-all term to describe rapidly changing technological platforms in this century, the term has been used in studies of mass communications dating back to

the 1960s (Livingstone and Lievrouw, 2002; McQuail, 2005), which allows for some difficulty in defining it. The primary features of 'new media', as per McQuail are: "their interconnectedness; their accessibility to individual users as senders and/or receivers; their interactivity; their multiplicity of use and open-ended character; and the ubiquity and 'delocatedness'" (2005:38). Utilising McQuail's characteristics, the most obvious facility for this kind of interactivity is the computer; Rice (1999) adds that he sees new media as the combination of computer technology, telecommunications and digital content.

Some media will always seem 'new' and the process of adoption and adaption is more important than any particular technology. Baym proposes that "one of the most exciting elements of new media is that they allow us to communicate personally within what used to be prohibitively large groups" (2010: 4), and this work explores whether that is the case for those actively participating in independent music scenes. Horst (2012: 62) offers a warning that not all new technological advances should be determined to be new media. What distinguishes them is "the concept of double articulation; new media technologies are not only objects, but they also link the private sphere with the public sphere, and in turn, facilitate the negotiation of meaning both within and through their use"[29]. Chapter Seven focuses on 'on demand' media accessible through online sources such as (but not confined to): email, social networking, blogging, e-zines, bulletin boards, etc. Many of these – blogging, boards, social networking sites – have Web 2.0 capabilities; i.e. the potential to go beyond just passive consumption of content through commenting, general interactivity, and the ability to create users and profiles.

Livingstone (2004) looks at how research on audiences has changed with the rise of new media technologies. While her research is more specific to television studies, she believes that new media is providing for more interactive and proactive audiences that are "selective, self-directed, producers as well as receivers of text (2004:5). If one is to

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[29] The computer, the phone, and other devices such as tablets, the smart phone, etc., have the accessibility and interactivity that McQuail speaks of, allied with the 'double articulation' that Horst proposes. They are technologies that allow for user-generated content to be shared in an almost 'call and response' format: receivers can use comments, shares, text, visuals, etc., to respond to the user.

take Livingstone's rational suggestion as a starting point, it would seem that fandom takes on a higher importance as audiences migrate online.

If fandom is becoming more of a phenomenon displayed online[30], then the next step is to determine how the online community is to be framed. An 'online community' has potential to be an 'imagined community' to use Anderson's phrase (1991) as it does not rely on any face-to-face communications. However, Bury's (2005: 14) concept of 'interactive community' is preferable, where interaction with other members of the community is a prerequisite. Constant changing technologies have of course made the study of online communities a difficult task for scholars, with some (e.g. Turkle) even dramatically revising their views on virtual societies. The contrasting perspectives of Turkle (1984; 1995; 2011), Calhoun (1998), Rheingold (1993; revised edition 2000), and Castells (2001) have been key in discussions about the strengths of community online.

Sherry Turkle's earlier work in particular offered a rather romantic viewpoint on the future of new technologies. In *The Second Self* (1984), she looked at the role that computers could play in our lives with a sense of optimism. Over a decade later (1995), the computer had changed from being a machine that was just for our personal usage to a conduit that could help us communicate with others, even complete strangers; Turkle proclaimed:

> We have the opportunity to build new kinds of communities, virtual communities, in which we participate with people from all over the world, people with whom we converse daily, people with whom we may have fairly intimate relationships but whom we may never physically meet (1995: 9-10).

However, while Turkle had some concerns about the future of 'cyberspace' and how it builds identity, she also felt that there was a psychotherapeutic potential for communities who hid behind anonymous or fictitious identities. The third part in this trilogy *Alone Together* (2011), offers a bleaker prognosis on the role of virtual communities: Turkle believes that the more we retreat to online communities, the less we begin to experience life 'in real life' (IRL). Rainie and Willman (2012) have

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[30] Works from Bury (2005), Scodari (2007), and Bennett (2009) look at how fan communities interact online.

criticised Turkle for this drastic theoretical shift, but I argue there is some relevance in her revised hypothesis, specifically around the concept of how capital is accrued online. This research considers the transition from fan cultures reliant on physical artefacts like fanzines to one that is more grounded in digital media. While the digital collector and/or curator may develop some sense of cultural and social capitals in the virtual community, do they retain an emotional connection to the media artefact? This is where Turkle's most recent work still has some basis, in that she argues that our emotional attachment to real life activities is lessened by our virtual activities. A well-measured counter-argument is provided by Hornsby's recent research, in which she uses a Durkheimian framework (2013). In this she finds that electronic gatherings do generate an emotional attachment in that they form themselves as "organic societies" to use Durkheimian language. Hornsby makes an attempt to argue that the spread of online technologies has neither signalled the end of traditional community nor marked the beginning of an era of cyber dominance.

Howard Rheingold's renowned text *The Virtual Community* (2000) is quite positive about the endless opportunities that virtual communities can generate. First published in 1993, it chronicled an era of net infancy. Like Turkle's earlier research in particular, his work was very much based on ethnographic activities written from an 'insider' perspective, as he excitedly described the happenings of the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), an early network of online enthusiasts that Rheingold had been connecting with daily since 1985 (Rheingold, 2000: xv). He found it an absorbing environment for sharing dialogue and personal stories with people he had never met before. While that is a part of everyday life for many adults in the Western world today, who commend, support, criticise, or argue with individuals they have never met, the WELL represented a tiny subset of global communication in this period of time. Rheingold predicted that virtual communities would have an impact on how we conducted ourselves 'in real life', but that he does see them as separate entities to the communities that we interact in outside of cyberspace. However, Rheingold contradicts this statement somewhat as he discusses in detail how his involvement with the WELL led to the establishment of offline networks with other participants where events such as parties, weddings, and funerals were attended by WELL members.

Despite this, Rheingold takes a positive view of the net "as an alternative reality to existing realities" (Delanty, 2010: 140) with virtual communities existing online and not in everyday life. Castells (2001), on the other hand, believes that the virtual experience becomes reality, with the internet having a positive impact on social interaction, taking "the form of supplementing existing relationships" (Delanty, 2010: 143); for example, in supporting the development of family networks online. Calhoun takes a different, and more reasonable viewpoint, that the internet exists as a supplement to face-to-face activity rather than as a substitute, arguing that "the Internet mainly makes it easier for us to do some things we were already doing and allows those with the resources to do some things that they already wanted to do" (1998: 32). This is supported by Parks's (2011) research on online or 'virtual' communities, which indicates that many of these communities are "often simply the online extension of geographically situated offline communities" (2011: 120). As such, the approach of both Parks and Calhoun that positions virtual communities as extensions of offline communities is the most relevant to the research that I am carrying out. However, there are benefits to considering other theoretical viewpoints on online communities. Cavanagh (2007) does not take the ethnographic approaches that both Turkle and Rheingold did. She touches on the idea of the fear that the Internet will "lead to the collapse of traditional community" (2007: 7) but says that this is "counterbalanced by the hope that e-communities may provide for civic renewal…" (107). Cavanagh refers to the "voluntary linkages" (119) that help to form Internet communities.

This idea is something that can be adapted to the contemporary prevalence of Social Network Sites (SNS), (something that has become more commonplace since Cavanagh's original text) to determine whether community can be found in these types of websites. This aspect of my research will draw on Miller's study of Facebook users (2011) as well as danah boyd's work which, utilising Anderson-esque language, sees SNS as 'networked publics'; that is "the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice" (2011: 39). These 'networked publics' mark perhaps the biggest change in the relationship between fan and music-maker, and this research will question whether that relationship offers a higher level of agency on behalf of the audience, who can now in theory interact with bands with a greater deal of ease and with a lack of the social 'awkwardness' of face-to-face fandom. It brings up the question as to whether community participation needs to be

measured in solely positive terms in an era of increasingly online communication, and to refer back to Tonnies, does a virtual community represent more of a *Gesellschaft* than a traditional community, and with that, does it mark a loss of the sense of belonging that comes with a more orthodox community? While I previously noted that Tonnies's conceptual distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* places too much emphasis on the damage caused to 'community' by the spread of industrialisation, *Gesellschaft* can be considered to determine whether 'networked publics' are a diminished form of an imagined community.

Another way of looking at networks is by applying Actor Network Theory (ANT), which has returned to prominence in recent years in cultural studies, and needs to be analysed to see if it has any relevance to this body of work. Actor Network Theory, in particular the works of Law and Latour, is a theory used to look at the nature of social relationships, and is, as Law proposes "a *semiotics of materiality* [writer's emphasis]" (Law, 1999: 4); it does not just concern itself with people and emotions involved in networks but also with the objects that are part of the process. In ANT, there is equal role given in the social experience to human and non-human actors. I will examine the extent of 'agency' of each medium in order to explore its role in community cohesion.

In an essay on DJ culture in Melbourne, Jonathan Yu (2013: 166) looks at how the technology used – turntables, mixers, headphones, etc. – by the DJs plays as significant a role in the clubbing experience as the DJ itself or the clubbers. Yu's work has similarities to mine in that 'authenticity' is a central feature; different usages of technology are deemed to be more legitimate than others by DJs in the local dance scene – however, Yu argues "that DJ/producers are constantly redefining electronic dance musicianship through their practices and authenticating discourses; hence, there are no 'natural' practices that are intrinsically more legitimate that others" (165). This can be applied to look at the suspicions that participants in this study often took to newer technologies and platforms, such as SNS and, in particular, blogging and the devices (tablets, smartphones, laptop computers) used to deliver these platforms. However, and especially when looking at Chapter Seven of this research, ANT is applicable when we look at the increased agency that comes with non-human actors in music dissemination. Music streaming sites (non-human actors) such as Spotify play a role in developing taste communities; the music fan does not need to read in a fanzine

or a blog or a magazine about a particular band, they can just listen to it instantly online. However, there is an irony here. While the listener believes that they are displaying more agency by selecting the music they feel they want to listen to, an algorithmic formation makes it a tailored service that makes it feel like it is a personalised service to each individual user, and their 'contacts', thus automatically encouraging a community of taste. The service offers 'suggestions' as to what the listener may want to listen to, thus subsuming the role of a taste gatekeeper. While ANT will not be applied throughout this research, it will have some weight when discussing online technologies. Of course, as this research will show, some individuals have displayed their own agency in eschewing online publishing or reducing their own online time, almost in a display of anti-internet sentiment; however, even when young music fans revert back to the fanzine format to demonstrate their fandom, there still is a paradigmatic shift that needs to be examined as the fanzine is now being used in a different context.

2.8 A Gendered Community?

As will be presented in later chapters (specifically in 5.3), music fanzine making and collecting in Ireland has traditionally been a male pursuit, although this was not an issue that was readily discussed by my research participants. Generally the lack of female involvement within fanzine cultures and DIY music scenes was brushed off as something that simply existed. While gender is not a central theme that emerges from the evidence collected in this project, there needs to be some consideration given to literature on this theme. In this section, I will briefly examine popular music studies literature that discusses the lack of female participation in music communities, before turning my attention to debates around contemporary masculinity.

Writing in the late 1970s, Frith and McRobbie noted that the music industry was very much a male-run business, with limited creative roles for women (1978). Bayton's (1997) sociological research examines gender divisions in musical practices, by examining why there are so few female guitarists. She looks at trade magazines, guitar shops, techno-phobia and "the entrenched sexism of the rock world" (1997: 46). Bayton points to these barriers, along with the demands of family life, as obstacles to

women getting more involved in music; Bayton's research is quite entrenched in successful or mainstream, rock music as opposed to the often non-professional music making and auxiliary practices (i.e. fandom, fanzine making and collecting) that are encountered in my work. Sara Cohen's (1997) study of the male-dominated Liverpool indie rock scene centred on bands like **Cast**, **Space** and **The Lightning Seeds**, and their involvement in locations like the Liverpool Music House. Cohen argues that common gender discourses associate women with mass-produced and commercialised pop, whereas men tended to be more associated "with the alternative and authentic" (1997: 30). She felt that this discourse excluded women from scenes like the Liverpool one, where her field research discovered that those involved in the music industry were almost exclusively male. Interestingly, the only place where there was any sense of female involvement was in music journalism (50% of females actively involved in the Liverpool scene were as journalists), an activity on the periphery of the actual industry. Again, the problem of applying Cohen's work to my own particular research is determining whether there are differences in professional communities and pro-am environments. As later detailed in my findings, female involvement in the production of fanzine texts was quite low in Ireland, which in itself is something of an interesting finding given the supposed egalitarian ethos of DIY cultures. There is little literature to suggest that women were active participants in music fanzine production outside Ireland, with the exception of the explicitly gender-conscious Riot Grrrl[31] movement. Reynolds and Press (1996), Schilt (2004) and Leonard (1997) all acknowledge that the printed fanzine was an integral part of Riot Grrrl, and was a response to male-dominated zine publishing and scenes. Furthermore, Duncombe (2008) suggests that Riot Grrrl helped to diffuse an overwhelming sense of machismo that started to dominate American hardcore music in the 1980s. Outside of Riot Grrrl, there is no significant literature about women's involvement in alternative music print media. Perhaps one of the pitfalls surrounding academic debate around the issue of gender is that it becomes a discourse centred on the involvement, or lack of, of women in certain activities. For instance, in the edited volume *The Popular Music Studies Reader* (Bennett, Shank and Toynbee, 2006), all five chapters that are concerned with gender focus on the process of music-making and participation of women.

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[31] Riot Grrrl is a feminist indie music scene that emerged in the early 1990s in the United States initially.

As a result, sometimes we neglect to examine the complex formation of male identity[32]. Jefferson notes that there is still a narrow focus in how masculinity is used in discourses "as if it referred simply to a list of 'manly' attributes – competitive, aggressive, risk-taker, strong, independent, unemotional, and so on" (Jefferson, 2002: 70). Adopting Connell's theory on 'gender hierarchy' as a way of looking at the dynamics of gender (1987: 183) gives a more nuanced discussion of masculinity. Connell lists various types of masculinity[33], such as 'hegemonic masculinity', which is the most dominant form of masculinity, akin to the popular concept the 'alpha male', but which is only bestowed upon a minority of 'powerful' males in society. Below this is the form of 'complicit masculinity' - those that benefit from hegemonic masculinity, yet do not have the authority or power to register that level; and 'subordinated masculinities', which exist in a subordinated relationship to hegemonic masculinity, and include 'homosexual masculinity' (Giddens, 2009: 611). It is difficult to fully adopt an approach such as Connell's to help identify why the production of music fanzines is such a masculine pursuit. For instance, it would be difficult to suggest that individual males who demonstrate counter-hegemonic values through their textual productivity could be at the top of such a gender hierarchy, displaying 'hegemonic masculinity'. Likewise, it is difficult to see them positioned at the bottom displaying 'subordinated masculinity'. Almost by default, they are stuck in the middle, and while the idea of 'complicit masculinity' may not provide a wholly satisfactory theoretical basis for discussing the male dominance of particular scenes, there is some scope in utilising it because as Connell expands:

> The number of men rigorously practising the hegemonic pattern in its entirety might be quite small. Yet the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women (Connell, 2005: 79).

Thus we are presented with studies such as Haenfler's (2004a) exploration of the straight edge (sXe) scene in an American town, where he applied Kimmel's (1996) three primary ways in which men "have responded to the crisis of masculinity and the growth of women's movements: self-control, exclusion, and escape" (Haenfler, 2004a:

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[32] It should be noted that there are texts that are an exception to this such as Walser's (1993) research on gender in heavy metal.

[33] Connell also lists various forms of feminine hierarchy, such as emphasised femininity (compliance and empathy with the dominant male) and resistant femininities (e.g. feminists) which more accurately describes females active in DIY music scenes.

87). The 'exclusion' category is of particular relevance to my study as it can help to explain how women play(ed) just a peripheral role in alternative music cultures. There is a rhetoric of equality and empowering women within straight edge scenes, but in practice, Haenfler found it was somewhat different: men in the straight edge scene "may not have intentionally excluded women, but they did not intentionally include them" (2004a: 89). As such, women whose association with the scene was as girlfriends of band members were treated with suspicion while women who were deemed to be too fashion-conscious were venerated. Most interestingly, in the corporeal rituals of the dancefloor, the limited female audience was frequently excluded due to the aggressive nature of moshing and 'slam dancing'[34]. Haenfler does not explicitly draw the connection with Connell's complicity masculinity, but this exclusion demonstrates a subordination of women in the community. What Haenfler does expand on is the contradictions that exist within the scene; while the majority of male participants were deemed to be progressive in their masculinity, by treating women fairly, abstaining from casual sex and not objectifying women, there was still a strand of the scene which had leanings towards hegemonic masculinity. So while the lyrics of songs may have questioned manhood, the heaviness of the music itself "attracted the most hypermasculine men" (2004a: 82).

As Haenfler attests to, the masculinity that exists within DIY cultures is complex and contradictory. Fanzines, which often espouse egalitarian beliefs, play a role in constructing a strange hybrid of masculinity that mixes Connell's complicity masculinity, escapism (from external factors, and feminism perhaps) and an almost idealised adolescence. Thus, we are presented with a juvenile quality to fanzine covers, particularly in the illustrations and form of humour that is presented. Cross (2008) puts forward the notion of the "boy-man" to explain how men in their twenties and thirties (and beyond) still immerse themselves in popular culture to help extend their adolescence – this accounts for the popularity of particular television shows, "men's magazines", gaming, toys, and sports cars, according to Cross. Choosing to "settle down" and marry later in life, these men are "frustrated and confused about what

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[34] Slam dancing and moshing are characteristics of hardcore and straight-edge performances. As Tsitsos notes: "although people occasionally slamdance and mosh to recorded music, it is far more common for it to be done at live music shows. Both are aggressive dances that are performed mostly by males in a roughly circular area called the 'pit'" (2006: 122)

maturity is and whether they can or want to achieve it" (2008: 1). While I am not suggesting that the male Irish DIY fanzine producer is necessarily a "boy-man" (almost all encountered directly in this research are quite progressive, in fact), there is an element that their involvement in the fanzine ensures that they do not become marginalised in the community.

Cross also argues that nostalgia can be gendered too, with men primarily those who collect and have an emotional attachment to old vinyl records. Richard Haynes's study of British football fanzines (1995: 113) contains the following passage from Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* (1992):

> I have not yet met one [woman] who would make that Wednesday night trip to Plymouth [for a football match]…I have never met a women with a huge and ever-expanding and neurotically alphabetised record collection…I am not saying that the anally retentive woman does not exist, but she is vastly outnumbered by her masculine equivalent" (Hornby, 1992: 103).

Hornby (and Haynes by using the quotation), is demonstrating two things here: firstly, there may be differing levels of fandom for sporting and musical practices that are gendered[35]; secondly, the male football fan and the music fan (often the same person) utilises their cultural activities as a form of 'escape' from the rigours of everyday life and from the rise of feminism (Kimmel, 1996). Similarly to how the 'shedism' movement has grown (see Thorburn, 2002), there is language, humour and content within fanzines that appeals solely to men and helps develop almost exclusive hubs for male interaction. This can also be seen in some sports. Whereas in the United States, there is a more evident divide between a culture such as straight edge and sports enthusiasts ('jocks'), there has actually been quite a degree of crossover between football and music fanzines in the UK, according to Haynes, and my research determines a similar shared sensibility in Ireland. The punk-style had an influence on the football fanzine, and in the 1980s when football fanzine culture peaked in the UK, fans were viewed as hooligans and troublemakers. Football fans, quite differently to how they are perceived now (more as consumers), were often portrayed as outsiders just as those in marginal cultural scenes were/are. Band-members in the UK worked on football fanzines (Haynes, 1995), and the same applied in Ireland as my research will

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[35] See also Belk and Wallendorf (1994).

show. Football, with its connotations of working-class culture and an outsider aesthetic made a suitable bedfellow with alternative music: for instance, Haynes points to numerous examples such as **The Fall**'s football song 'Kicker Conspiracy' (1983), and later the indie-pop band **The Wedding Present** releasing the album *George Best* (1987). Football also helps make those involved in DIY scenes appear more 'manly' due to their associations with sport.

To conclude this section, the most interesting aspect of the gender divide in music fanzine participation is how a multifaceted form of masculinity is constructed, which juxtaposes progressive beliefs with relatively juvenile behaviour.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided for a multi-faceted approach to analysing the significance of fanzines in alternative music cultures. I have shown how some literature has failed to adequately present the complex formation of fandom within alternative music cultures. In an Irish context, this work (in particular chapter five) will examine the make-up of DIY music scenes and the position of fan media within it. In a wider context, this study signals that a different approach needs to be taken to looking at the fanzine; it is not simply a medium of opposition, but is a fan practice and needs to be considered as such.

Through the course of interpreting the research, I reached a set of key propositions that will be developed in forthcoming chapters, and have articulated these as three central conceptual spheres (a triangulation of theory, if you will) that help frame this thesis throughout. Firstly, the importance of the 'dominant representational paradigm', adapted from Hamilton (1997), will become particularly clear in subsequent chapters (Four, Five, and Seven) as the thesis will explore the defining characteristics of fanzine production and consumption in Ireland. The aesthetic choices that are linked to this paradigm link in with the idea of authenticity, which I will demonstrate is a significant concept within the fan and music communities themselves. Secondly, social and cultural capital is accrued by fanzine writers (chapter five), musicians (chapter six), fans (chapter six) and proponents of new and online media (chapter seven). I have

clearly illustrated in this chapter why this research prefers a mixture of these two forms of capital. Finally, popular music studies (and to a lesser extent, media studies) has frequently ignored fan studies in its investigation of media practices and audiences – this work places fandom firmly at the centre of local DIY activities, but also signals a lack of analysis from fandom scholars of the complex nature of local music collectivities and practices. This project moves away from a stardom-dominated conceptualisation of fandom to offer a new perspective.

The literature discussed in this chapter will be used to accompany primary research conducted. Before detailing those findings (Chapters 4-7), the next chapter outlines the different methods that were utilised to support this theoretical framework.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the methods that were used to design and conduct the research, and to interpret the findings in light of the theoretical approach outlined in Chapters One and Two. For a multi-disciplinary research project, no singular approach can address all of the questions raised by this phenomenon. As such, there is an element of methodological triangulation at work here; multiple methods encompassing quantitative and qualitative techniques are utilised to help analyse the central research questions that were outlined in Chapter One.

As will become evident as this chapter progresses, there is more of a leaning towards ethnographic methods in this research. When exploring the relationships within, and the practices of musical collectivities, ethnographic research can – as Sara Cohen argues - "bring the researcher in 'the field' into contact with social reality in a way that no reading of secondary sources or 'armchair theorising' could ever accomplish" (Cohen, 1993: 132). A key criticism of the Birmingham approach to subcultural studies was that – with the notable exception of Willis (1978) – there was not sufficient focus on the social actors in their studies. Crucially, for Willis, a qualitative approach "is the only possible source for the 'authenticity', the 'qualitative feel', which is one of the method's major justifications" (1976: 91). An ethnographic approach brings the focus onto audiences and their consumption, which ties in with some of the core theoretical elements (such as 'fandom' and capital) of this study.

My work in 'the field', with its combination of interviews and observation is not as extensive as ethnomusicological studies or more traditional social anthropology, as it did not require "extensive and intimate involvement in the community studies" (Shuker, 2012: 118). However it was very valuable, especially when used in conjunction with the analysis of archival material. Nonetheless, as Cohen expands, "ethnography is meaningless in the absence of theory" (1993: 132). Thus, the methods described in this chapter are used to complement the theoretical approaches that were outlined in the previous chapter. Before I discuss these methodological trajectories,

however, I feel it necessary to clarify my own relationship with the field of research, as both participant in the scene and academic observer.

3.2 Research Position

Prior work carried out on fanzines (e.g. Duncombe, 2008) has clearly been influenced by the rather subjective viewpoints of those immersed in fanzine culture. As I was never a regular fanzine consumer or collector, this removed me somewhat from being a fan of the texts and/or their subjects. Since the emergence of 'fandom' as a field of research, there has been a trend of fans studying fellow fans and this perhaps can lead to a romanticisation of the subject matter. However, researchers such as Song and Parker (1995) have recognised difficulties they found in determining themselves to be 'insiders' or 'outsiders' where issues of identity were concerned[36]. As I am an operator of an independent record label, most of the individuals I encountered during this research were people I was already aware of. They belong to communities where 'insider' status is valued. As someone with connections, but without being recognised as an insider I had enough credibility to be granted access to materials and individuals. As such, I was able demonstrate both "critical distance" from and "mutual knowledge" with my respondents (Giddens, 1984: 4). Despite any objectivity I brought to the study, I was probably closer to the role of 'participant observer' than actual 'outsider'; this is considered the ideal research position according to anthropologists (see Barz and Cooley, 1997). As Grazian (2004) suggests, ethnography has moved from the researcher who "gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies (Becker, 1958: 652, cited in Grazian, 2004:197) to a broader usage of qualitative methods.

Participant observation has been in usage since the early twentieth century, with the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) one of the first to use the term. Chicago School scholars quickly adopted it, with Nels Anderson's key study *The Hobo* (1923) shaped by his own experiences:

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[36] In their research on young Chinese people in Britain, Song and Parker (1995) wrestled with the insider/outsider dynamic due to their own dual heritage (Korean-American and Chinese-British respectively).

Having experienced hobo life himself, Anderson moved fairly easily amongst the many homeless men coming into Chicago – collecting many real-life stories along the way…one is observing one's *own* social group, even if one may no longer be a part of it (Gelder, 2007: 33)

In terms of the participants in my study, there was a loose connection to a social group that I had some kinship with. Nonetheless, one does not need to have had some level of insidership to conduct participant observation. Willis (1978) outlines how he organically became *au fait* with the biker boys by drifting around their club and gaining trust. Shared musical taste and the availability of his car helped him develop relationships with individual members of the hippy community. He admits that after spending the day with hippies, playing records and smoking cannabis with them, he would often produce the tape recorder and start recording; he suggests that the advantage of this method "is that the research is done in the natural situation of the actors" (Willis, [1978] 2014: 254). My approach was quite different in that I did not take the time to embed myself into the community. This study did not necessarily require me to spend a great deal of time with participants building up relationships and gaining unique access to their lives. Additionally, as someone with an involvement in DIY music cultures, I had already immersed myself in this scene for over a decade by being an active audience member and organiser of live gigs in various cities around Ireland. This lived experience of the Irish context helped direct the past four year of research, where I was able to focus more specifically on certain aspects of DIY scenes. It also meant that I was quickly able to establish the members of this community that needed to partake in this study.

Generally, the social groups I was dealing with were aware of my presence and research purpose. However, there were occasions when I was embedded in events and situations without people having much realisation of my research work. Nonetheless, a great deal of my interaction was with people on a one-to-one basis, as outlined in section 3.3. Also, and as I will detail later, there are difficulties in dealing with communities that are either retrospective or in flux; some of the sites and locales no longer exist so it is not possible to analyse them. With retrospective observations, they can provide a more selective than systematic account of what actually happened.

Patton notes that "the extent of participation can change over time…the researcher may begin the study as an onlooker and gradually become a participant as field-work progresses" (2002: 265). As outlined in Chapter Seven, I led the production of a 'zine'[37] in 2013 for my record label. Without being so engrossed in this present research, I probably would not have considered using the 'zine' as a medium for this event. It was important that this marked change would not be reflected in the development of any bias, because as Robson contends, "every effort made to counter them [biases]" (2002: 98) in the research process.

Bennett (2002) looks at how many significant ethnographic accounts in popular music and youth studies have not necessarily come from a completely detached position: he pinpoints the ground-breaking work of Ruth Finnegan on music networks in Milton Keynes (1989), where she had a strong familiarity with the city prior to her involvement in the project. Furthermore, Hodkinson (2005) argues that this is not necessarily a new phenomenon, pinpointing Anderson's work (1923). Hodkinson himself utilises his own status as a Goth[38] aficionado for his various studies (2002; 2004) of the Goth scene. 'Insider' knowledge can also give researchers an advantage in locating willing participants in studies, and certainly there is some need for "gaining trust" (Fontana & Frey, 2000: 655) with the interviewee, but there is a thin line between fan and ethnographer in certain studies that needs to be clearly distinguished to participants in the study, and to also avoid "insider complacency" (Hodkinson, 2005: 139). As such, I never presented myself as a collector or expert on fanzines or independent music scenes to those who took part in this body of work.

It also should be considered that as consumers and fans of popular culture, most academics are likely to be emotionally attached to the cultural form they are writing about, particularly popular music. It is "value judgements", as Frith describes them (1996b), which separate the scholar from the fan. In order to deal with my key research questions in an objective manner, the research methods I adopted are framed in a

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[37] In this case I have removed the prefix 'fan' as that would have suggested that I was a fan of my own creative enterprise. However, it was still promoted as a 'fanzine', with those who considered themselves fans of the label taking part in the publication.
[38] Goth - or gothic rock – is a musical genre and style that emanated from the late 1970s (See Reynolds, 2005: 420-438). Bands such as **Siouxsie and the Banshees** and **Bauhaus** were amongst those who adopted a 'goth' identity; black clothing, black hair, make up, etc. Goth scenes still exist today, and style is very much a signifier of that identity for its participants.

manner that distances me from my own fan behaviours. While I may speak the language of the research participants, I have structured the dialogue in an objective way through the agenda and questions set for both focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

3.3 Research Methods

This research encompasses a number of different approaches (primarily qualitative) that were utilised to collect and analyse data for this research. While cultural studies tend to favour qualitative research, this work tends to intersperse small elements of quantitative research in order to balance my subjectivity within the scene with an element of positivism and test the value of early hypotheses. As Ruddock argues, "scholarship matures in part through a willingness to transgress disciplinary orthodoxies" (2001:15).

Some of the different methods that were used in this research, which I will discuss, include:

- Surveying
- Textual analysis of fanzines.
- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups.
- Observational field notes.

Surveying/ Sampling

Jankowski and Wester (1991: 49-51) point out that since World War II, the social sciences started to focus more upon quantitative methodologies, leading to research becoming almost too scientific. By the late 1970s, research methods such as the production of surveys began to be criticised by theorists, and there was a move towards more "interpretive social inquiry". Quantitative research does have a role to play in sociological studies, as Ruddock posited, but largely in tandem with qualitative research. Surveys are useful for gathering statistical information, but it is when that data is used subsequently to inform qualitative research that it is most beneficial.

One of the first pieces of research that was carried out for this study was what I viewed as a preliminary survey, conducted in late 2011. I designed a basic questionnaire (Appendix 1) which was simply to analyse how music fans found out about new music through the media, and what devices and platforms they utilised to subsequently consume that music. The research participants were all Irish attendees at the All Tomorrow's Parties (ATP) Festival[39]. Participation was not exactly through a 'self-selection' method: I was travelling to the festival myself, and reasoned that others travelling would be interested in 'alternative' music. This placed me as an 'insider researcher' for this aspect of the research; a bus from Bristol airport had been organised by Irish gig-goers and I was invited to travel with this group. I knew approximately twelve of the travellers prior to the trip, and emailed them an online link to the survey, should they wish to complete it in advance, with 42 replies in total (eleven online, 31 en-route from Bristol). My own level of cultural capital – I was 'on the bus' after all – ensured that respondents were willing to complete the survey. In terms of framing this group of fans, they were too disparate to be considered a community as such, but were loosely bonded through their connections to alternative music scenes.

Fanzines were a minor aspect of the original questionnaire, featuring in just one question: "Which Publications Do You Read Regularly?" Under this question, a range of options was given, including music magazines from Ireland and internationally, music supplements in newspapers, and fanzines. Just one respondent ticked the box marked "fanzines", and in the "Other" section listed the American fanzine *Maximumrocknroll*. Nonetheless, this did not prevent me from determining that fanzines did have relevance to DIY scenes; it highlighted three issues with the survey I had designed:

1. The word 'regularly' at the end of the question is problematic, as there is no clear definition in the survey guidelines as to what 'regularly' constitutes – is it weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, etc.? Additionally, fanzines by their very nature

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[39] ATP Festivals have taken part in the UK, US, Australia, and Iceland since 1999. The research for this project was conducted with attendees at an ATP festival in Minehead, England. Each festival would feature a line-up curated by an individual act(s) and would cater for a far smaller audience than larger festivals such as Glastonbury. http://www.atpfestival.com/content/whatisatp [Retrieved 10 February 2015.]

are *irregular* productions that do not follow the scheduling patterns of mainstream media.

2. The timing of the survey – fanzine production (Chapter Seven) had tapered off in Ireland by 2011 (with a micro-resurgence taking part in the years following it).

3. The sample group – retrospectively, I realised that many of those attending, particularly the younger members of the cohort (45% of respondents were under the age of thirty), would never have been active fanzine collectors because the type of music they listened to was not always covered in fanzines that typically covered punk or hardcore. While many respondents listened to those genres of music, both at live shows and on recordings, not many would actively identify themselves as punks.

It is important to note that at the time this survey was carried out (December 2011) neither the current nor retrospective role that fanzines played in Irish music communities was a primary concern for my own research. Thus, half of the questions on the survey were related to the consumption of music, and would go on to have little relevance as this project evolved and took on a different shape. Nevertheless, there were benefits in terms of the results of the other half of the survey to this project's research questions. For example, the analysis showed that there was a clear shift towards the usage of digital media; I found that 81% of the respondents accessed music websites and blogs at least once a week, while 71% regularly visited the American music website Pitchfork. This will be significant in helping to articulate the role of technology when exploring the paradigmatic shift in Chapter Seven. Even more specific to this research, two Irish blogs had a high rate of regular readers: Nialler9 with 52% and Harmless Noise with 48%. This data identified who the main online cultural gatekeepers were in an Irish context, and would inform subsequent face-to-face interviews with the writers of both of those blogs. It would also ensure that the position of blogging in local scenes would be a topic discussed, not just with the bloggers themselves, but also with fanzine writers, musicians, and fans. Additionally the analysis of the data showed that there was some opposition to the mainstream music press; just 12% of the cohort regularly read *Hot Press*, Ireland's longest running music magazine. This piece of data compliments interview material and the analysis of fanzines where fanzine and music makers in DIY cultures feel marginalised by

established publications such as *Hot Press* (see Chapter Six). However, while there were some benefits in terms of analysing trends from this survey, I felt that the information itself was not telling enough. It also demonstrated that the making and consuming of fanzines was a more minority practice than I had initially anticipated, particularly in an era of increasing reliance on online platforms for music news.

While the ATP research was quite directed, I felt an element of random sampling was required also. Of course, as Ruddock notes, "the term 'random' is a little misleading since there is nothing casual about these proceedings" (2001: 50). The most random sample that took place in this research was fieldwork conducted at Plugd Records, an independent record store based in Cork city. While individual customers in the shop were asked to participate in the research, they all represented a very specific subset of the population – by being present at a record store (particularly an independent and relatively specialised one), the presumption was that they were active music consumers, if not necessarily music fans.[40] Furthermore, as the survey was about their own musical interests and practices, another gauge of fanhood was a willingness to take part in the research, as some people refused to partake indicating that they were only in the store to make a purchase for a friend or family member.

I spent six hours on a Friday in the summer of 2014 at the store, inviting customers to participate in the survey. The survey took the form of twelve questions (Appendix 2), but it was not conducted as a paper survey, and respondents were not given the option of possible answers; instead, they were interviewed on the spot. Primarily open-ended questions were asked and recorded – for example, "how do you find out about gigs and new releases?". The purpose of these recordings was to determine respondents' opinions on four specific areas (which fed into all three of this thesis' research questions) namely:

1. The extent of their fandom.
2. Participation in local music scenes.
3. Attendance at concerts/gigs.
4. Collection and consumption of recorded music.

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[40] Shuker (2014) outlines that there are differences between being a collector and a fan (Chapter 5).

Plugd Records is housed in the Triskel Arts Centre in Cork, which is seen as a cultural hub for visual arts, cinema, theatre, dance, and music in the city. Plugd was selected as a location as it is seen as fulcrum for independent music activity in the city[41]. Additionally as an environment surrounded by music, it was felt that it was also a space where it was easier to discuss music. All individuals who entered the store during the period that I was there were asked if they would like to take part in the research. In total, there were eleven respondents to this and they ranged in ages from their early twenties to mid-sixties, and self-identified themselves in a number of ways – producer, DJ, musician, music fan, record collector, etc.

The most important output of this survey was that it helped to develop my own conceptualisation around the role of fandom in cities that are relatively small in size. Cork may be the Republic of Ireland's second largest city, but with a population of fewer than 120,000 residents (according to the 2011 Census[42]), those involved in underground music activities provide a rather limited sample. This research method had two clear results in this respect: firstly, it proved that almost 'everybody knows everybody' within the local indie music scene, which adds an interpersonal dimension to any fandom; secondly, it also established that there was a great deal of cross-genre inhabitation (though not collaboration) in the city – for example, some of those who clearly identified themselves as DJs in electronic music scenes were very much aware of and considered themselves to be fans, or perhaps simply 'supporters' (see chapter six) of acts that played in the indie/alternative local scene. This particular research provided an indicator of the complex divisions of fandom in small scenes and the analysis of such can be found in more specific detail in Chapter Six.

<u>Textual Analysis</u>
As the main subject matter of this work focuses on fanzines, a very important aspect of the research was in compiling and analysing various publications from around Ireland – this in particular would be required to answer the first research question

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[41] Recent ethnographic research by Hogan (2014b) looks at the role the shop plays in local cultural happenings.
[42] Information from:
http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/populationofeachprovincecountyandcity2011/ [retrieved 23 April 2015].

(characteristics of fanzine production) but would also show the technological and aesthetic factors that would contribute to a "dominant representational paradigm" (Hamilton; 1997 – see Chapter Two). Before I commenced this process of gathering these primary sources, a couple of key areas had to be addressed, namely:

1. Should there be geographic boundaries to the research sample?
2. On what grounds would the sample be selected?
3. What information was needed from these publications, and how would it be dissected?

One of the first issues was whether the sample of fanzines utilised for the research would include fanzines from just the Republic of Ireland, or whether it should also include titles from Northern Ireland. I decided on the latter, as in many cases - particularly between the cities of Dublin and Belfast - local scenes were interlinked through a network that included gig swaps, housing for musicians, and the trading of fanzines. Other factors in this decision included the relatively small size of Ireland and difficulties in determining which side of the border particularly titles came from, due to a lack of information listed in the fanzine's contents. A handful of international fanzines were also included in the research, primarily for comparison reasons, or because they contained 'Scene Reports' from Irish writers. In these instances, my study is responsive to the perceived flow and distribution of fan media. A common perception may be that fanzines are quite limited to a small range in one city, as opposed to their digital counterparts; however, data that I have discovered indicates that there has been a great deal of cross-border communication through these texts.

The next step was to establish just how large a sample of fanzine titles was required to carry out the research. While I had specific titles that I wanted to gain some access to (e.g. *React* and *Nosebleed*) due to their popularity and importance within particular music communities, I came to the conclusion at an early stage that I should not limit the scope of the research. This was influenced by a singular factor – availability. Many of the older editions of fanzines had not survived, and libraries such as those at Trinity College, Dublin only retained copies of football fanzines. With that in mind, any publication discovered would become part of the study and catalogued accordingly. It was decided that the period of time that would be covered would be from 1977 – the year Ireland's first punk fanzine *Raw Power* was launched – up until the present day

(2014 is taken as the cut-off point for research on this project). Fanzines were obtained through four different methods:

1. The private archive of a former fanzine writer and collector: while this was a treasure trove of underground literature from Ireland, it had one significant limitation, which was that all of the material was from the early 1990s onwards.

2. The collection at the Forgotten Zine Archive – eight visits were made to this archive, which is housed at the Seomra Spraoi[43] in Dublin city. The archive was established using the private collections of some prominent fanzine producers, and is undoubtedly the largest single collection of music fanzines in the country. While I was not allowed to remove fanzines from the building, I was given permission to scan materials and to take notes.

3. The purchasing of fanzines: this method admittedly only provided for a limited amount of research materials, and was solely used to locate new titles. Despite some attempts via auction sites, it was rare to find old editions of Irish fanzines for sale online.

4. Online – a limited amount of Irish fanzines have had editions, partially or fully, scanned and uploaded as either JPEGs or PDFs. Through this, I was able to access some earlier fanzines. Sites such as brandnewretro.com and irishmetalarchives.com were utilised.

While there are other and more complex software programmes designed specifically for quantitative research, this project only required relatively rudimentary software such as Microsoft Excel, which was used to build different databases. All Irish titles that were identified formed the largest database (Appendix 3), while actual physical and digital copies I had of fanzines were logged in a smaller database which included information such as year, issue number, page numbers, etc. As can be seen from the example below, there were often gaps in determining some pieces of information simply by reading a fanzine; they displayed (often intentionally) their differences from the mainstream music press by neglecting to include rather basic details such as publication year, page numbers, a contact address or person, or even an issue number.

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[43] Seomra Spraoi is a non-profit 'autonomous social centre' that is based in Dublin since 2004. The Forgotten Zine Archive has been housed at the centre since 2005.

Thus, the dominant paradigm of fanzine publishing includes non-conformity not just in terms of content, but also structurally.

Title	Issue #	Year	Years Active	Editor/Publisher	Location	Pages	Size	Total Amount of Issues Published
Smegma	9		1986-99	Angus	Dublin	44	A5	
Smegma	10	1997	1986-99	Angus	Dublin	28	A5	
Smegma	11	1999	1986-99	Angus	Dublin	28	A5	
React	9	1991	1990-97	Niall McGuirk	Dublin	4	A4	Approx 35
React	10	1991	1990-97	Niall McGuirk	Dublin	4	A4	Approx 35
React	11	1991	1990-97	Niall McGuirk	Dublin	4	A4	Approx 35
React	22	1993	1990-97	Niall McGuirk	Dublin	4	A5	Approx 35
Nosebleed	11	1994	1990-2002	Boz	Dublin	40	A5	22
Nosebleed	19	1999/00	1990-2002	Boz	Dublin	34	A4	22
Nosebleed	21	2001	1990-2002	Boz	Dublin	36	A4	22
Nosebleed	22	2002	1990-2002	Boz	Dublin	36	A4	22
High Speed Death Skeletal Dance	4	1991		Cathal Rodgers	Co. Offaly	24	A5	
Gutter	1	1993	1993-?	Joe Clarke	Limerick	4	A5	

Figure 1.1: Excerpt from Irish Fanzines Database

Any fanzine edition that was accessed was read thoroughly, analysed and catalogued. In the earlier stages of this research, it was simply a case of fervently reading these publications in order to loosely familiarise myself with style and content patterns emerging. Following on from this, a second stage of reading was more targeted, as I knew I wanted to find articles and imagery that could support various elements of the theoretical grounding for this project. Thus, I paid particular attention to articles such as those that featured descriptions of local music scenes. Additionally, covers were analysed that showed the type of masculinity present in those scenes, and keywords and articles were logged that showed how discourses of authenticity were central to these communities. Data collected in notebooks, particularly at the Zine Archive, was invaluable. For example, the notes for *Loserdom* (Issue 4) contain the following:

> Relevance to local Dublin scene: Features local bands **Bambi** and **Jackbeast**; a number of references to the Hope Collective; an opinion piece on the local 'underground'.

The logging of this information helped identify what local (**Striknien DC**, **Bambi**, **The Steam Pig**, **Paranoid Visions**, etc.) and international bands (**Fugazi**, **Crass**, **Oi Polloi**) featured most regularly in Irish fanzines, indicating a general preference for punk music and its subgenres (generally acts that adhered to the DIY ethos). Additionally, elements of databases were tailored to include any political commentary

that accompanied the discourse on local music scenes in issues of Irish fanzines. Some of these were visual – for example, it was noted that the Anarchy 'A' symbol featured on a number of front covers of fanzines, particularly in the late 1980s and 1990s to indicate a sense of anti-authoritarianism[44].
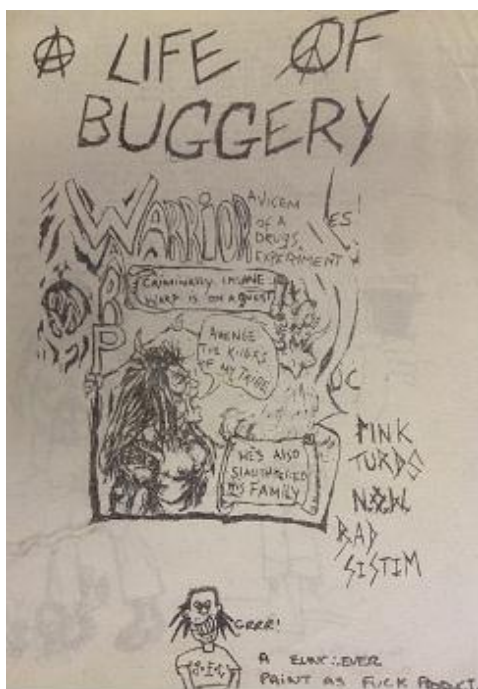
Figure 3.2: 'Anarchy' symbol on top left of front page of *A Life of Buggery* (Issue 4, 1990)

The language and text used also indicated the political stances of particular titles. Figure 3.3 shows that two fanzines from 1991 and 1992 came up when a search was carried out for "anti-Nazi"; these publications were released relatively close to each other and had written articles or featured advertisements that were against Nazism. Information like this could indicate that there were tensions in Ireland at the time around such issues, and that fanzine producers and those involved in DIY music communities wanted to strongly demonstrate their anger. This information also could reflect material that the writers of fanzines were reading in their UK equivalents, where anti-racism and anti-Nazi movements were mobilised to some extent. Away from more overtly-political concerns, the most interesting data was that which was uncovered that illustrated the relationships between the writers and the bands featured in these publications.

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[44] Anarchy has been an ideological feature of punk music since the mid-1970s. While **The Sex Pistols** espoused anarchist ethics, it was not on a very serious level, compared to more 'genuine' anarchist bands such as **Crass** (Kelso and Cogan, 2009: 130).

Title	Issue #	Year	Music	Political (Pro)	Anti	Notes
Puppet Patrol	1	1991	Quicksand, Fugazi	Pro Palestine & Animal Rights.	Anti Nazi, EMI, McDonalds	
The End		1992			Anti Nazi	Interview w/ Mero 'Rejected'

Figure 3.3: Excerpt from detailed Irish Fanzines Database

Through articles and fanzine reviews that featured, I was able to find out about certain publications that existed but that I could never locate. In total, I managed to identify 207 different music fanzine titles that existed in Ireland between 1977 and 2014 (Appendix 3). This is not to suggest that this is a definitive list: firstly, there were surely a number of publications that my research just did not come across; secondly, there were titles of a handful of fanzines that I uncovered which I could not determine were music-specific or related to other fan pursuits. However, I would contend that all of the most significant titles are included in this number. This research examines 127 of those 207 publications over 257 individual fanzine issues. As aforementioned, there are also problems accessing earlier Irish fanzines as they were never formally retained by any institution in the country. Hence, the majority of material that my research focuses in on is from the 1990s onwards[45], although as I show later in this research (Chapter Five), the 1990s did prove to be the zenith for the publishing of these texts. This dataset solely gives a picture of what trends emerged in terms of location, paper size, and longevity but does not give an indication of what kind of content was contained within.

This is where the decoding of texts becomes a significant part of the research. Text is seen as qualitative data in respect of this research, and refers to the analysis of fanzine texts, websites, and interviews. There are, according to Denzin and Lincoln, three distinct approaches that can be taken to textual analysis: "content analysis with the quantitative approach to media studies; semiotics with the structural tradition in literary criticism; and narrative discourse analysis with the recent poststructural development in interpretive theory" (2000: 639).

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[45] 58% of music titles that featured in my fanzine database were published during the 1990s. This perhaps skews the data somewhat, and illustrates a potential constraint of relying too heavily on quantitative results.

Perhaps the method with most relevance to printed media artefacts is semiotics, the method used to analyse how meaning is generated through the interplay between 'signs' in processes of communication, whether they be in the form of spoken or written language or directly iconic pictorial representations such as photographs, or other visual symbols. Deriving from the seminal work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1913/1983) and developed in its applications to popular cultural forms by such theorists as Roland Barthes (1972; 1976; 1977)[46], semiotics focussed on how the material form of the sign, the 'signifier' generates a conceptual 'signified' in the mind of the viewer/reader/listener. In language signs are organised on a 'syntagmatic' axis, each word in a sentence acquiring meaning through its syntactical combination with others. Each sign also belongs to a 'paradigmatic' axis of alternatives, so that the choice of one from the various alternatives gives nuance to the signified in each case, and this nuanced meaning is further refined through syntagmatic combination (see Fiske, 1982; Hartley, 1982). When applied to non-linguistic forms of signification, the same principle of analysis applies: in a magazine layout, for example, why a certain feature rather than alternatives, and how do the elements combine in a syntagmatic logic? In other words, media texts consist of signs that are organised in 'codes' which audiences learn and accept. In the case of fanzines, though, a cursory glance will tell us that they communicate through deviation from accepted codes. The choice and combination of semiotic elements is calculated to upset expectation. Through semiotic analysis we can trace *how* this is achieved, and by placing the fanzine texts within the context of how their producers and readers have formed a community through production, circulation and critical engagement we can see why this form came about and how it developed over time.

Semiotics has been used in musicology, but Tagg warns that "many musicologists rallying under the banner of 'semiotics' or 'semiology' have drawn almost exclusively on art music" (1987: 282). While it would be possible to pursue the theme of how punk music practitioners have deviated from the codes and conventions of more mainstream popular music the focus of research here is firmly on the fanzines rather than the music. Triggs notes that the British punk fanzines of the 1970s "embraced

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[46] Barthes's works on the face of the actress Greta Garbo as a signifier of cinematic perfection (1972: 56-57) and an advertisement for the Italian food producer Panzani that connotes 'Italianicity' (1977: 33) are seminal works in showing how images are signifiers for specific ideas.

their misuse of English grammar" (2006: 76-77) to establish their own methods of communication. In the production of fanzines, photography, illustrations and mixed fonts repeatedly signify difference from the mainstream. They represent and invite identification with marginality or outsider status by breaking with convention and expectation in a way that is comparable with the deviation from grammar. Similarly the amateur Xeroxing and the material texture of fanzines, purposely eschewing glossy paper, gives a deliberately low-tech feel, similar to how the French humanist photographers avoid the "luxury" of colour printing as a way of complementing their subjects through the material form and look of their work (Hamilton, 1997).

An additional theoretical and methodological influence is Fiske's (1986, 1989) use of the works of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, especially the concept of carnival (1968). The applications of this concept will be pursued in Chapter Four. Though somewhat romantically, Bakhtin celebrated medieval carnival as a periodically licensed popular celebration that "was characterized by laughter, by excessiveness (particularly of the body and the bodily functions), by bad taste and offensiveness, and by degradation" (Fiske, 1989: 81-82). Carnivalesque literary and media texts are those that share the spirit of carnival by subverting expectation, often by inverting social hierarchies, or the conventional superiority of mind over body, or the upper half of the body over the lower half. Fiske draws particular attention to corporeal excess of the television show 'Rock N'Roll Wrestling' to demonstrate this, and it can also be found in the more juvenile (and it could argued adolescent masculine) elements of fanzine design and content. The language used in fanzines can be vulgar, offensive, or haphazard, echoing "what Bakhtin (1968) calls the language of the low to disrupt the official, polite meaning" (Fiske, 1989: 110). Moreover, fanzines are engaged in 'dialogical' (Bakhtin, 1981) communication not just in how they quite publicly interact with and react to other fanzines but in how they engage with other aspects of popular culture, both visually and critically. A Bakhtinian analysis thus extends beyond a purely semiotic analysis in the context of this research. Each fanzine element can be seen as a text that forms part of a dialogical chain, quoting and critically engaging with textual features that are questioned or lampooned or uprooted in some way from their original context and reinserted into a new context where readers are invited to orientate themselves critically towards them, and in so doing to experience a communal identity with producers and readers.

These forms of textual analysis were also applied in the web-based research undertaken here, with data collected through scouring social networking sites, web-blogs, and internet forums. In Chapter Seven, I utilise the example of the underground music website Thumped.com, analysing usage and variation in content from a given week in 2004 and 2014. This also shows how quantitative research can help tell the story too, as the usage of the website was able to indicate that online traffic had moved elsewhere, namely social network sites. It is another example of how a mixed methods approach can give more thorough findings.

Interviews and Focus Groups

The role of the interview in collecting data cannot be underestimated. Music fandom scholar Daniel Cavicchi (2014: 52) notes that his current students are surprised that fan studies could exist prior to the proliferation of the Internet. This shows the growing reliance that researchers have started to place on Internet texts and digital production, and Cavicchi notes that this has changed the texture of his own research activities, including "interviews [which] had become oral histories" (2014: 53). The collecting of interview material is effectively a way of gathering oral histories. The richness and texture of evidence generated using qualitative methods cannot be achieved through online surveying and data collection.

The content featured in the interviewing stage ranged from very recent events to recollections of what happened four decades ago. Some of the actors interviewed had exited the scene, or at the very least ceased publishing fanzines, while others were still very much active participants as writers, bloggers, musicians, and/or music fans. For those in the former category, the biographical approach to explaining their changing experiences is particularly useful to these findings as it allows them an opportunity to reflect on the past, but inevitably recollections are framed by current self-identities, so rather than seeing recollections in a naïve realist way, it must be accepted that there is inevitably a fluidity and instability, a capacity for reinvention in all autobiographical narratives. There are advantages and disadvantages to this method of interviewing; in some cases, interviewees were able to reflect on their youthful involvement in DIY cultures with a sense of embarrassment (see for example, Michael Owens's recollections of his band's rivalry with another in Chapter 6) or even disgust with how they behaved. There was also a tendency among participants to romanticise (perhaps

excessively) the simplicity of DIY networks that have since disbanded and that existed in an era before social networking sites (SNS), particularly when they were asked for their views on blogs. For these interviews, questions were devised in advance that would explore the interviewee's entrée into fanzine culture, but would also touch on some of the key theoretical issues in this work: for example, interviewees would be questioned as to what they felt constituted a fanzine (what was their sense of the 'dominant representational paradigm' and what was and was not 'authentic'?) and their position within the community (what kind(s) of 'capital', if any, had they accumulated through their fandom, and how?).

Twenty-five semi-structured interviews[47] were conducted as part of the research. While there were specific questions and topics that I wanted to cover in the interviewing process - primarily those linked to the thematic areas outlined above – I ensured that the face-to-face interview environment was flexible enough to allow for other topics to emerge during the process. These interviews were very fruitful not just in terms of gathering information directly but also for identifying other sources, such as fanzine titles that had not been considered or potential other interviewees. In some cases, there was a 'snowballing effect' in that one interview led to another, but in most cases, I specifically selected interviewees who I knew to be closely involved in the scene. If I relied solely on this method, it would have limited my study sample simply to 'friends of friends', thus excluding potentially valuable participants. In one case, after a recorded interview, a research participant expressed some mild concern about another (key) fanzine writer that was interviewed for this study, arguing that he was not somebody who had fully participated in Irish fanzine culture. The other fanzine writer, he suggested, did not socialise with other fanzine writers and was considered a friend of his. By doing this, my research participant was demonstrating the unspoken importance of authenticity in DIY cultures, and this proposes challenges for ethnographic research. Furthermore, it suggests that insidership is important for those active in music scenes; those who are not adhering to the same principles and/or tastes of others in the community are thus somewhat excluded. Bennett warns that "researchers have tended to display an uncritical acceptance of insider knowledge as an end in itself" (2002: 461). In my role as researcher, I regularly had to ensure that I

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[47] All but two people contacted during the engagement process took part in the interviewing stage.

did not position myself as an insider. I also tried to avoid developing pre-formed biases about other participants through the influence of particular interviewees' views.

As such, I did not allow this to influence my analysis of the interview material or fanzine content that I had collected on either of the participants in the above example. In some cases, recommendations were made to me about other fanzine writers that I should contact and interview that I declined to follow up on; this was for a variety of reasons – their title may not have been significant enough in terms of the number of issues published or impact on the music scene to warrant a full interview, while in other situations, the particular fanzine that they worked on was not considered to be a music fanzine, and hence not relevant to this research. In one exception, a fanzine collector and writer who was unknown to me made contact through Facebook as he had heard about the research that was being carried out and wanted to partake in it.

There was no set requirement at the start of this research for the quantity of participants that were required to take part but multiple interviews were necessary to produce more information and different perspectives as Newcomb (1991: 101) suggests. Interviews took place between 2012 and 2014, in a variety of locations in Ireland including Cork, Dublin, Leitrim, and Limerick. That interviews were conducted at such early and later stages of the study is illustrative of the fact that research is an on-going concern; as late as summer 2014, I could see some possible questions emerging from the data I had been analysing that required further or follow-up interviewing. All but six of the interviews were conducted in person – this was the preferred method as it allowed time to develop a rapport with the interviewee, and to be able to ask follow-up questions on the spot. It made the interviews less structured, as opposed to the six interviews that took place via email, which generally took place due to an unavailability of the participant to conduct the interview in person. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with four of the face-to-face interviewees, but these were conducted through email as they sought limited and specific information. All interviews that were conducted in person were recorded using a digital recorder; it is almost a given now that scholars conducting qualitative research will use some form of a recording device for interview. Writing at a time when such technology was perhaps as not readily available, Finnegan declared that a good reason for recording interviews is as follows: "Oral forms are, almost by definition, ephemeral. If you want to

preserve, disseminate or analyse them it is near-essential to employ some means to make them more lasting" (1992: 62).

The interviewing process in this project indicates a qualitative approach as the interview is not simply a set of structured questions that the interviewee is being asked, or a 'box-ticking', closed question method of data collection. Instead, the subjectivity of interviewees involved calls for qualitative methods. Those who were selected to be interviewed were invited to take part for a variety of reasons, and were identified as playing diverse roles within music communities, including: fanzine writer, fanzine collector, gig promoter, music journalist, former record store owner, music blogger, and musician. In one way or another, they were all fans themselves but were distinguishable by the fact that they were active audiences, particularly those indulging in what Fiske terms "textual productivity" (1992: 39); i.e. the ability to develop narrowcast texts that are produced and circulated solely within the fan community.

I had envisaged that a cross-section of these music communities would provide the most rounded sample. The first people to be contacted were various current and past fanzine writers. Those who were the most prominent writers, or whose publications seemed to be the most valued within music scenes, were earmarked to take part as they could be considered gatekeepers of community taste. Contact was made in a number of different ways but primarily through email, while an open invitation was posted on the forums section of the music website Thumped.com and potential participants were suggested here. Of the twenty-five interviewees, I would have known ten socially or in other circumstances prior to contacting them for interview.

While all but four of the participants were male, gender was not a consideration in the selection of interviewees. The only guideline was that they were over eighteen years of age (for ethical reasons), and from varying eras; Stephen Averill of *Raw Power* fanzine represented the first wave of punk literature, while Ian Maleney of *Hatred of Music* is the youngest music fanzine publisher (twenty-three at the time of interview, 2013) in the country. Additionally, other interviewees offered differing views to the fanzine movement: Stuart Clark is now the Deputy Editor at *Hot Press*, a music magazine in Ireland; Leagues O'Toole is a former writer of fanzines and for music magazines and national newspapers who now works as a booking agent; Richie Egan

is a former fanzine writer who identifies himself more as a musician. The three bloggers selected were identified because they were the most prominent bloggers at the time.

With a varied and partly self-selected group of informants, it was important that the questions were not the same for every interview. However, some questions appeared in almost every interview, for example: "When did you first start reading music fanzines and what appealed to you about them?" This research favoured the usage of semi-structured interviews; research was carried out in advance on the specific interviewee, and some set questions were regularly employed (at least 12-15 for every interview) to have on standby. However, the advantage of a semi-structured interview was that the answers provided by the interviewees often elicited the next question as opposed to pre-planned ones. I was also acutely aware that research participants did not treat me as an 'insider' as this would lead to too much presumed knowledge not just on my part, but also on behalf of future readers of this thesis. Thus, any such assumptions made by the interviewee would be met with a follow-up question that would ask for some clarification (Appendix 4).

Supplementary to the interviews conducted for this research, focus groups were held in three different Irish cities (Cork, Dublin, and Limerick) in early 2014. These focus groups were specifically to engage with current and past active musicians in local music scenes, and primarily attracted participants who played genres of music such as indie, rock, metal, punk, electronica, etc. It was envisaged that contributions from these focus groups would be of particular benefit to how this study looked at the relationship between fans and musicians, but would also help to inform other aspects of the thesis; for example, the inclusion of musicians from different generations helped demonstrate the paradigmatic shift as technology has changed, while also bestowing a certain amount of capital on fanzine producers. While there had been a handful of one-to-one interviews conducted with musicians, it was felt that a wider sample could be obtained through this method, and that it would be an easier platform for some individuals to participate and communicate in. It was considered to be an efficient research technique that would yield a great deal of data in less time than individually interviewing each person. Within the scope of this research project, there simply would

not have been sufficient time to travel to, meet, interview, and transcribe all of these as individual interviews.

In total, there were twenty-eight participants between these three groups, with a far greater number of male (twenty-three) than female participants. The largest group contained eleven contributors, while the smallest featured seven, which places this sample in the optimal number of participants for this type of research[48]. Despite this, there was a great deal of difficulty in actually attracting the contributors. Whereas with an individual interviewee an agreement was made to meet at a very specific time and place, with a specific outline of what was going to happen and with a focus on that individual's own personal experiences, the focus group is a tougher sell for the researcher. Participants do not feel the responsibility of the one-to-one interviewee to arrive for the focus group, and without any monetary remuneration for their time, it is difficult to convince participants that it is a worthy way to spend their time. I utilised a number of different ways of sourcing participants. I sent emails to every band for which I could locate an email address, I posted on web forums, and I established Facebook event pages. This did not have the same 'snowballing effect' as other research methods had; I had envisaged that musicians would talk to others and almost 'recruit' them to attend. Instead, those who attended came because they had either received an email or Facebook invite. Proving that research is not necessarily a smooth process, the first attempt to host a focus group in Dublin in 2013 was a failure: it attracted a single participant, despite contact being made with approximately fifty different acts in advance. However, the following three focus groups would prove to be far more rewarding, with each session lasting between ninety minutes and two hours.

It proved to be a worthwhile research method as the conversations became quite relaxed and informal with an answer from one musician often leading to a follow-up question coming from another musician instead of from myself. In practice, there were fewer questions asked in focus groups than interviews[49]. My role was to facilitate the

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[48] Stewart & Shamdasani (1991) concur that between eight and twelve participants are required for a successful focus group.
[49] For example, one interview of 31 minutes that was held with a fanzine collector yielded 27 questions; a question every 1 minute 30 seconds on average. The focus group in Dublin lasted 1 hour 47 minutes, and again yielded 27 questions, an average of one question every four minutes.

groups and ensure that they stayed on topic; when the conversation deviated drastically from the focus of the research and into unnecessary or uncomfortable territories, it was subtly but swiftly brought back to the central topic. There are potential disadvantages to group interviews that are based around the dynamics of the group, such as:

> Individuals may be stifled rather than stimulated by the group; there may be a higher ratio of interpersonal conflict in interacting groups and this could drain the response energy of the group; the production of irrelevant data may be high; posturing by members of the group could create a level of false information or awareness of research problem (Frey & Fontana, 1991: 34).

In group situations, there are always those who tend to stand out as leaders that will take charge of proceedings to an extent; it was my job to always remain conscious of all participants in the group, and to ensure they were all afforded an opportunity to amply contribute to the discussion. While there is a concern around focus groups that personalities can clash or arguments can ensue, the groups that feature in this research were quite complimentary of each other, and utilised each other's contributions to develop or change their own opinions.

Once the data was recorded at the individual interviews and the focus groups, it was downloaded, backed-up and almost immediately transcribed[50]. Each interview transcription was analysed to determine which aspects of the interview would be of greatest use to the research, and this was logged separately. Again, I used a basic Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that enabled me to cross-reference various topics and themes that emerged during the interviews: for example, this allowed me to search for interviews that referenced local venues, and find what interview transcription contained such references, and on what page of the interview I could find it. In a sense, Becker's (1971) notion of 'sequential analysis' was applicable to my analysis. Fielding (2001) outlines it as a method:

> ...in which one continually checks data against interpretation until satisfied one has grasped meaning. In Becker's approach the analysis of ethnographic data is carried out sequentially in the sense that analysis begins while one is gathering data. In the periods between the observation one may 'step back' from the data, so as to reflect

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[50] Any concerns over particular words that were completely inaudible were left in the transcript as such: "_____ (??)". In cases where there was a degree of uncertainty whether it was the correct word or not, it was entered as such: "word (??)". This was more from a personal documenting point-of-view, as the majority of interview content would not be directly reproduced in the thesis itself.

on their best possible meaning. Further data gathering is then directed to particular matters to which the observer has become by provisional analysis (Fielding, 2001: 154).

This demonstrates the advantage of qualitative approach in collecting data; it is a more nuanced process than merely collecting hard data. Furthermore, as Becker sees it, this approach allowed me to begin analysing interview data at an early stage of the research (the first interviews took place six months into the project), and this helped inform the direction of future interviews. This contributed towards the development of some themes for this study that may not have been as prominent in my research plan to begin with (e.g. the position of the concept of authenticity in such cultural activities). Additionally, analysing the interviews demonstrated the nostalgic and emotional ties that former fanzine writers and/or collectors had towards the medium, and influenced further interviewing and dissection of literature relating to nostalgia which can particularly be seen in a significant section that appears in Chapter Five.

In the interview material that follows in this dissertation, the interviewees are identified by first and second name, and are not presented anonymously, as they are directly linked to a publication, website, or band, in most cases. This differs in the case of the fan subjects who were interviewed at Plugd Records in Cork – most of these are just identified by their first name, as there is no relevance in printing their surname, and it also ensures that their contributions remain more confidential.

Observational Field Research

A final method that needed to be considered was the role that observational field research played in shaping this study. Field trips were made to events where fanzines were prevalent, such as Independents Day and the Dublin Zine Fair to take notes on what kind of activities were taking place. These were logged in a research diary. I did seek permission from event organisers in advance to take photographs and make some notes, either through a notebook or through the 'Notes' app on the Apple iPhone. Two examples of such field notes can be found in Appendix Five.

Observation is useful in that it allows you to determine what is happening in a particular location without having to ask individuals or groups questions. The issue I found with some of the events that I selected for observation was that I did not feel

they were always sufficiently representative of the community I aimed to study, particularly because of their leaning towards 'zines' that covered other cultural forms such as art and literature. Nonetheless they still provided useful data on the activities that are currently taking place publicly around fanzine culture in Ireland.

Figure 3.4: Photograph from Independents Day (Dublin Food Co-op, June 2013)

3.4 Turning Data into Findings

Adopting this mixed-methods approach ensured that best practices were applied to the research stage of this thesis. Each individual method played a very significant role in determining the findings of this work, whether that is how semiotics helps to analyse the visual and linguistic aspects of fanzines or the advantages of doing interviews individually and in groups. The next four chapters illustrate how the data that was uncovered during this research was subsequently utilised alongside relevant literature to make key arguments related to the role of fanzines in music scenes in Ireland.

Chapter Four: Fanzines And Their Making

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers music fanzines as material artefacts and looks at how Ireland responded to international trends in terms of design and the genres of music represented. Examining the historical background to fanzines internationally will give a sense of how music fanzines developed a particular subaltern niche within the Irish media landscape, and how that emergence of a fanzine culture was inextricably linked to the rise and ethos of the punk rock movement. Each key section of this chapter considers how various factors play a role in developing a paradigm of production and consumption, influenced by Hamilton's (1997) research. While Hamilton's work looks solely at photographic representations, this chapter also examines how factors such as language, imagery (to include photography), symbolism, and materiality play a significant role in how a certain vision of the scenes is represented in these publications. A semiotic approach to these texts helps in understanding the underlying ethos of fanzine production in Ireland.

This chapter also introduces the importance of capital in alternative music and fan cultures, a central area of discussion in Chapter Five. It looks at how producing fanzines in a certain way can signify cultural capital, while also looking at how much of a factor economic capital is in making these artefacts. Low budgets, and a do-it-yourself ethic, are contributing factors to how technology is used by makers of fanzines but this is also part of a DIY paradigm where authenticity is central to the production and dissemination of these materials. This chapter argues that the minimal production scale and low distribution network of music fanzines allows for them to be seen as signifiers of authenticity.

This chapter introduces some of the main fanzine titles (and their writers) in Ireland that are utilised in this work, with a particular emphasis on publications from the 1990s onwards. Titles such as *React* (1990-1997), *Nosebleed* (1990-2002), *Loserdom* (1996 – present), *Slanted and Enchanted* (1996-1998), *Unfit For Consumption* (1999-2006) and *Riot 77* (2000 – present) all feature prominently. They are analysed to demonstrate

this dominant paradigm of production that exists, and the chapter describes how fanzines and their corresponding musical practices are contextualised as alternatives to the culture industries.

4.2 Historical Context of Irish Fanzines

There is scope for considering fanzines as a continuation of a tradition of self-publishing from the 18th century onwards. An influential and intellectual bourgeois-led European 'public sphere' (Habermas, 1989) saw the rise of pamphleteering, a medium that was also in use during the American Revolution. In an Irish context, Dillon (2005) notes that self-publishing can be traced back to works like Jonathan Swift's *Drapier's Letters*[51]. Nonetheless the emergence of and propagation of fanzines was very much a Twentieth Century phenomenon, with its roots in Science Fiction fandom, 1930's. Science fiction fanzines such as *Hyphen* (1952-1965) and *Pot Pourri* (1958-1968) were amongst the longest running of these titles in Ireland. The media landscape of early twentieth century Ireland was quite conservative, with Morash pointing out that the sole Irish radio station of the day – 2RN – was a mish-mash of Irish language, classical and traditional music, and a promotion of an agricultural way of life (2010: 135-136). During the same period, the newspaper industry was politically aligned to various political parties[52]. In that light, the emergence of science fiction fanzines provided a completely different type of media – fan media.

While music fanzines existed within Ireland and internationally prior to the explosion of punk rock in the mid-1970s, this research's primary focus is on the years 1977 to 2014. Dubliner Stephen Averill ran a fanzine *Freep* in the late 1960s that was dedicated to the likes of UK space rockers **Hawkwind**. There were other music

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[51] A series of seven politically charged pamphlets (1724-25) that would reach a distribution of 2,000 copies (Morash, 2010: 38-46).
[52] For example, *The Irish Press* (1931-1995) was founded by Éamon de Valera, a future Fianna Fail Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and President of Ireland. *The Irish Independent* leant more towards Fianna Fail's opposition Fine Gael, while *The Irish Times* was initially considered a more pro-Union paper. There were other, more radical, newspapers in the first two decades of the Twentieth century explicitly linked to the Irish nationalism movement such as *The United Irishman* and *Sinn Fein*.

publications in Ireland prior to the arrival of punk fanzines such as *High Times*[53], a short-lived publication in the early 1970s that was very much concerned with rock and roll and "for the readers of *High Times*, RTÉ Radio, which broadcast only a few hours of pop music every day, existed in another, not very interesting, world" Morash (2010: 186). During the 1970s, several pirate radio stations provided alternatives to the state broadcaster. Additionally, the hugely popular showbands[54] scene of the 1960s and 70s was well served through the magazine *Spotlight*, and its successor *New Spotlight*. In *New Spotlight*, interviews with musicians appeared alongside pages for penpals and vox-pops on contentious issues such as religion (Egan, 1970a) and the legalisation of marijuana (Egan, 1970b). Yet, while it was a magazine tailor-made for fans of music, it was run as a commercial enterprise, reaching a circulation of almost 50,000 copies per issue at its peak, and had very strong ties to the music industry in the country at the time. Other music-orientated magazines appeared, such as *Gun*, *Hitsville*, and *Scene*, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While other music magazines have been launched in Ireland[55] in the interim, none have had the longevity of *Hot Press*, which as of March 2015 has published 900 issues and has a fortnightly circulation of over 17,000 copies[56]. In the same year that *Hot Press* launched – 1977 – punk music fanzines arrived in Ireland. While the arrival of punk in the UK heralded major changes in personnel in the music papers, papers such as *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker* kept going; in Ireland, there were no such crossover publications from the pre-punk era to post 1977.

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[53] This publication only lasted a handful of issues, according to Morash (Interview, 6 March 2013). This magazine also predated the US-based pro-marijuana publication of the same name (founded in 1974), and is in no way related to it.

[54] McLaughlin and McLoone (2012: 20-29) discuss the showbands scene in detail. Showbands toured around Ireland from the 1950s onwards playing a mixture of covers of rock 'n' roll music and country and Irish songs in large ballrooms.

[55] For example this century has seen attempts by magazines such as *Alternative Ulster* (later known as *AU*), *Foggy Notions*, and *State*, to provide an alternative to or to take some of the market share of *Hot Press*. All three of these publications have ceased publishing printed magazines.

[56] http://www.hotpress.com/1279946.html, accessed 6 March 2015.

Fanzine Titles in Ireland

- Republic of Ireland: 151
- Northern Ireland: 36
- Unidentified: 20
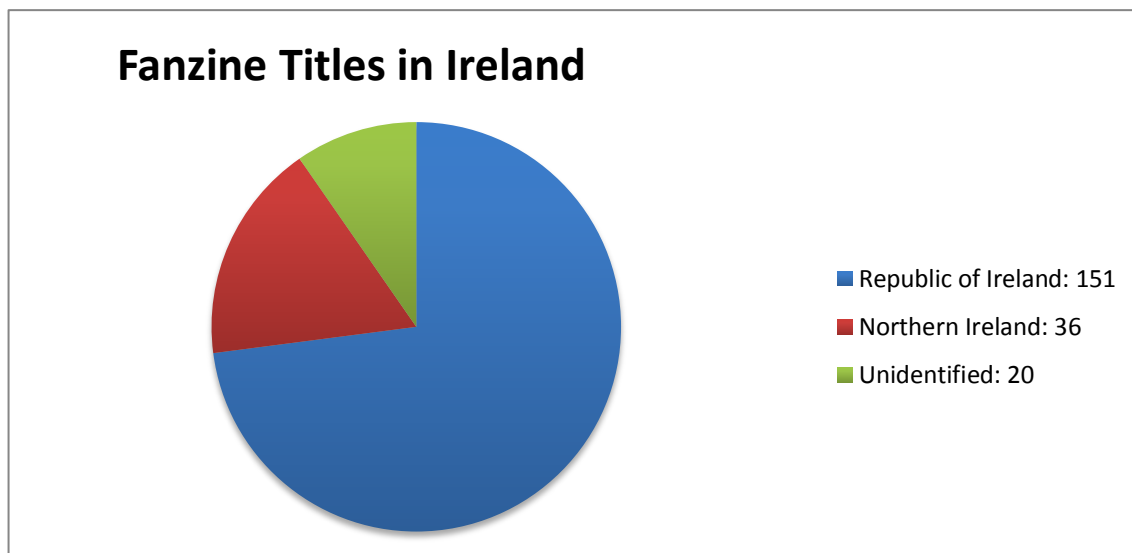
Figure 4.1: Breakdown of music fanzine production in Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland, 1977 – 2014.

This study has encountered 207 different music fanzine titles produced in Ireland[57], and these consist of titles produced between 1977 and 2014. There can be a difficulty in determining what exactly constitutes a music fanzine as many of the titles mix music with other interests such as cycling (*Loserdom*), film (*Non-Plastique*), skateboarding (*Bite The Hand That Feeds The Poisoned Food*) and politics (*Back2Front*). Additionally, many fanzines such as *Lucidity* can be considered 'perzines' – personal fanzines where "authors document the most intimate details of their lives, generating personal narratives and thereby unique autobio/graphical snapshots" (Triggs, 2010: 12). The perzine deals with everyday aspects of the author's life, and becomes a form of public diary of their experiences (Atton, 2001b). I have included fanzines in this research where the primary content is music, even if there are other cultural, social, and political aspects covered.

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[57] There have undoubtedly been other titles produced during this period that are not included, particularly as many fanzines last just a handful of issues or are one-off publications. Whilst locating and cataloguing every single title is simply not possible, this survey includes all of the most established publications to date.

Figure 4.2: *Raw Power* **(Issue 1, 1977)**

<u>Music Fanzines as Punk Literature?</u>

My Irish research sample commences with Ireland's first punk fanzine *Raw Power*, launched in March 1977, and influenced by the instigators of punk fanzines in 1976 – *Punk*[58] in New York, and *Sniffin' Glue* in the UK, which Frith quickly referred to as "the punks' magazine" (1978:47). The cover of the first *Raw Power* (Figure 4.2) featured this visual aesthetic that it had appropriated from the international fanzines, and it delivered similar content also. A cut out newspaper headline – "Punk Rock: A Way of Rebellion for Today's Teenagers" – along with another pasted headline proclaiming that "Gardai [Irish Police] Chase Punk Rockers" feature prominently. They are accompanied by images of local punk bands and the placement of safety pins, a significant appendage in the punk style that Hebdige argues were used as bricolage, "taken out of their domestic 'utility' concept and worn as gruesome ornaments through the cheek, ear or lip" (1979: 107). The fanzine cover's collage of borrowed textual elements is a good illustration of how fanzines can be seen in Bakhtinian terms as both carnivalesque in appearance and dialogical in quoting and recontextualising mainstream media comment within the implied fanzine community. Both news stories are presumably being appropriated as badges of honour.

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[58] While *Punk* was founded in 1975, the first issue was not published until January 1976.

Stephen Averill's pseudonym within the punk community was Steve Rapid. At the time he was the singer with Dublin band **The Radiators From Space**. He was in his mid-twenties when he established *Raw Power*, and had worked in creative advertising as a graphic designer as well as playing in various bands. Averill's fellow band member in The Radiators – as they were known in the local scene - the late Philip Chevron (also a member of **The Pogues**) wrote some of the articles for the publication but the bulk of the work fell to Averill himself, who produced something deliberately amateur in appearance. Averill was quite a skilled artist and designer who would subsequently design album covers for **U2**. In an interview conducted for this research, Averill painted the picture of a Dublin punk scene where the locales sympathetic to the music have understandably long disappeared. Available freely, the 150 copies of the first issue swiftly moved from places such as: "Murray's Record Shop which used to be on Grafton Street, various **Radiators** gigs, Advance Records up near Stephen's Green – shops that we thought were actually selling the kind of music that we were writing about would get copies left in" (Interview with Stephen Averill, Dublin, 6 March 2013). As will be expanded upon in Chapter Five, the record stores that were involved in punk culture also took a keen interest in fanzines, and this has been evident since the publication of Ireland's first punk fanzine.

Raw Power would last only two issues itself, setting something of a precedent for Irish fanzines, with many fanzines existing for just a handful of issues or as a once-off publication. While some Irish publications made it up to thirty or forty issues, none enjoyed the longevity of international titles such as the Californian fanzine *Maximumrocknroll*, which has been published monthly since 1982. It is important to this research to set the context for how the fanzine movement would become a central part in the rise of punk internationally in 1976-1977. During what Hebdige described as the "strange apocalyptic summer [1976] that punk made its sensational debut in the music press" (1979: 25), fanzine writers like Mark P, founder of *Sniffin' Glue*[59], provided grassroots coverage of an emerging movement.

At this stage, it is imperative to note that punk music existed in various forms prior to the mid-1970s, and despite the movement's own iconoclastic rhetoric, there was no

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[59] *Sniffin' Glue* is generally considered to be the first UK punk fanzine.

'year zero' for this music genre and its correlative focus on identity and style. From the countercultural and nihilistic 1960s bikers and hippies (see Willis, 1978) to garage rock, pub rock (see Bennett, 1997), and more avant-garde practices in popular music, punk was not simply something that happened overnight. Of course, the term 'punk' itself is a contentious term both inside and outside of academia: Sabin argues that it is "best characterised as being part youth rebellion, part artistic statement" (1999: 2), Savage (1991) places it firmly as a phenomenon of the mid to late 1970s, while Thompson (2004) sketches out seven major scenes (six of which are American) that chronologically chart punk from 1974 up to 1995. Regardless of exactly when it started or ended – if it ended at all – punk rock emerged at a time when large studio productions from progressive rock bands and disco music were the mainstays of the UK music industry. On the surface, punk is music that is challenging to the majority of listeners, both lyrically and musically:

> To the mainstream music consumer and ethnomusicologist alike, punk, especially its most extreme, non-commercial varieties, has a reputation for being "bad music" par excellence: a music that seems to go out of its way to be terrible, offensive, unlistenable (Rodel, 2004: 235).

Angela Rodel (2004) argues that forms of punk manipulate 'badness' as a mode of resistance to commercial popular music. While there is some mythologizing of punk that perhaps frames it as more anti-authoritarian than it may actually be, when it first arrived, it did confront mainstream culture with music that "was unpolished, informed by an amateur aesthetic that exposed its rough edges" (Negus, 1996:17). Negus's usage of 'amateur' may be a tad misconstrued as some of the most significant players in the first wave of punk rock wrote and produced music with a professional aesthetic that sought those 'rough edges'. For instance, it can be argued that many of the public activities of a band like **The Sex Pistols** were very deliberate and calculated, done in a way to draw as much attention as possible from the public and media[60].

Punk rock made its noisy way onto the pages of the mainstream music press of the day; however, according to Frith (1978: 152-153), the mass media and major record companies had the same goal of sensationalising punk rock as a new musical

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[60] As Hesmondhalgh points out (1999: 39-40) some practitioners did not see **The Clash** and **The Sex Pistols** as "true punk" due to their affiliations with major record labels.

phenomenon, as they had managed previous novelties. The UK fanzines at the time also trumped up the significance of punk, but crucially did so from the fan's perspective, and thus provided a more authentic voice for the movement. Take for example the first issue of *Sniffin' Glue* (1976), itself named after **The Ramones** song 'Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue' where editor Mark P proclaims: "in this issue we lean heavily towards being a **Ramones** fan letter…punk rock is about enjoyment and nothing else". In Ireland, the mainstream music press in the late 1970s centred on sections of the national newspapers and the fledgling magazine *Hot Press*. Stuart Clark, Deputy Editor at *Hot Press*, stated that *Hot Press* was firmly modelled on the American magazine *Rolling Stone*, in terms of design and editorial styles, and was thus far removed from the punk agenda. Despite the timing of its launch in 1977, Clark contends that *Hot Press,* by the virtue that it considered itself a professional publication, followed the example of other major publications in dealing with punk:

> One of the problems with the *NME* [*New Musical Express*] in my mind is that they are so annoyed that they missed punk for the first six months that they're continually trying to make up for it even now by discovering scenes that don't really exist. For people saying that we [mainstream music press] foresaw punk, nobody did…*Hot Press* did react to punk, but you'd be having pieces on [traditional Irish bands] **The Dubliners** and **Planxty** next to stuff about that first wave of Irish and UK punk bands (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

Punk music – in its various forms – has been a constant driver in the production of fanzines but as I will detail further on, other (sub)genres of music have been served by this medium. Where fanzines differed from the music papers that were covering punk was that they continued to cover this type of music, particularly subversive music genres, long after punk's novelty and commerciality had waned. Alternative music scenes which termed themselves as 'anarcho-punk' (see Dines, 2004) or 'hardcore' emerged from the late 1970s onwards, almost in opposition to the popularity of some punk bands that ended up being commercially successful on major labels. Rodel proposes that punk has continually reinvented itself to remain a countercultural subject position. Hardcore can be loosely defined as: "a synonym for punk that Americans invented in the early eighties. Hardcore music is usually faster than the punk music of the seventies, but the ideas and people involved are virtually the same" (O'Hara, 1995: 4). As 'anarcho-punk' was emerging in the UK and Europe, hardcore was emanating from the USA at the same time.

DIY Practices in Music and Fanzine Making

Those within music communities use many different ways of describing themselves, and have also been described by those outside the communities in varying ways. For those partaking in fanzine production, they have been predominantly designated either by genre (punk and its various subgenres) or by their adherence to a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos. Indeed terms such as 'hardcore', 'punk rock' and 'DIY' are terms that have been used almost interchangeably by audiences and academics alike, and sometimes used alongside 'alternative' or independent/ 'indie' music. In this section, I want to briefly explore the DIY ethic, and look at how there is a connection between how it is applied to music and the production of fanzines.

The starting point for exploring DIY production is in how it is positioned as being 'independent'. DIY created an environment where bands could organise their own concerts ('gigs'), record and release music themselves, ignoring the constraints of the mainstream music industry (where the "Big Four"[61] multinational firms dominate the recording industry) and its capitalist ethos in the process. As Strachan notes, DIY practitioners "often base much of their shared identity in opposition (or relation) to an othered music industry" (2007: 246). Music produced in the DIY ethos challenged the existing 'culture industries' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972), where popular culture was mass-produced. The first wave of punk fostered this ethos that anybody could pick up a guitar, start a band, write songs, or even run a record label. The spirit of the venture was perhaps more important than the quality – thus punk was characterised by songs that were not just played fast but also written and recorded in short bursts of time - and the same criteria applied to the emergence of a punk fanzine culture. In saying this, the significant role that technology played in both the music and the medium needs to be considered because, as Dale argues "so called Xerox music appeared because basic multi-track recording equipment was being mass-produced as never before, and because Xerox copiers enable fanzine writers to easily produce discourse about the recordings produced" (Dale, 2008: 175). Here is evidence that technological factors played a role in the creation of a dominant paradigm in fanzine

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[61] The "Big Four" refers to the four major music groups that owned approximately 80% of the music market worldwide (Sony, Warner, Universal, and EMI). Since 2013, this is now the "Big Three" with parts of EMI being absorbed by the other companies.

production, and somewhat ironically, that paradigm was supported by the mass production of such technologies.

For fanzine writers and readers, DIY does not necessarily mean the same thing as punk. Dave Kennedy, a former proprietor of a much-loved independent record store in Dublin called Road Records, explains that "punk rock turned into a more DIY thing and it wasn't a particular sound of music that people were writing about, it was more of a kind of ethos, a belief system that they have about basically doing things for yourself" (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012). Furthermore, Hugh McCabe of Dublin band **Large Mound**, who blend classic rock with American alternative rock, notes that "we were very in-tune with the philosophy of punk and DIY and that kind of thing, even though the music wasn't in-tune with that scene" (Interview, Dublin, 9 December 2013). For those interested in this scene, the fanzine presents an outlet for discovering the people, places, and institutions linked to DIY music in certain cities:

> …they'd tell you about a lot of the DIY gigs that were coming up in Dublin, or DIY gigs that had been on…you'd also find out about a lot of the DIY releases, like Rejected Records stuff, and some of the other bands that were going around at the time (Interview with Trevor Meehan, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

Thus, we are presented with a musical movement that is more grounded by practice (DIY ethics) than the spectacular style of punk. Nonetheless, this does not quite explain the type of music that is predominant in these alternative music cultures. While this may not necessarily be a thesis about the music itself (its central focus is of course on the medium), and as Dave Kennedy suggests there "wasn't a particular sound", it is important to at least momentarily consider what the music may actually sound like. In discussing the Washington, D.C. hardcore scene, Fairchild perhaps sums it up as succinctly as possible: "Tying all these scenes together was a nihilism articulated through parody or cruelty each with a distinct groove of harsh standard time rock laced with blocked chords smashing out songs which vaguely resembled older rock styles" (1995: 21). Similarly, fanzines take the conventions of a traditional medium (the printed magazine) and subvert them somewhat, and there are interesting connections to be made here between the aesthetics of DIY music and its corresponding medium. For fanzine writer and musician Willie Stewart, "DIY music and DIY publications go hand-in-hand" (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012). While he may be discussing

underground music of a far more avant-garde persuasion, there is some merit in Graham's view that "the underground is essentially a practice, a cultural philosophy of music that exists outside the mainstream" (2010: 10). Moreover, as he expands: "The aesthetic tone of underground music usually pivots on sublime and fragmentary modes, with surface abrasion and syntactic destabilization, in many subtle formations across the field, being the primary expressive currencies" (Graham, 2010: 10-11). This "syntactic destabilization" can be seen in DIY music and fanzine making. The modes of production are similar to those of more 'traditional' or 'popular' fields, but it subverts the conventional practices of the cultural industries in the process.

The Emergence of Freesheets

The move towards more of a DIY ethic in the 1980s also coincided with the emergence of freesheets, a form of the fanzine which played a key role in maintaining cohesion within these communities. Freesheets (sometimes referred to as newsletters), in principle, were to be released quite regularly (weekly or monthly), and feature short and snappy news, along with reviews, gig listings, and comment. The name was quite literal – generally an A4 sheet folded over to make a four-page A5 Newsletter or even just an A4 page with content back and front that was available for free at record stores, gigs, or could be posted. These freesheets and newsletters are very much fanzines themselves, as they communicate and serve the same communities, and do so through literature designed and written in a similar style to the more conventional fanzine.

There are numerous examples of Irish freesheets, with titles such as Niall McGuirk's *React* perhaps the best known within the fanzine and DIY community, particularly in Dublin. *React* ran for approximately thirty-five issues between 1990 and 1997; each issue had four pages and they alternated between being an A5 and A4-sized publication. A promoter of independent gigs and a bassist in the band **Not Our World**, McGuirk had previously published the fanzines *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* and *Sketch* in the 1980s. The difficulty in retrospectively investigating retrospective scenes is in dealing with individuals who may change somewhat in the interim; when I met McGuirk for this research, he was in his mid-forties and seemed a very calm and amenable character. When talking to other participants, they were all positive about the influence he had on the scene, and he seemed to be uniformly well liked. Late in 2014,

a video[62] was put online of a November 1989 appearance from **Not Our World** at the Dublin venue McGonagles, a location where many gigs from McGuirk's Hope Promotions[63] were held. The band were supporting American hardcore band **Fugazi** (who were major influences on Irish and international DIY bands and movements). The bands playing no longer exist[64], the venue no longer exists, and I would hazard a guess that many of those in the audience no longer attend hardcore shows some quarter of a century later. However, the video represents an ideal way of depicting the scene at the time. A 21-year-old McGuirk is wearing a Dennis The Menace-style red and black striped jumper, a style that was adopted by other punks (for example, Captain Sensible from **The Damned**); his bandmate has a sticker with the slogan "We Hate Yuppies" emblazoned on his guitar and the music is simultaneously loud, fast, incoherent and discordant. There is no significant barrier between band and audience (in keeping with the DIY style) and in general it seems a fairly rambunctious affair. The tunings are different from more orthodox popular music, and as such, the band are immersing themselves in a form of this "syntactic destabilization" (Graham, 2010). That same aesthetic applies to the fanzines that McGuirk has worked on – taking a medium and destabilising for your own benefit – and this was most evident in *React*.

He saw *React* as an outlet for helping to publicise the various performances that he was organising. This interestingly shows links between music fanzines and some sort of quasi music industry, even if it is very much a cottage industry operating on a do-it-yourself non-profit basis. Nonetheless, like many other freesheets, *React* contained a number of other elements – letters, demo tape reviews, and various bits of news from the scene. The format adopted by McGuirk also influenced fanzine producers in other parts of the country; in Issue 16 of the Cork fanzine *Choc-A-Bloc* (1993), the writer notes that "*Gutter* is Limericks [sic] answer to *React*/*Choc-A-Bloc* and is free and available at…". For McGuirk, key to his preference for the freesheet format was that

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[62] The video can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRaUmU465-g (Accessed 2 April 2015).

[63] A non-profit collective based in Dublin city that promoted independent and all-ages gigs in various venues around the city, and very much espoused DIY ethics in their operations. They were quite influenced by Dischord Records and the 'D.C. Scene'. Hope Promotions started in 1984, disbanded in 1994, and reconvened as the Hope Collective from 1996 to 1999 (Dillon, 2005:24).

[64] **Fugazi** have never formally broken up, instead claiming to be on indefinite hiatus since 2003. Perhaps in an era when numerous bands from the 1980s and 90s have reformed, **Fugazi**'s refusal to announce a cessation is an act of opposition to the PR game that surrounds popular music.

its convenience allowed for a consistency that did not apply to regular fanzine production:

> It was an easy way to get something out… I think I got up to a few thousand copies at one stage…It was a quick format for people to pick up, and it was kind of like a tabloid in a way, as in it's just a quick read, and you don't necessarily hang onto it. But it wasn't written in a tabloid sense – it was four pages, bang it out once a month…the idea of having *React* was to have a more regular thing for sure, and because it was only four pages, it was easier to have it more regular (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

Other fanzines would not generally be published as regimentally as a weekly or monthly freesheet. Chapter Five expands more upon the audiences for these publications, but it is important to note that the freesheet was for many of this study's participants a gateway point into both alternative publishing and a DIY community:

> The thing about *React* was that it was clearly a man doing this out of the pure joy and enthusiasm for music. It wasn't a job obviously; it was a free thing. It wasn't professionally produced. I just thought the spirit of that was brilliant, and I had no knowledge of what a fanzine was prior to that…It was tapping into a local culture that I wouldn't have known about if I hadn't picked it up because *Hot Press* weren't writing about that stuff (Interview, Leagues O'Toole, *Fudge* Fanzine, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

> That's how I got into fanzines when I used to go to Dublin and buy records, buy clothes as well, like imitation "Cons"[Converse trainers] and combat pants and stuff like that! I used to pick up free newsletters – *React* was one of them and *Slanted and Enchanted*…they were originally how I got interested in DIY media (Interview, Trevor Meehan, *Unfit For Consumption*, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

Figure 4.3 is from a four-page Dublin freesheet entitled *Slanted and Enchanted*, a publication that ran over at least thirty-six issues between 1996 and 1998[65]. A somewhat crude breakdown of those figures would imply that *Slanted and Enchanted* was released on a monthly basis during that period of three years, indicating that it was a far more systematic production than most fanzines in that period of time. The content and layout is typical of the freesheet: black and white, a relative lack of imagery, primarily text-based, and featured very short pieces of writing – in one page alone, gig reviews and previews, competitions, reviews of other fanzines, and a mention of a demo tape all feature. Even if it seemed succinct, the writer (Clodagh Murphy) still

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[65] This research has encountered an Issue 36 of *Slanted and Enchanted*, but as the cataloguing/preserving of fanzines in Ireland has been haphazard, there can be no certainty as to exactly how many issues it extended to.

allowed some space for personal writing under the title of "Yokky Stuff" where she detailed the nose-picking habits of a fellow bus commuter.
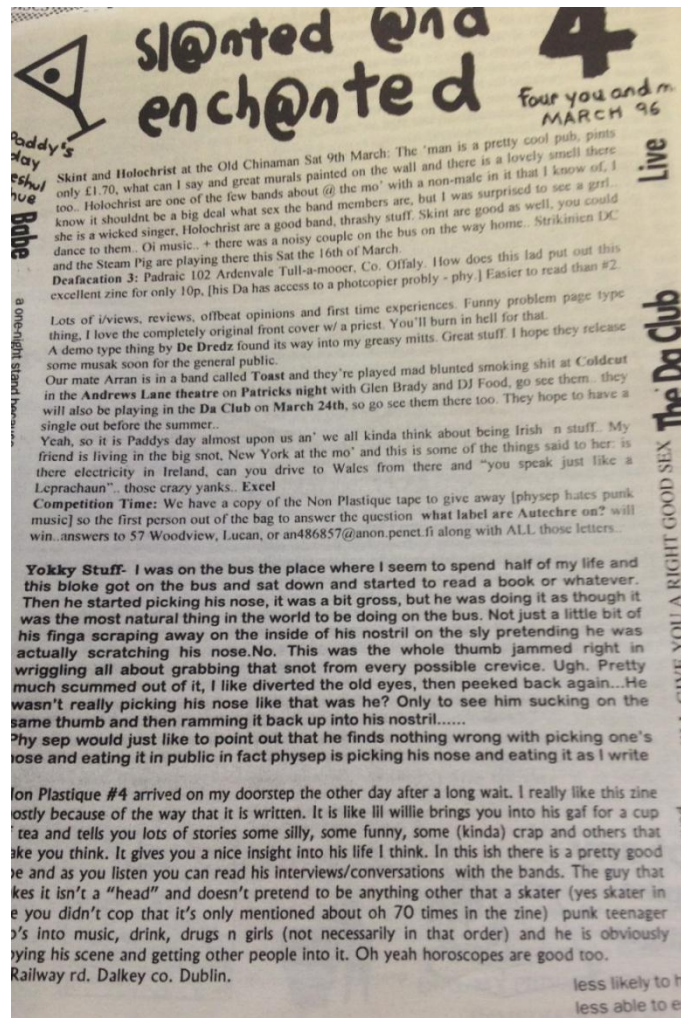
Figure 4.3: *Slanted and Enchanted* **(Issue 4, 1996)**

4.3 "Let It Rain"[66]: The Economics of Alternative Publishing

Regardless of the motivations to produce a fanzine, some level of economic capital is required to publish one. As evident from the front page of the freesheet *Slanted and Enchanted*, a number of factors influence the production of fanzines and help establish – using the term I have borrowed from Peter Hamilton – a "dominant representational paradigm" (1997). Already in this chapter, I have started to examine the significance

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[66] There were two comic strips entitled 'Let It Rain' that were published in the fanzine *Nosebleed* (Issue 1, 1990; Issue 5, 1991).

of technology in the production of fanzines, and its influence on the correlation between both the music and the fan medium in DIY cultures to demonstrate how it contributed to the making of the scene. Just as Hamilton argues that the paradigm concept encapsulates the ways in which the French Humanist photographers clustered together with a shared style and common themes, it may be transposed in order to make sense of how Irish fanzine producers developed a shared set of cultural practices. Hamilton outlines some of the key factors that contributed to the construction of this paradigm, such as economics, technology, and aesthetics, and how this was consumed within a specific temporal context. The same type of examination can be applied to music fanzines, and this will provide a focus for a great deal of the content that follows in this chapter. In this section, I will examine the economic considerations of production. For the humanist photographers and the corresponding magazines that published their works, the costs of production were kept as low as possible so that not only could the savings reduce the cost to the reader but that it would also socially link reader and author. Something similar happens in the production process of fanzines.

Fanzines such as *Slanted and Enchanted* did not require a huge investment from the publisher, which ties in with the original wave of punk fanzines that Hebdige wrote were "produced on a small scale as cheaply as possible" (1979:111). It is important to reaffirm that any class-based construction of the concept of subculture is too stringent to position this community of writers. Music fanzine writers come from different class and social backgrounds, and while prudent expenditure on fanzine production may suggest an overall fiscal paucity amongst fanzine writers, the truth is further from the case. While some fanzine writers encountered during this research wrote while they were unemployed, many others were either musicians, students, or in relatively secure 'middle class' employment; for example, two active writers still publishing fanzines both work as civil servants. Although the writers of fanzines were not necessarily working class, the affordability of the medium meant that it was open to participation from individuals with the most modest means. This technological levelling facilitated democratic engagement, whilst it also served as a tangible symbol of that communitarian spirit.

Regardless of personal wealth or background, being economically savvy is central to the production of fanzines. Many fanzines actually define themselves as not-for-profit;

take the first issue of *The End* (Figure 4.4) released in 1994, where it clearly denotes on the front cover that it is "non-profit" three different times. This determinedly gets the message to readers that despite a 30p charge, the writer will not be making any money other than retrieving his printing costs. This sense that a fanzine writer cannot be seen to be earning money is commonplace amongst Irish fanzines. This message conveys to consumers of fanzines such as *The End* that the author is supposed to be an authentic fan; he is illustrating that he is contributing to the local music community and is not primarily producing a fanzine for personal gain, although there is cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) to be attained through associations with fanzine production. The cover of *The End* also introduces style and thematic motifs that reoccur in Irish fanzines; the mohawked image of the punks and the "Nazi Out" inscription which my analysis found was commonplace in Irish fanzines in the 1990s.
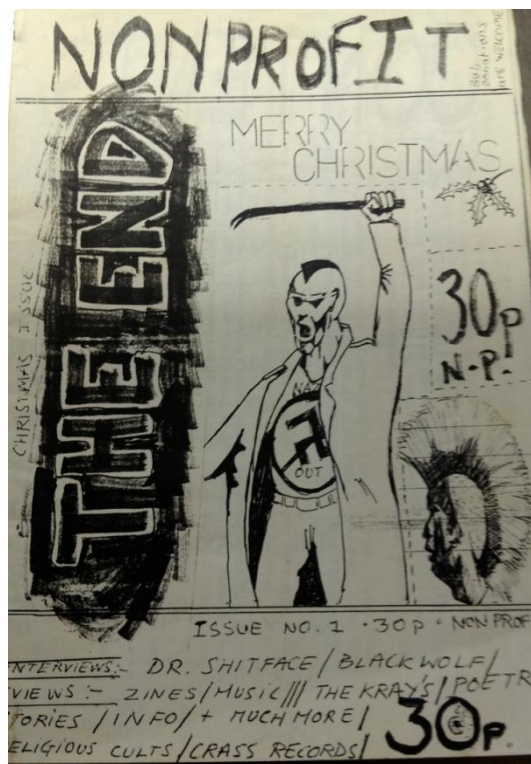
Figure 4.4 *The End* (Issue 1, 1994)

Regardless of whether it is a non-profit publication, a fanzine needs to have low overheads in order to survive beyond the first issue. Fanzine writers tend to distinguish themselves clearly from business people and professional journalists; instead, they are firmly positioned as fans within the scene. Therefore, it is not surprising that more

basic or homemade productions appeared. Trevor Meehan, publisher of *Unfit For Consumption*, adds: "The handiest thing was to keep it as plain as possible for the cover, just because basically I wasn't going to put too much money into it. I just wanted to cover costs" (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

Freesheets were not the only fanzines that were available as free publications, with many Irish music fanzines distributed freely through record shops and at independently-promoted gigs. When there was a charge on a fanzine, there was often an arrangement made by the publisher that they would swap with another fanzine producer or with record labels, shops, or distributors of records or CDs, which again shows this connection to this niche industry of independent music. Additionally, a type of loose bartering network formed between readers and writers of fanzines. The fanzine could be thought of as a loose currency within the community whereby it could be exchanged for entry into a gig or a CD or perhaps some drinks. More often than not however, it was used to acquire other fanzine titles. *Fake* (Issue 3, 1996) has the fanzine priced at "Trade or 50p"; inside, in the opening 'editorial', the writer Richie Egan makes reference to the cost of this edition to the reader: "You may have noticed that you had to pay for this zine this time. Thats [sic] because I dont [sic] want to have to financially cripple myself every time I put one out and also advertising is free. Sorry." It is interesting that Egan felt a need to apologise to his readers for asking for 50 pence for a well-assembled thirty-six page publication that featured a blue card cover. The justification that he needed to recoup the costs of producing the fanzine also hints at reluctance amongst fanzine producers to ask their audience to invest in the title; one could argue that they felt that it created an awkward barrier that distanced them from the scene's communitarian ethos. In this respect, the fanzine writer seemed to occupy a different space from that of the gig promoter or the musicians playing.

It can also be argued that fanzine writers are in a different position to that of other audience members; however, their labour in producing the content could be remunerated with the same level of cultural capital as those producing and performing the music. Nonetheless, conventions of 'gig-going' indicate that it is acceptable for the promoter to be on the door of the venue collecting the money, and it is considered reasonable that the band may want to sell merchandise (CDs, records, t-shirts, etc.) from the stage or a stall. However, if the fanzine writer does not get his/her fanzine to

be part of a merchandise stall, they are trapped in something of a 'No-Man's Land', trying to sell fanzines to individual gig-goers. The unwillingness of some members of the audience to buy a fanzine was quite apparent to Trevor Meehan:

> I remember a gig I went to in Dublin…I basically went around and asked people did they want to buy a fanzine, and it was a punk gig by quite a punk band, **Oi Polloi**[67] I think, and someone actually turned to me and said "what's a fanzine?" so that was a bit of a f**king setback really, but I took it on the chin, and explained to him what a fanzine was but he still didn't buy it but I thought it'd be a lot easier to get one punt [Irish pound] at the time; I thought it'd be a lot easier to get that off people but sometimes it's not… It is nice to just go and have a couple of drinks and enjoy the band and not be looking around for people that might be interested in buying a fanzine and approaching them (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

The below comic (Figure 4.5) clearly illustrates this quandary for the fanzine writer. The comic was written and drawn in 1991 by well-known fanzine-publisher and artist Boz Mugabe who wrote the long running and respected *Nosebleed* (1990-2002). While portrayed here as a humorous cartoon, the struggles of actually selling a fanzine were very real. However, Boz confesses that *Nosebleed* was a publication that did not have any major issues in selling copies, and the strip was "more of a reflection of stereotypes than retail scumbaggery!" (Interview, 13 June 2014). Nonetheless, for many fanzine writers, the distribution and sale of their publications was the most difficult aspect in the process, and this could be for a number of reasons. In some cases, the writing or content was simply not good or original enough – a problem that a respected publication like *Nosebleed* did not have - to entice music fans to part with their money; secondly, many fanzine producers may have felt that seeking financial remuneration for their work may have harmed their credibility within the scene.

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[67] **Oi Polloi** are a longstanding (formed 1981) Scottish anarcho-punk/ "crust" (a subgenre of punk) band.

Figure 4.5: *Nosebleed* **(Issue 5, 1991)**

Richie's editorial in *Fake* also pointed out that he provided advertising for free. Many music fanzines have a trade advertising policy in place, similar to the bartering system utilised to exchange fanzines – record labels, independent record stores, and bands all advertise latest releases and pay for advertisements through CDs, Cassettes, and LPs. Certainly fanzine writers do not want to see their publications to be deemed as commodities in a Marxist sense. Trevor Meehan, who also adhered to the trade system, admits he did not have any formal advertising policy in place:

> I was just happy that someone wanted to send in a few ads and a few records. I actually have it here: "advertisements will be included in exchange for merchandise", so that was the idea, it says it here in the first page. There was no real policy, but I suppose in a way it was by labels that I know the music by that I was going to put in. I don't think there were any major labels as much, so it was labels like Household Name [and] Blackfish Records…basically it was traded off against releases that he [Blackfish] brought out (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

When money is exchanged for advertising it is relatively cheap compared to that of professional magazines. One of the few remaining music fanzines in Ireland is *Riot 77*,

a punk fanzine printed on glossy paper, which as a result of its high production quality has high production costs. *Riot 77* has a print-run of 500 copies, and based on data collected, I would estimate that the average Irish fanzine distributed approximately 200 copies per issue. At a cost of €50 for a full-page advertisement, *Riot 77* has probably as high an advertising rate as one would encounter for an Irish fanzine. In comparison, a full-page advertisement in *Hot Press*[68] costs €4,500, while new additions to the Irish fanzine landscape such as *Hatred Of Music* and *We Play Here* do not contain any advertising. While *Hot Press*' circulation has a far greater reach than *Riot 77*, there is still a major discrepancy between the advertising rates between the two. This is primarily due to the professional nature of one as a magazine and their ability to attract advertising from sources away from the music 'industry'. For Cian Hynes, the publisher of *Riot 77*, it would be inconceivable that he would seek advertising from large corporations, regardless of their relationships with the music:

> I wouldn't advertise a major label I don't think. It's never happened so I have to think about it [laughs]…I wouldn't put something in if I thought it looked out of place. All the ads that are in are to suit the fanzine…I've seen some – I don't want to name any names – some fanzines, Irish ones, recently, they've ads for student accounts from TSB [bank], and they're saying that funds the fanzine so we've had to put it in but I've never had anything like that. It's always been punk-related, or something to do with what I'm talking about (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

This sign of integrity is a selling point of sorts for fanzines, and throughout this research, it is evident that there is an ethos related to fanzines that is anti-commercial. Fanzine producers are deemed to be principled by both musicians and audiences, and while discussing different terrain (folk music), Redhead and Street usefully suggest that such integrity in music communities affords practitioners a "right to speak for a community or people" (1989: 178). As such, the integrity of individuals within the community is a significant contributor to the construction of an authentic voice, and this authenticity allows such a fanzine maker to become a form of tastemaker. Yet, in examples such as the above, there are some contradictions: in issue 16 of *Riot 77* (2013), there is a full-page advertisement for two concerts promoted by MCD Productions. MCD are the largest concert promoters in Ireland, and their high ticket prices, monopolising of international talent and alignment to corporate-sponsored

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[68] As per *Hot Press* rate card accessed at
http://www.hotpress.com/store/files/adm/9/9873/9873270_HP%20Rate%20Card%202013%20A4.pdf
Retrieved 4 March 2014.

music festivals, leaves them frequently at odds with independent music scenes. The writer of *Riot 77* could perhaps provide some justification that the gigs advertised were for niche punk bands that would be of interest to his readership, and thus, he agreed to include the advertisement in more of a participatory sense than a monetary one. Yet, there is a feeling that inclusion of the MCD advertisement has perhaps diminished or diluted the reputation of Hynes's publication. A former fanzine writer, who asked to be unnamed, commented that "that's not punk at all to have that ad in". In fact, the very first issue of *Riot 77* (2000) has a "thank you" list that explicitly says "no thanx what so ever to MCD" at the end of it.

MCD, as a representation of the commercialisation of music, come in for criticism in a number of different fanzines; for example, *Jake's Wrath* (Issue 5, 2001) features a profile piece with **The Redneck Manifesto**, an instrumental Dublin band, which contains the following commentary: "Mervyn also added that they don't have a thing against big companies in general, they just don't like MCD because they treat bands like shit." Later in the interview, the writer notes that she followed up with the band two months later when they played the Witnness[69] festival, which was promoted by MCD, to which they responded:

> We got together and had a debate over whether it would be the right thing to do. We all know about MCD's dodgy business practices and apparent lack of interest in music unless it makes them money…We asked the advice of punks and non-punks we know and we decided that there was this opportunity for us to use MCD to get the whole DIY thing to a bunch of kids from the country who might not know about it.

As with those who write fanzines, credibility is a very important thing for bands involved in the do-it-yourself scene – that is illustrated by **The Redneck Manifesto** taking the time to defend their actions and place it within the position of promoting the DIY community as opposed to developing their own band's career. The large-scale promoters are very much painted as the 'enemy' within the pages of punk and alternative music fanzines.

As the music featured in fanzines becomes more palatable to the mainstream, there is a subsequent opportunity for fanzine producers to generate more revenue. One or two

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[69] A large-scale (approx. 50,000 attendees) festival held at Punchestown Racecourse between 2000 and 2003, before being replaced by the Oxegen Festival.

lucrative advertisement placements probably could offset all the production costs of an issue. Thomas McCarthy, an avid fanzine collector from Kilkenny who wrote a short lived fanzine called *Paranoia Critica* in the mid-1990s, recalls how a growing interest in alternative music led to major labels not just showing an interest in punk bands, but also in punk fanzines:

> There was Epitaph Records[70] and stuff like that trying to jump on the punk scene. Anyone who did a punk fanzine in Ireland at one stage did get a letter from some guy in Sony asking about putting ads in or asking about bands, hoping to find the next big thing...I'd got some letter off this guy but I didn't know what it was. I just laughed at it. The advantage was that fanzines could say what they want, and you can say outrageous things in them, and maybe that was the point of them, especially if you are a teenager. There's going to be no big advertisers that are going to pull out of your little photocopied fanzine so you can say what you want (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

For McCarthy and most fanzine producers, accepting such a proposition from a large record label represented a compromise in terms of their values and also in terms of how their content was written and presented. It solidifies a well-worn discourse in popular culture that punk rock, and by extension punk rock fanzines, need to be oppositional. However, as Burt notes (1998), for musicians and publishers alike, the focus is not always on being 'oppositional, it is more so on being 'alternative'. One of the vital components of being 'alternative', according to Burt, is to be 'independent'. With this in mind, the majority of fanzine publishers in Ireland have tended to have a clear ideological approach to how they deal with systems of finance.
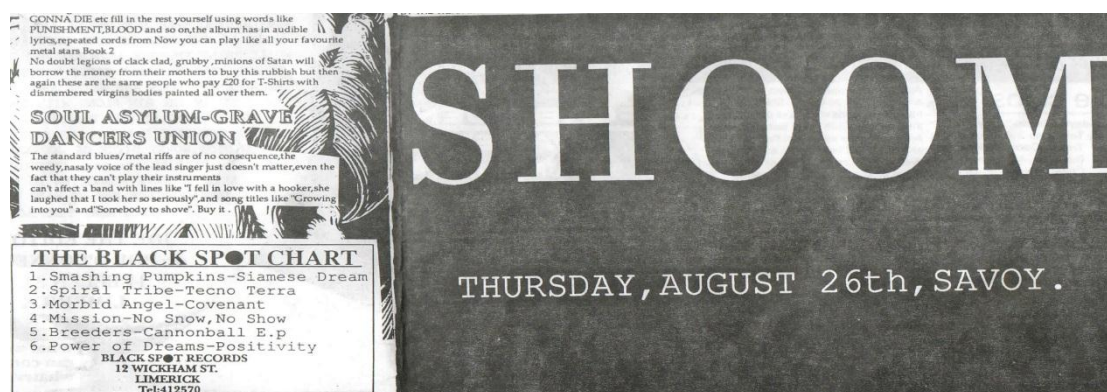
Figure 4.6: *Gutter (Issue 1 - 1993)* **carries advertising for a local independent record store and an independent club in Limerick, Ireland.**

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[70] Epitaph is a highly successful independent record label set up in California in 1980. In the 1990s in particular, they were linked with a number of large punk and pop-punk bands.

4.4 Production Tools and Techniques

> Every code of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its age, and at the same time produces them (Attali, 1985:19).

Economic factors also play a role in what tools are available to the fanzine producer, and the technology at hand has a major bearing on the actual production quality of fanzines. Simultaneously, producers have attempted to use technology to subvert the media they are publishing. Ironically employing out-of-date formats, or by deliberately making a fanzine appear as homemade as possible, has allowed these publishers to overtly or stylistically rebel against the constraints or trends of the mainstream music press. Technology has always had an impact on the production and dissemination of popular music; for instance, Peterson (1990) looks at how the emergence of the '45 single was vital in the spread of rock music[71]. Similarly, there is a link between the increasing access to photocopiers and typewriters in the late 1970s and 1980s that allowed for fanzines to be produced cheaply. Many of those who wrote fanzines in Ireland readily admit that it was the technology that their parents often had access to – whether at home, or at the workplace – that impacted on what kind of a fanzine they could produce:

> The first fanzine I did was called *Non-Plastique*. I started it with my friend Jenny, and we just wrote about films we'd watched, and I think we wrote about the band I was playing in. It was done on her Dad's typewriter, and then I think on a photocopier at her Dad's work (Interview, Willie Stewart, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

Yet, despite the fact that some fanzine publishers had parental support, the demands of dealing with what would now be deemed antiquated technology made it difficult for a budding fanzine writer to compile an edition, as Niall McGuirk explains:

> It's very hard to bring a fanzine out because you might have the enthusiasm and you write everything down and that's good…then you have to type it and lay it out. Nowadays, it's maybe a bit easier if you have the skills in publishing whereas before you were getting your typewriter and your Letraset[72]…even writing it, handwriting it….and then you have to go and get it printed, and you have the find the money to get

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[71] Peterson contends that the arrival of the '45 single allowed for a relatively affordable format for musician and consumer that played a major role in the dawn of rock 'n'roll in the mid-1950s.
[72] While Letraset is actually a company, it is commonly used as a synonym for letter transferring sheets.

it printed and there certainly wasn't as much, or there didn't seem to be as much spare cash (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

> He [McGuirk] would type the reviews on a typewriter, then he would cut out the typed paper and lay it out on a larger sheet of paper with pritt-stick and use Letraset for the headlines. Then he would fold these things in a certain way, like a miniature magazine and bring them into Read's photocopiers in Dublin and then print them off, and then cut them, so it was quite an arduous process to make these things but that's how people made fanzines (Interview, Leagues O'Toole, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

Figure 4.7 shows a page from the Mullingar-based fanzine *Sprawl* – all of the text that appeared in the twenty-four pages of this fanzine was handwritten. Published in 1991, it contains cut and pasted images and various music reviews fitted to the page vertically and horizontally so as to ensure as much content as possible fits on just one page.
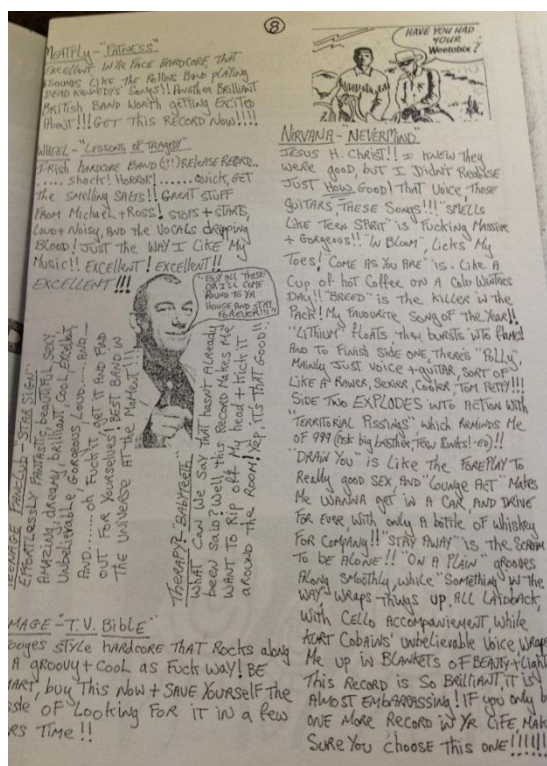
Figure 4.7: *Sprawl* **(Issue 3, 1991)**

Richie Egan of *Fake*, worked on producing his fanzines in the mid-1990s, and like *Sprawl*, he used a variety of tools to compile each issue:

> There was no internet at the time and I didn't have a computer so I made the whole thing on a typewriter, with a scissors and a photocopier. I'd go into Thomas Read's

[Read's Print Shop] with a picture in a book, like Tod Browning[73] films, photocopying them, cutting them out, gluing them. I remember there was a minimize function on the photocopier…It was a really hands-on process (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

However, as the 1990s progressed, more and more fanzine writers started to work with home computers and various software packages:

I remember someone got hold of a Word Processor, which was a step up from a typewriter and being quite excited about that, about the functionality and the easiness of doing it with a Word Processor…it was quite exciting and technical. And then, people having home computers or access to computers in colleges or in their workplaces (Interview, Leagues O'Toole, 6 March 2013).

Working with what was available to you was the *modus operandi* for fanzine publishers (just as it was to the French humanist photographers in Hamilton's (1997) study) but there was also a distinct communal ethos of cooperation, even when the fanzine was a one-person operation. In the editorial of the second issue of *Indeed U R* (1996) the writer thanks a friend who has contributed her time, skills, and available technology to ensure that a typed version of the fanzine was published:

Major thanks to Clodagh without whom you'd be squinting at this page trying desperately to decipher what the hell I've typed, because she has kindly agrees [sic] to be my personal typist. Not a pretty job you understand because it's grossly underpaid et my handwriting can be pretty horrific most of the time.

This is further echoed in issue 11 of *Smegma* (1999), when the writer Angus thanks "Susan in the Socialist Party Centre for scanning the photos and Johanne for access to her word processor." Trevor Meehan's *Unfit For Consumption* first edition appeared around the turn of the 21st Century, but he still felt it was important to keep the design, look, and feel of the fanzine basic:

Black on white was going to be the easiest one when it was going to be photocopied because basically you didn't know what quality photocopying was going to happen for the first issue, so if you had light reds or anything like that in there, they're not going to come out unless the guy is a really good photocopier…It was basically with that in mind, that's why I kept it black-and-white you know. And probably because it does look a bit more DIY and punk as well (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

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[73] Director of cult films such as *Freaks* (1932) and *Dracula* (1931).

Meehan demonstrates here that technological and economic factors influenced how his particular fanzine looked. He may have been in full-time employment when he published his first issue, but that did not mean that he could be flagrant with his disposable income. Fanzine publishing, and in particular the first issue of a new title, gives no guarantee of a recoupment of expenditure. Meehan did not have the technology to hand himself to ensure that he could publish it in colour, and suggests he did not want to be in a position to reprint (and pay for it again) if the copying shop did not have the necessary expertise or equipment to get the job completed satisfactorily. This is a common occurrence for many fanzine publishers who do not have a direct line to copying, and therefore have to place trust in a stranger with no links to DIY culture to print their publications. This provides a logical reasoning for keeping the design and layout as straightforward as possible. Moreover, as Meehan suggests, an added advantage of this approach was that it made the publication appear more credible to the punk community. He had adhered to DIY principles (even if he did not actually do the printing himself) by producing what looks like a homemade fanzine.

A Subversive Production?

It would be remiss to suggest that the availability of certain technologies (such as the copiers available to Meehan) was the only factor in determining the texture of fanzines. Many fanzines have been produced since desktop publishing became more widespread and the costs of decent quality copying have reduced, but some fanzine publishers purposely eschew high quality publications, in a similar way to other members of DIY scenes. As Chapter Seven will suggest, many DIY practitioners still favour analog over digital technologies – in fact, 69% of my ATP Survey (see Chapter Three) respondents noted that their preferred format for listening to music was vinyl records. Physical music releases tend to have more of a fetishistic quality for the music fan, and this behaviour is replicated in the hoarding of old fanzines (see Chapter Five). Irish DIY labels tend to put more emphasis on physically releasing music than on the corresponding digital releases, even though digital releases cost less. Of course, this ignores the fact that such releases are frequently produced in studio or home environments that use digital technologies. Nonetheless, the physical artefact (whether that be a record or a fanzine) is deemed to be a more authentic artefact within the community as it appears to be home-produced. Crucially, these works also provide a

stimulus for interaction in the live environment, where there can be discussions over the artwork of a new record that's for sale or an interview in a fanzine.

Some writers wear it as a badge of honour to produce their fanzine to look as homemade as possible, and thus, a more 'real' fanzine to the scene they were targeting. In the early years of the 21st Century, many fanzine writers were still utilising out-dated techniques: take issue 3 of *Lucidity* (2003) where the writer proclaims "my whole flat is covered in pieces of paper stuck to everything with glue…and believe you me I still believe doing it all cut n' paste is far more fun than doing a computer layout". Figure 4.8 from *No Ego* (Issue 2, 2003) is typical of the bad quality and grainy photocopy style that featured throughout the particular issue. To many of these producers, there is a feeling that they are subverting the mainstream media, the corporations that own the mainstream media, and the corporations (often the same as media owners) that own the technology, thus demonstrating some rejection of the dominant industries. Rather than adhering to standard methods of production, these fanzine makers are actually drawing attention to the act of representation itself. With the mainstream media, the techniques used have become so standardised that the means of production have become somewhat disguised; the message receives more analysis than the mode of communication itself. This will also further discussed in Chapter Seven when I look at new fanzine producers that may be adhering to an 'anti-internet' agenda by producing such works in the current age. It is also important to note that fanzine producers are consciously adhering to an established tradition of subversion; this tradition may be different to mainstream publishing but it is following a pattern that has existed for four decades.
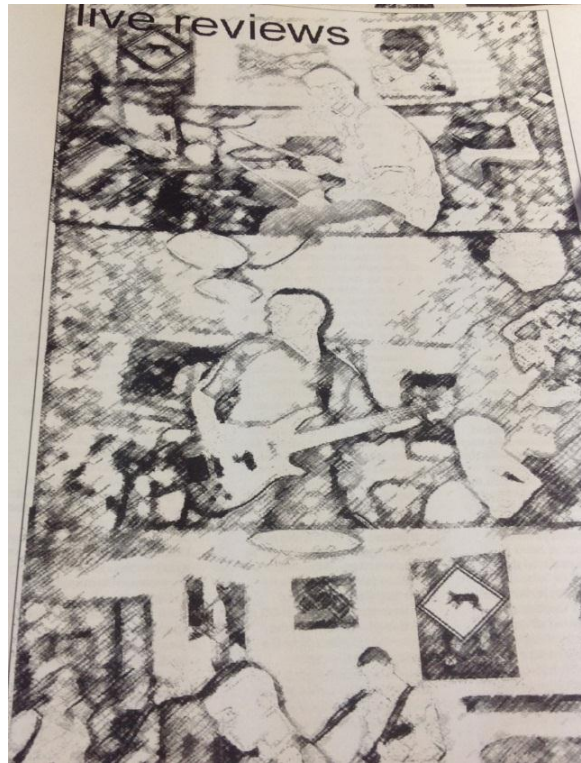
Figure 4.8: *No Ego* **(Issue 2, 2003)**

Attali talks about "a subversive stream of music that has always managed to survive" (1985:13), and this can be easily applied to the genres of music that dominate music fanzines in Ireland such as punk, metal, and hardcore. The very act of producing a fanzine was to fanzine writers such as Niall McGuirk a subversive act:

> I think by their very nature, by their very existence, back in the [19]80s they were subversive because by bringing out a fanzine you are making a statement in itself that you are not relying on the mainstream media to provide you with your entertainment. In that sense they were subversive, and some of the content in them would have been subversive as well (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

In other conversations with Irish fanzine producers, they also felt that fanzine production is subversive by positioning itself as the 'other'. Some fanzine makers make this explicit to their readers: for example, *Global Negation* (Issue 1, year unknown) contains the motto "Subversion of Public Morality" on its front page. However, while there is an element of subverting the mainstream media by producing a fanzine, other factors may suggest that it is not quite as subversive as the writers themselves see it. Fanzines can be made for less political or altruistic motives, as will be explored in the next chapter – the production of fanzines can be a very personal

115

statement, and a public display of fandom. Furthermore, some writers set up fanzines simply because they are bored – bored of their jobs, school, home life, or indeed of mass entertainment. What also needs to be considered is that fanzines adapt to the technologies available as Attali alluded to. Bennett and Peterson (2004:5) assert that the digital revolution of the 1980s crucially impacted on the development of a do-it-yourself music community, in terms of how availability to home recording made producing and releasing music less difficult and less reliant on the 'music industry'. While producers of fanzines such as *No Ego* were indulging in a nostalgic representation of the fanzine, some fanzine producers were striving to produce more legible and professional looking artefacts, and they were using newer technologies to achieve that. Nonetheless, within the Irish DIY music community, fanzine producers have by-and-large resisted the newest technologies – digital platforms – in the production and consumption of their work. By creating increasingly out-dated looking publications, they are finding themselves more and more in opposition to the mainstream, and this gulf allows authenticity to be attributed to the producer within small and localised music scenes.

Sourcing Content

Another factor that needs to be discussed in this conversation is content, and how it was sourced and compiled for fanzines. With the traditional press – particularly in pre-Internet times – information came through a number of sources: press agencies, PR firms, press releases, other media, and industry sources all fed into the content that the mainstream music writer formulated. For fanzine writers, with limited financial backing and a lack of various technological aids such as a fax machine, they often had to improvise. This limited access, however, helped to emphasise their locality too.

The following examples demonstrate the ways Irish fanzine writers communicated with both bands and readers prior to widespread accessibility of the internet. Whereas the email or Skype interview has now made it easier for journalists to conduct interviews with touring artists outside of Ireland, fanzine writers such as Willie Stewart embraced a trend that emerged during the nineties of conducting interviews via the post:

> You would basically write out the questions and post it to the band, and they would send it back. You would leave a gap between each question and every member of the band would write in there…You certainly weren't going to pay for a phone call, and the chances of them touring were pretty zero (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

This type of communication led to some interesting networking that took place between fanzine writers and audiences beyond their readership, as fanzine writer Clodagh Murphy (*Slanted and Enchanted*, *Ideas Is Matches*) explains:

> There was lots of written correspondence back in the day to punks around Ireland and the U.K. Bands would post tapes for review and promoters send flyers for inclusion. My name and address has appeared in publications with a large circulation; this can result in unusual unsolicited mail. In this way I began a correspondence for many years with a punk/anarchist prisoner in the U.S[74]. This was a very rewarding and informative experience (Email Interview, 23 August 2014).

Clodagh shows that there was a randomness attached to the correspondence that fanzine writers received, and it is arguable as to whether that type of communication is replicated in more professional publications. Fanzine writers, especially in an era prior to the ubiquity of the internet, utilised more traditional communicative methods to develop social relationships and networks, and this was something that was actively encouraged[75]. A very different model exists in the mainstream press, where readers communicate in a much more moderated fashion, with letters/emails sent to the publication's editor. The usage of home addresses from fanzine writers exhibits an openness to create dialogue with DIY practitioners both locally and internationally. Crucially, it also places the writer in the position of a fan who actively seeks communication with fellow fans. On paper, at least, it shows that this is not a hierarchical relationship[76].

Furthermore, the majority of the bands that featured in fanzines, because of the scale they operated at, did not have services such as public relations available to them. They may not have been on a label, and certainly not a major label, so rarely had anybody actually writing press releases, organising interviews, or giving advice on what to say

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[74] Letters can be regularly found from inmates in the US fanzine *Maximumrocknroll*. For instance, Issue #358 (2013) featured letters from two different correctional centres in its letters page.
[75] For more on these relationships, refer to Chapter Five where fanzine writer and musician Willie Stewart discusses how he developed friendships through pen pals that he encountered via fanzine texts.
[76] I will argue in Chapter Six that hierarchies can – and do – exist in local fan communities.

or do in interviews. Essentially they were doing all that work themselves, and this contributed to the content of fanzines not having the same polished feel of material that appeared in mainstream music magazines. Instead, reviews and interviews contained some fairly off-the-cuff observations and questions. Sometimes they are humorous such as the interview with Bristol band **Screamer** in *Smegma* (Issue 9, 1996) when they are asked "If "Punk" was a word made up of initials what would the initials "P", "U", "N", "K" stand for?." *Smegma* in particular is littered with bizarre and seemingly not researched questions such as "if you all had to go into an offy right now and spend a tenner what would you buy?" and "what would be your favourite colours to have on an alternating pattern on a stripey jumper?"

4.5 Masculinity on Display

Given the usage of the word 'smegma', it is not altogether surprising that much of the subsequent content of this particular fanzine demonstrates a form of adolescent masculinity, or even a version of what Cross (2008) calls the "boy-man". However, it is important to note that music fanzines are a world removed from the 'laddish' behaviour of 'men's' magazines such as *FHM* or *Loaded*. Idolising or objectifying women is not found in the pages of Irish music fanzines, and there is a general rejection of, or apathy towards the commercialisation that goes hand-in-hand with so-called 'lads mags'. Additionally, the content of punk songs and fanzine texts is rarely sexual in nature. However, similar to how Haenfler (2004a – see Chapter Two) adapted Kimmel's (1996) work to look at a straight edge scene, there is an element of exclusion taking place in what is supposedly an egalitarian community. This is noticeable by the fact that just fourteen (7%) of the fanzines that I encountered during this research featured female writers. Moreover, there is not a great deal of content that explicitly discusses feminism or equal rights for women, in comparison to non-music articles about animal rights, environmental issues, or politics. Even the discussion of Riot Grrrl zines takes up a somewhat juvenile posture as evident in a review that appeared in *Ethos* (Issue 6, 1994), which discusses *Wimmin Zine* (Issue 1) in the 'Zine Review' section:

Dublin's first Riot Grrrl rag. I don't know of any other one so I must believe them. Lists a few books you should read if your [sic] into feminism. A good articel [sic] entitled 'What Is Queer' and the editors views on that topic. They are looking for contributors and their message is 'Nothing that says feminism is stupid and we should be nice to men gets printed'.

From analysing fanzine texts, it seems women have a more passive role in Irish DIY scenes. For instance, in *React* (Issue 10, 1991), Niall McGuirk responds to some criticisms for the booking of a band called **Muff Dive**, a name whose implications he did not previously realise: "Does anyone else feel so strong about this?? There are not very many women involved in, broadly speaking hardcore music – is this part of the reason?"

The fanzine may not explicitly or consciously be a place where the female member of the scene is not invited, but there is an element of an idealised adolescent escape (to use another of Kimmel's (1996) ways of responding to the crisis of masculinity) and 'shedism' (Thorburn, 2002) where men can share their common interests. Football features prominently in many Irish music fanzines (for instance, *Fudge* – Issue 1, 1992), and in the case of *Smegma*, there is a series of 'Cider Drinking Reviews'. In these reviews, the writer gets punk bands to give their opinions on different brands of cider. These reviews exclusively feature all-male bands (see **Stagnation** in Figure 4.9). In the article, the writer notes that he gets "various Dublin punk rock legends in their own lunchtimes to give me their opinions on them"; in these reviews, he is finding that all of these "legends" within the scene are male, thus excluding female members of the scene, and indulging in a form of complicity masculinity (Connell, 1987). Similarly, fanzines such as *Smegma* indulge in 'carnival' (Bakhtin, 1968), with displays that can be seen as in bad taste or offensive. This can also be seen in the caricatures of punks that feature prominently on the covers of Irish fanzines (some of these, such as *Scumbag*, will be explored in more detail later in this chapter. These illustrations are exclusively male; just as the writer of *Smegma* equates punk legends with male musicians, so too do other fanzine writers who tend to portray a masculine punk identity.
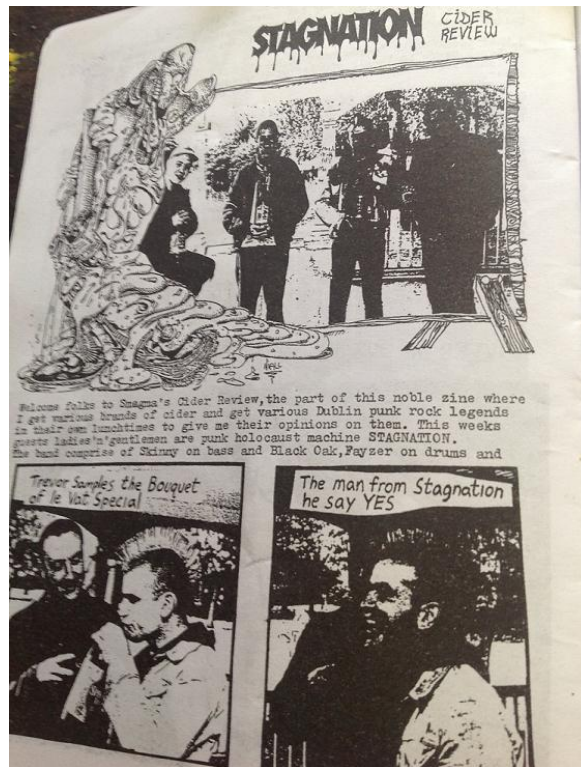
Figure 4.9: Members of the band Stagnation review cider in *Smegma* (Issue 10, 1997)

4.6 Signifiers of Authenticity

> For Lester Bangs, authenticity was tied to fandom, and Bangs was, simply, a fan (Jones & Featherly, 2002: 34).

The renowned music critic Lester Bangs wrote for music fanzines before working for mainstream music magazines in the United States. Prior to the emergence of punk, authenticity was a key signifier in the divide between edgier rock music and pre-packaged pop music (Frith, 1988a: 192). Indeed, as noted in detail in the literature review, authenticity has long been a contested term applied to the study of various different types of music. The homemade style of fanzines can be deemed to be a signifier of authenticity, and dissolves barriers between publisher and reader as it is very much something that anyone can make. Writing a fanzine gives one a degree of sincerity within the community that they are serving, and that production style emphasises that. Leagues O'Toole felt that his work with fanzines in the early nineties would have an impact on his future career as a professional journalist and music booker:

> …that sense of credibility in that people knew you were a fairly genuine fan that was actively involved in stuff and had some idea about what you were talking about and not just one of these people that is attracted to the music industry because of the glamour and doesn't really know anything about music (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

While DIY culture may not have originated in Dublin where O'Toole was active, his experience of the culture was no less authentic than that of someone in Washington, D.C. in the 1980s when straight edge hardcore or alternative music was blossoming. Thomas Turino determines that "cultural cohorts" – people who come together from different communities to experience music and dance at special events and weekends - are equally authentic, in that their habits become part of them and a signifier of authenticity (2008: 159-163). In a similar sense, those contributing to fanzines feel that their fandom and interest in the music is authentic, whether they are at the frontline of an established scene in Dublin, or writing about what is happening when they are geographically or otherwise removed. Take, for example, Liadain O'Driscoll, the writer of *Jake's Wrath*, who wrote the fanzine as a school-attending teenager while living in West Cork. Her forays to live performances and do-it-yourself shows would have been more sporadic than say Niall McGuirk of Hope Promotions and *React* fanzine due to her age, probable lack of access to transport, and the fact that she was located over ninety kilometres away from the nearest city. Yet, she was considered to be a very active member of the 'underground' music scene nationally, because she travelled when she could to gigs in other cities and she wrote extensively about Irish bands; thus, her interest and participation is as authentic as McGuirk's. This idea that age, location, or gender, should have no impact on one's authenticity is backed up by Sabin (1999: 6), who also suggests that there is a "'hipper-than-thou' snobbery" attached to punk music in particular.

This all ties in with the 'do it yourself' or DIY ethos that is central to various music communities: that sense that anybody could pick up an instrument or start a band regardless of education or background that emerged out of punk but was solidified during the early eighties in both the United States and the UK, as noted by Tim Gosling (2004) in his study of labels such as Crass Records, Dischord, and SST. Anto Dillon (*Loserdom*) feels that fanzines and the music go hand-in-hand with this DIY attitude: "There's a famous thing from *Sniffin' Glue* fanzine where "here's three

chords, now start a band"[77], and that's the kind of philosophy of punk and the fanzines. You just sort of dive in and go from there" (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

This sense of authenticity is one of the recurring themes throughout this research. Stephen Averill admits that he was consciously aware when he set up *Raw Power* of what kind of a look that the fanzine needed, based on what he was importing at the time from the UK and the United States. As he explains, the rush to get material out during the early years of punk in Ireland, coupled with a desire to retain credible links to the bourgeoning scene, meant that it was very much in that 'classic' homemade music fanzine style:

> *Raw Power* was hand-lettered and done by hand. It was a very cheap publication, whereas with *Freep*, I was lucky enough to work in a place that I could get a certain amount of typesetting done so it was a little more functional in that sense. Largely it was all done in house; it wasn't a conscious effort to produce something that was graphically very stylish…I think the aesthetic that was around requires that it had that certain do-it-yourself look…It was of the moment, of the feel that we were trying to get across; very instant (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

DIY allowed for fanzine producers internationally and in Ireland to do as they felt, and by using the template of international fanzines like Averill did, it was an empowering experience for young music fans that helped to centre a community of cultural outsiders. Duncombe (2008: 124) summarises:

> Doing it yourself is at once a critique of the dominant mode of passive consumer culture and something far more important: the active creation of an alternative culture. DIY is not just complaining about what is, but actually doing something different.

Leagues O'Toole believes that fanzines stood out from other literature that was available to him as a youth:

> I think it was definitely 100% authentic. The people who contributed to it were generally not professional music writers or music career people. They were people in bands or people who listened to music, who wanted to talk about specific things that they probably felt weren't being covered in mainstream music publications. I think it felt more localised: there wasn't an emphasis on who was bigger or more popular, sold more records or more famous. There was no lead artist…It was about highlighting

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[77] While this quote is regularly attributed to *Sniffin' Glue*, it actually came from a different UK publication - *Sideburns* (Issue 1, 1977).

something that you probably weren't going to find out about elsewhere (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

O'Toole's opinion is valuable here in that he is someone who has exited the DIY scene, and now works for the second largest concert promoter in the country. Furthermore, he has produced content for the mainstream media, even if he himself operated somewhat on the fringes of it: he presented the late-night music television programme *No Disco* and wrote music features for national broadsheets such as *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Examiner*. This distance from the scene allowed him to be quite reflective in our interview, and he intimated that the freedom he had in fanzine writing was never replicated in professional publications. Furthermore, as suggested in the above interview segment, he felt that those involved within the Dublin DIY scene in the 1990s, and particularly those active in the gigs hosted by Hope Promotions, did not have any ulterior motives beyond showcasing local music and music that adhered to DIY ethics.

For the majority of fanzine producers it seemed that in order to be deemed as credible and authentic voices within this community that this would spread to the content and design of the fanzine. Even simple things like location were used by fanzine writers to determine whether or not they should be considered authentic participants within the scene. For example, teenage music fanzine writer Owensie (Michael Owens) half-jokingly remarks in his fanzine *Nag Nag Nag* (Issue 1, 1998) under his address that "yes, I live in D4, but I'm still a double hard bloke", to undermine his affluent address for the punk readership (D4/ Dublin 4 is widely recognised in Ireland as the most elite postcode). Calling himself "a double hard bloke" is an attempt to display that he is an edgy member of the punk community but in doing so, and understandably given his age at the time, he also demonstrates a sense of juvenile machismo.
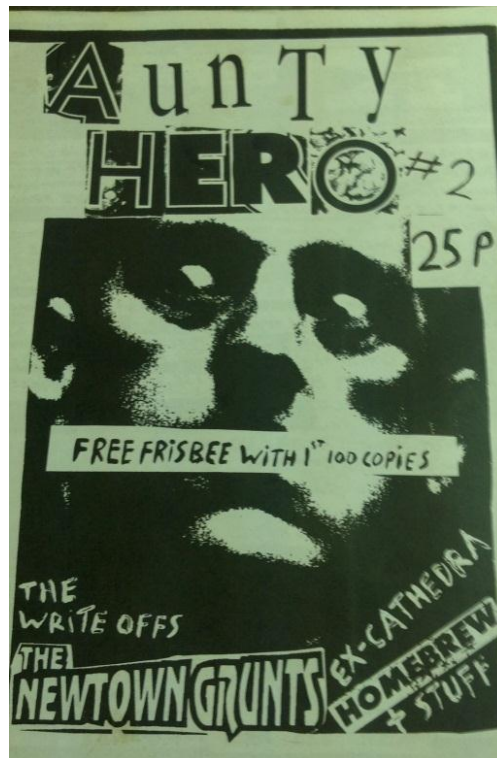
Figure 4.10: *Aunty Hero* **(Issue 2, 1997)**

Visually the authenticity of a fanzine often extended to just how homemade it could look – the further away it looks from a published mainstream magazine, the more authentic it is deemed to be. Take the cover of the fanzine *Aunty Hero* (Figure 4.10): it uses physical cut and paste with lettering, handwriting, photocopying, and there is no sense that the text has been laid out in any kind of meticulous manner. Inside the cover, the writer proclaims "punk is for life, not just for Christmas." While, at face value, punk music fanzines such as *Aunty Hero* may look like piecemeal publications that are produced with little thought or care, I would strongly disagree with this assertion; instead, a great degree of patience and time goes into fanzine production, and the fanzine producers clearly intend to produce such arbitrary artefacts. Certainly, the availability of technology plays a part in the look and aesthetics of the publication, but there is a purposeful move from fanzine writers to make these texts look as homemade as possible. The front page of *Aunty Hero* is a highly composed image, and the usage of collage is certainly not something invented by the fanzine movement; it can be found in the work of the Berlin Dadaist John Heartfield and other members of the Dada movement. For instance, Kurt Schwitters's assemblages invited the usage of everyday materials, a practice that "crossed the traditional boundaries of fine art and

applied graphics" (Hill, 2009: 14). It is unsurprising that this type of outlook made Dada and punk likely bedfellows; as Marcus (2011: 186) puts it, "the formal dada theory that art could be made out of anything matched the formal punk theory that anyone could make art". Fanzine design such as that visible in the cover of *Aunty Hero* is illustrative (regardless of whether the writers of contemporary fanzines are aware of this lineage)[78] of the links between the Dada movement and punk (see Savage, 1991) and how a designed collage as such can be seen as a rejection of mainstream publishing techniques. This inherited style helps to explain how the physical look of punk fanzines has changed minimally over the past four decades. Figure 4.11 shows various Irish publications from 1990 to 2010. If one examines the cover of *Nonesuch* (Issue 1, 1991) and *Night of The Locust* (middle-left of photograph, Issue 4, 2008), one will find little difference in the style of the production.

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[78] This research found an Irish fanzine Scrawl (Issue 3, 2001) that actually featured an article about John Heartfield, entitled 'A Revolution in Words and Pictures – The Life and Work of John Heartfield'. This demonstrates that for some members of the punk community, there was an actual conscious awareness of the Dada tradition.

Figure 4.11: Various Irish Fanzines Published Between 1990 and 2010

Producing homemade texts generally means that the fanzine producer is avoiding fashionable trends. Sarah Thornton, in her examination of club culture in the UK, looks at the cultural hierarchies that are formed within taste communities. One of the criteria she pinpoints is the "authentic" versus the "phoney" (1995: 3). At any grassroots level, similar to the rave scene that Thornton explored, authenticity is seen as a key value, and a major contributor towards one establishing capital within their community. Likewise, Fiske notes the relationship between authenticity and cultural capital, "particularly when validated as the production of an artistic individual (writer, painter, performer)" (1992: 36). While 'capital' is more of a central concept for discussion in Chapter Five, it is important to note that Thornton suggests that "underground sounds and styles are 'authentic' and pitted against the mass-produced and mass-consumed" (1995: 117). They may well connote authenticity but that is not a guarantee that they are 'authentic' as they may be appropriated by others.

Former fanzine writer Trevor Meehan criticizes an Irish punk fanzine *Riot 77*, which he believes to be more of a magazine due to its glossy pages. This sense of authenticity was not just related to the physical fabric of the fanzine; this extended to the content featured in it too. Meehan furthermore felt that because *Riot 77* featured material from larger punk labels and not enough Irish content that it seemed more like a magazine to him. Cian Hynes who writes *Riot 77* admits that he drew criticism from some readers for turning to glossy print, but that he had his aesthetic and economic reasons for doing this:

> I went down to the printers one day…Issue 3 was done by a printer but it was matte paper. When I went back to do Issue 4, he said "what paper do you want it on?"; I said "is there a price difference?"; he said "no". I was using a lot of my own photographs then as well so I felt that the photographs were going to come out a lot better on a better quality print job so that was the only reason. If it cost any more, I'd go back to matte you know (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).
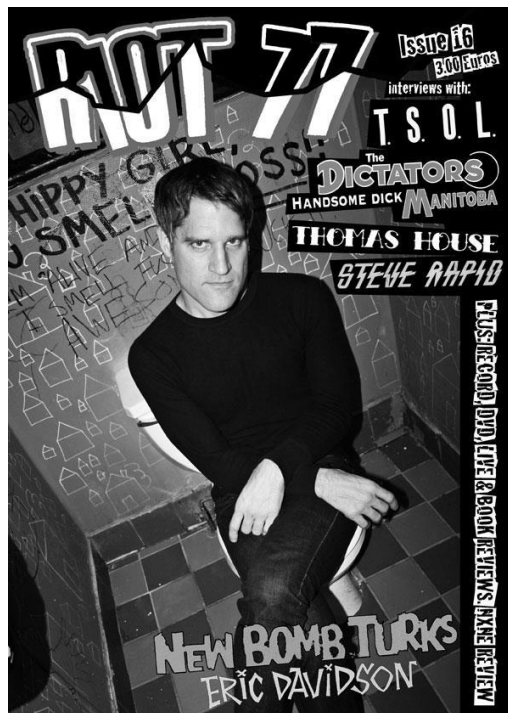
Figure 4.12: *Riot 77* (Issue 16, 2013)

Additionally, Ed Hannon in an edition of *The Devil On 45* (Issue 3, 2007) tells his readers in the introduction that he has start utilising newer software to design his fanzine:

> This is the first issue I have laid out not in the usual cut paste style I've used in zines throughout the years instead opting to use publisher, although this may be viewed as

being less 'real' by some people I do think it brings a whole new dimension to the zine.

Hannon was the same writer who produced the fanzine *Lucidity*, which was referred to in section 4.4; that issue of *Lucidity* was published just four years previously to the above extract from *The Devil On 45*, and in it, Hannon has extolled the virtues of a more traditional and handmade method of fanzine production. It is clear from the above comment in *The Devil On 45* that he understands the significance of fanzines having a DIY appearance, and that he needs to rationalise his decision to move to a more contemporary approach to publishing. The idea of being 'real' is central to the concept of authenticity. Just as the respondents in Fox's study (2004) of working-class country music aficionados were able to distinguish 'real country', those in alternative music cultures place value on participants' genuine interest in adhering to the ethics of DIY. Within those practices come the aesthetic values that Schloss argues (2004) are so important in small music communities. Hannon is careful to explain to his readers that he has made this design change, and his logic for doing so, while simultaneously gaining some level of trust from his readers for being upfront about the switch to digital production. As shown from both the discussions with Hynes and the writing of Hannon, fanzine writers have an awareness of the discourses of authenticity that take place within the community, and are keen to protect their position in that community.

Some fanzine writers feel it is important to go to an effort to make their fanzine stand out from other literature, and this can sometimes happen in the design and layout process. In some of its more recent issues, *Loserdom* has utilised screen-printing for the covers, and always features a meticulous binding that has been done by hand[79]. The time spent on the 'hands-on' elements of production can limit the amount of copies distributed, as Anto Dillon explains:

> Even though I really enjoyed making it and all the rest, it was quite a laborious task with the way I have the binding so I hadn't managed to do as many as the previous issue, even though the previous issue had a screen printed cover. The previous issue was about 400 [copies], whereas this issue was probably about 200 or something…I wouldn't necessarily judge a fanzine on that – if it's a good fanzine, it's a good fanzine. It's a nice touch I suppose and it's something we like to do but a lot of good fanzines are just photocopied and stapled. It does create a lot more work though which

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[79] Loserdomzine.com features two short videos of their production process.

in a way can be detrimental to continuing with it because there's always so much to do (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

It is noteworthy that Dillon does not see a correlation between the effort that goes into a fanzine (see more on fanzine labour in Chapter Six) and its overall quality. In fact, he suggests that spending *too* much time on the production of a fanzine can lead to one ceasing to continuing with the publication, which partially explains why so many fanzines never make it past a first issue. Also interesting is that he posits that a "photocopied and stapled" fanzine can be just as good as the one that he, by his own admission, has painstakingly put together, as long as it observes the accepted practices of DIY production.

Figure 4.13: *Loserdom* (Issue 21, 2010)

Similarly to *Loserdom*, many fanzine writers incorporate conventional publishing styles to create something completely unique. Hebdige (1979) utilises *bricolage* to describe how the punks of the late 1970s appropriated and tinkered with mainstream style. To an extent, this has continued through how fanzine production subverts

techniques, typefaces and design used by the traditional culture industries. Take, for example, the cover from *The Sun, The Moon, And The Starz* (Figure 4.14), a 1980s Irish anarcho-punk fanzine: it uses the printed form of publication, as does the mainstream media, but it takes the mastheads from two prominent tabloid newspapers *The Sun* and *The Star*, along with material cut and pasted from newspaper headlines to create a publication far removed from the corporate viewpoint of the mass media. Instead, what we get is a clear manifestation of personal expression and an attack on the ethics and style of conglomerate-owned media, and a questioning of the political system.
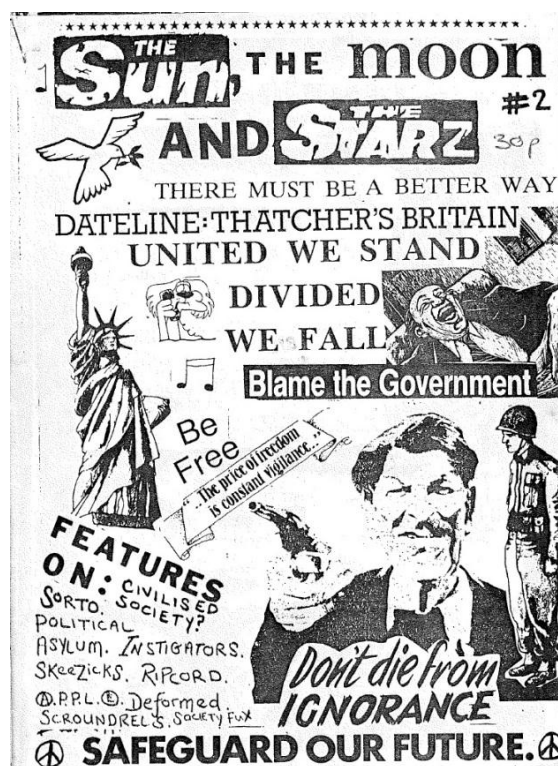
Figure 4.14: *The Sun, The Moon and The Starz* **(Issue 2, 1987)**

The cover of this particular fanzine shows that there were Irish fanzines that were in some way politicised during the 1980s, even if such fanzines primarily covered music. The features listed on the left of the cover are primarily related to international bands (**Skeezicks** from Germany, **Sorto** from Finland, **Ripcord** and **Instigators** from England) but none of the imagery relates directly to these bands. This quite deliberately removes the idea of stardom from the publication – no one musical act is deemed to be more important than the other. Instead, the author of *The*

Sun, The Moon and The Starz demonstrates a politicisation influenced by international fanzines. While the UK in particular had a strong lineage of anarchist publications and zines, the same did not apply to alternative publishing in Ireland. Nonetheless, *The Sun, The Moon and The Starz* displays a leftist view on world affairs at a time when Reagan was in power (see image with gun) and there were particular worries over nuclear arms, evident in the CND symbol and the "Safeguard our Future" slogan. Conservative politicians (Thatcher and Reagan) were in power in the two countries that were the most culturally influential on Irish music making and consumption. This cover sets out to destabilize such a political climate, with lampooning of political mantras. For example, by the statue of liberty a banner reads "The Price of Freedom is Constant Vigilance", echoing the quote "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" (commonly attributed to Thomas Jefferson), while the motto "United We Stand, Divided We Fail" has been utilised by groups ranging from the US Military (during World War II) to loyalists in Northern Ireland. While it may appear that this cover is produced haphazardly, everything placed on this cover is quite measured.

Atton refers to an "anti-design" (2010: 518) ethos that he sees as central to punk rock fanzines, and as a contributor to an aura of authenticity surrounding them. While Atton is correct in suggesting that fanzines adopt a design method that may not have the nuances of professional graphic design, I would disagree with the usage of the term 'anti' as it indicates that there is nothing deliberate about the approach taken, and that there is abhorrence towards the act of design. Instead, these are carefully constructed collages, where every individual segment has significance. As such, it bears similarities to what fellow Dadaist Hans Richter noted about Kurt Schwitters: "there was no talk of the 'death of art', or 'non-art', or 'anti-art' with him" (1997: 138). I contend that fanzine layouts are every bit as planned and designed as that of any other publication. It is not surprising that many Irish music fanzine producers have also have expertise in art and design; for instance, Boz Mugabe of *Nosebleed* is renowned for his artwork which was a central feature of the covers of his publication.

Of course not all fanzines followed design methods like the covers of *Aunty Hero* or *The Sun, The Moon, and The Starz*. In his research on progressive rock fanzines, Atton (2001a) found that the publishers of these fanzines would move away from

photocopying and towards colour printing and a professional layout as soon as they had raised enough money from sales. Interestingly as you move away from the hardcore and punk dominated music fanzines in Ireland, a few interesting examples materialize of publications not engrossed in this way of design. The Dublin-based dance/electronica A5 fanzine *Anorak* (c.2002 – 2005) was very much a glossy publication (though in black and white), with a professional layout and contributions from columnists whose work had featured in mainstream music magazines such as *Hot Press*. In Galway, Keith Wallace compiled the fanzine *Notes From The End of the Underground* along with a number of friends in the early 2000s. The acts featured included Americana artist **Papa M** and Canadian post-rock outfit **Godspeed! You Black Emperor**. The cover of the fanzine was on soft blue paper, visually indicating that it was removed from the cut and paste nature of the hardcore/punk fanzine. Yet, *Notes From The Underground* and *Anorak,* which is clearly aimed at a different community, seem to be an anomaly; the majority of Irish music fanzines followed a DIY template utilised internationally. Fanzines, with pages stapled together and featuring grammatical and design imperfections, seem more naturalistic to the reader; essentially, they feel like something that the reader could have put together themselves, and thus, it feels representative of them and their community. It can be argued that the readers of magazines such as *Paris Match*, even though they were professional publications, found a similar connection to the photographs of the French Humanist photographers. While the magazine was professional, the photographs were representational by depicting everyday life and ordinary subjects (Hamilton, 1997). As Finnegan argues, when we study the practices of everyday life "the main focus is not on the cultural industries … [but instead] cases more likely to be within direct personal experience (1997: 114). For those viewing these French magazines, they are looking at how they can relate to the depictions within them. Like this photography, the fanzine is a result of different societal elements converging: technology, aesthetics, economy, and cultural identification.

4.7 Visual Components of Irish Fanzines

This DIY paradigm is very much solidified by how fanzines visually represent the community. From the sample of fanzines that I have analysed in this study, ripped and

torn punk rock-style imagery is the primary visual aesthetic that has dominated music fanzines for over thirty-five years in Ireland. Writers use what design skills they have to hand, rarely seeking external expertise, and these skills range, depending on their own artistic background. Generally speaking, the fanzine producer will put most artistic effort into the cover page, as it is the starting point for any potential reader. A semiotic analysis of fanzine covers in Ireland indicates an inclination of fanzine publishers to use imagery that signifies a challenging of the establishment. Figure 4.15 is taken from Cork fanzine *Squashed Apple*, and contains the caption 'And The Beat Goes On', accompanying a rather grainy, not quite decipherable photograph of police clashing with protestors. The caption is a gentle play on music terminology ('beats'), and the cover represents a subtle resistance to the dominant institutions that is portrayed in music fanzine texts and replicated in the music itself. In his subsequent editorial, the writer takes a more explicit political tone:

> As for the political stuff, well some of it is there to show you that fighting the system can be fun, as whether we like to realise it or not it's part of our everyday lives and if the bosses, the law, and politicians haven't been at you already they will unless of course your [sic] in deeper part of their elite group already.

Figure 4.15: *Squashed Apple* **(Issue 1, early 1990s)**

Photography also plays a significant role in the production of fanzines. Some fanzines just utilise photographs cut and pasted from other magazines or mainstream media, while some do not use any. When original photographs do appear, the quality of reproduction sometimes makes them incomprehensible (as in the case with the *Squashed Apple* cover); however, there are occasions when the writer has taken photographs themselves that are quite legible, and there is a marked difference between them and professional photography. The two examples below from *No Barcodes Necessary* and *This Friggin' Thing* display a sense of ordinariness in the photography, and furthermore, they showcase the fanzine writer's surrounds – the audience. While technically they may not be of a high standard, photographs such as these two are clearly taken from the audience viewpoint and thus signify the live setting as experienced by a fan. The photograph from *No Barcodes Necessary* is a particularly good example as you can see another audience member taking a photograph from a different angle at the exact same time. Benjamin (1934) feels that the writer has a role to play in the production process aside from just being the author, and this can be seen in fanzines where the writers take on the role of photographer to document this lived experience. Benjamin argues that:

> What we should demand from photography is the capacity of giving a print a caption which would tear it away from fashionable clichés and give it a revolutionary usevalue. But we will pose this demand with the greatest insistence if we – writers – take up photography (1934: 5).

By capturing the relatively ordinary rituals that take place at live gigs, without much regard for the technical rules of photography, some fanzine producers add to the originality of their works, creating a unique artefact. It may not be as politicised as Benjamin posits, but it does show an active engagement with the medium. Of course, not all fanzine writers feature their own photographs – instead, they invite submissions from readers or casually reproduce photographs from other fanzines and publications.

Figure 4.16: Images from *No Barcodes Necessary* (Issue 5, 1997) and *This Friggin' Thing* (Issue 3, 2004).

Photography that is of this quality is also a signifier of the punk context of the publication for a number of reasons: it is clearly not a professional image and the reproduction is quite poor. It does not adhere to artistic conventions; and the work is spontaneous with none of the participants posing for the camera or perhaps even aware that there is a camera in the audience.

This discourse is further communicated through other non-verbal methods. Abrasive imagery and drawings are used to depict the punks, and many covers are not particularly inviting to a wider audience, even if they are designed more as an in-joke within the music scene they are targeting. The 'punk' - complete with his (and it generally is a 'he' on the front page of fanzines) spiked or mohawked hair, body piercings, and a confrontational non-smiling appearance – is portrayed in a fairly threatening way towards mainstream society. This menacing tone is further emphasised by the usage by many fanzines of cut-up letters to form words in the way that ransom notes are formulated. The message is clear – if somewhat tongue-in-cheek - from the fanzine writers: they are not to be messed with. In *Scumbag* (Figure 4.17), a slightly grotesque caricature figure is pencil drawn with his middle finger extended (a feature in other fanzines also), and with a muscle-toned torso on display. Even the name 'scumbag' elicits a confrontational attitude; visually, the writer is warning off potential suitors without any insider knowledge that they should beware of the content contained within. For those 'in the know', the cover of *Scumbag* is not read in the same intimidating manner. The buyer of the fanzine may readily identify with the tone

135

of the artwork and their purchasing of the publication communicates something about them to both those within and outside of the music community: by reading this publication on a bus, at college, or in their workplace, they are indicating to others that they are associated with the punk scene. For those who were attending gigs at venues such as The Old Chinaman , and were purchasing and trading records and fanzines with Mero (of *Rejected* fanzine and Rejected Records), they could easily identify with the punk on the cover, and crucially had the necessary insidership to understand that there was also a humorous tone to the cover.
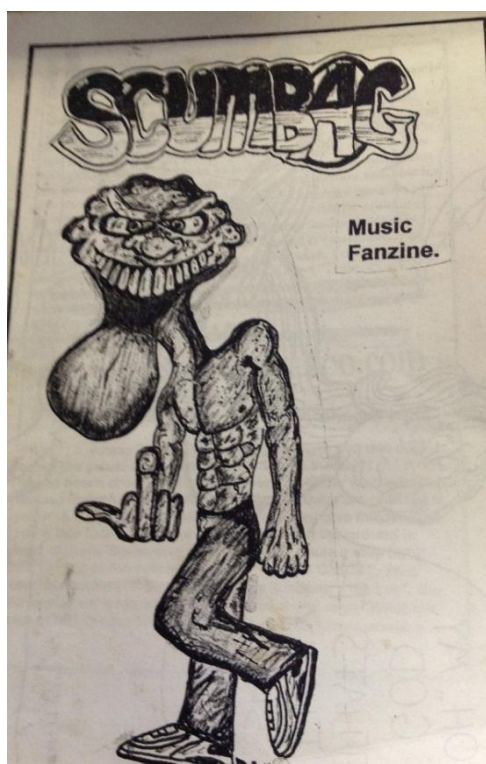
Figure 4.17: *Scumbag* (Issue Unknown, 1997)

Other imagery frequently appears across the pages of Irish music fanzines. Following international trends (Triggs, 2006), fanzines co-opt styles of mass media images and typesets as demonstrated in the previously discussed cover from the *The Sun, The Moon, And The Starz*. In issue 9 of *Analogue Bubblebath* (c.1998/99), various television celebrities are on the cover with headlines such as "Pimp: Serial Killer" and "Porn Queen" posted below them from popular media outlets. On other occasions these images are subverted as with the case of *Puppet Patrol* (Issue 1, 1991) where the McDonalds logo is changed with a variety of other names on it such as McDeadly, McHunger, McDollars, etc., all featuring in an article that is anti-McDonalds.

McDonalds, EMI[80], and Burger King are amongst large corporations that frequently receive abuse in fanzines that mix music with anti-capitalist commentary, with an issue of *Industrial Weed* (1995) carrying what looks like a half-page ad that simply states: "Only stupid bastards help EMI". The comic strip – a regular addition to music fanzines – from the second issue *of Bumcheek* (1991) also takes a swipe at the corporate world, albeit in a more colourful fashion, which is hardly surprising considering the same fanzine features a picture of showband crooner Dickie Rock alongside a piece on animal cruelty, and a somewhat self-effacing tagline on the front page of "…and you thought #1 was bad."
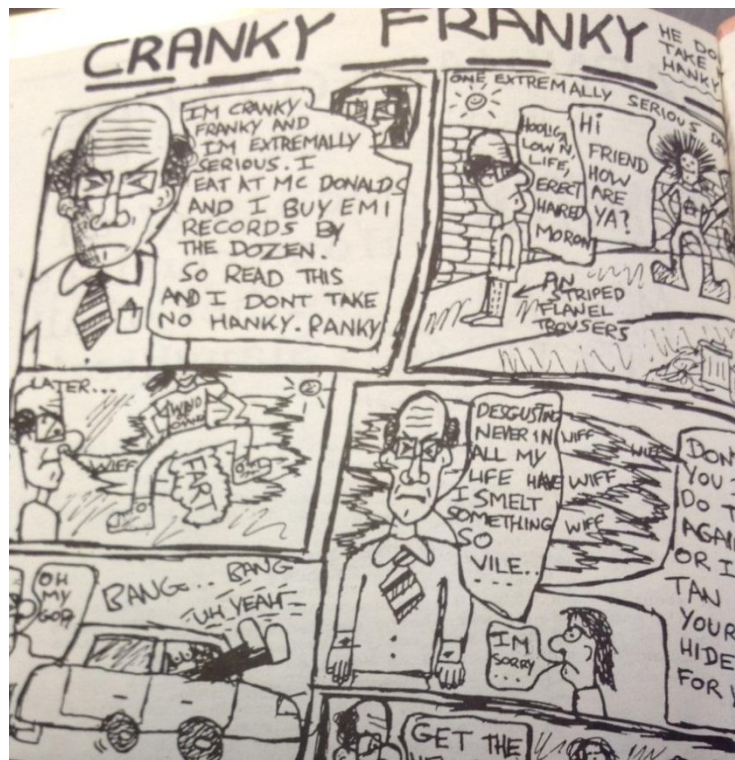
Figure 4.18: *Bumcheek* **(Issue 2, 1991)**

Other publications take a more sombre tone when it comes to dealing with political and capitalist concerns, like the way they are treated by Belfast-based fanzine *Scrawl*. While it declared itself as a "DIY/hardcore/punk bulletin", *Scrawl'*s powerfully illustrated covers touch on issues such as nuclear power, wars fought supposedly in the name of religion, asylum seekers, and imprisonment. Other fanzines take less blatant

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[80] Major record labels such as EMI and Sony were regular targets in music fanzines, as they represented mass culture and the commercialization of music to those fanzine producers. The 1980s saw a much-used slogan in anarcho-punk circles that stated "DIY not EMI", and compilation album was released in the UK entitled *Fuck EMI* (Rugger Bugger Records, 1989).

measures in announcing their political base: the anarchy 'A' symbol appears on the pages of numerous publications such as *Gutter*, *React*, *With Harmful Intent*, and many others, while repetitive usage of dollar signs ironically in publications like *Back2Front* (Issue 5, 2009) is used as a denouncement of capitalism.

However, not all non-verbal marks and portraits were in fanzines to stir up political angst; quite a bit of the time illustrations were there to showcase creativity and to provide an amusing antidote to the potentially too-serious-for its-own-good nature of punk-rock. A perfect case study of this is the cartoons drawn and written by Eugene Dillon for the *Loserdom* fanzine, which inevitably features cycling and the DIY music community in Dublin. Perhaps the greatest culmination of this was a piece based on numerous bands from all around Ireland competing in a "punk's cycle" from Dublin to Wicklow. One of the bands that featured in the cycling race was **Ten Past Seven**, whose member Rory O'Brien was approached by Eugene to purchase a copy:

> I remember Eugene stopping me on the street one day and saying 'oh I got the new zine. I didn't know that you cycled because you're in this bicycle race in my head that's a story in the zine' (Cork Focus Group, 22 January 2014).

Dillon's imaginary cycle race had injected a sense of fun into the fanzine. It also helped provide an outlet for his illustration skills, in a similar way that *Nosebleed* provided a platform for artist and musician Boz Mugabe. One of the reasons why *Nosebleed* was so revered was because of most its artwork. When *Nosebleed* switched from black and white to colour in the late 1990s, the detail and colourfulness of his work was even more evident as exemplified in Figure 4.19. Despite the obvious quality of the colour illustrations, Boz had some concerns about switching to colour:

> The zine had been around for nine years at that point and it was my way of doing something new, and availing of illicit access to colour copiers. I'm not sure, in retrospect that the colour cover idea was part of the overall spirit of *Nosebleed,* but media had changed rapidly. Maybe it was a way of finding out where the title fit into a world where information was now instant, and you didn't have to wait six months to read a band interview (Email Interview, 13 June 2014).

The fact that Boz has retrospective concerns as to whether or not moving to a colour cover was in the spirit of the DIY community is yet another signifier of how authenticity was linked to the design aesthetic of a fanzine. There is almost a fixed

code to this aesthetic – black and white, amateur appearance, edgy font selection, photocopied, and without emphasis on one particular 'star' - and that code is tinged in nostalgia.
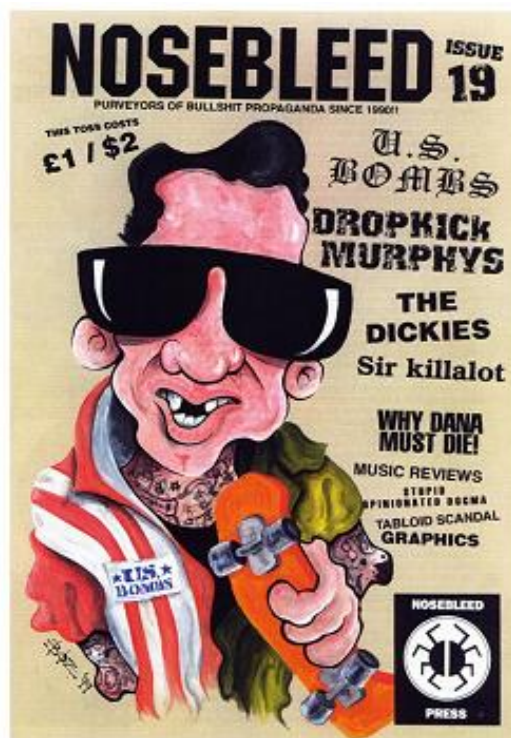
Figure 4.19: *Nosebleed* **(Issue 19, 1999)**

Every aspect of the design process ties in with this, even the fonts selected. As Triggs adds: "the manner in which the graphic marks, visual elements and their layout were presented reflected not only the message, but also by default the individual hand of the fanzine producer" (2010: 46). This could be seen particularly with earlier punk rock fanzines that were often handwritten. It gives each individual fanzine the 'aura' of a limited edition, produced and written in a style that cannot be replicated. This uniqueness can even be found in fanzines typed on typewriters, where, in some cases, particular letters can leave particular marks on the page. The type of handwriting can also be an indicator of the style of music contained within; for instance, the below article from *PVC* (*Paranoid Visions Continued*) uses pen to write the headline for the article in an angled capital letter styled, visually expressing the angst contained within the interview that followed, and also in a typeface employed in the logos of punk bands, reflecting a common ethos. The article feels at times simultaneously personal

and improvised. The moody expression of the band – complete with facial piercings and spiked hair – is complimented by the ruggedness of the writer's handwriting.

Figure 4.20: *PVC* **(Issue 1, Year Unknown)**

Newer fanzines generally embraced using the PC. This, of course, allowed an ease of use, where errors did not have to be corrected by either using tippex or simply crossing out material with a pen which had, until then, been signifiers of amateur production. However, when a fanzine uses a programme like Microsoft Word or Publisher, font selection becomes very important, and still acts as a way of individualising the text like handwritten fanzines do. In some cases, the font size is quite small so as to ensure as much content as possible is fitted onto the page. Small text not only reduces printing costs, but also environmentally speaking, plays up on the 'right-on' image of DIY ethics. Indeed, in one issue of *Loserdom* (Issue 23, 2013), the Zine Reviews section notes in a review of *Non-Plastique*: "I do have one or two small criticisms of this issue – primarily that the printing is only on one side of each page – what a waste of paper!" With fanzines, fans rather than industry dictate the style. With this in mind, the font types used are often markedly different from those in mainstream magazines and newspapers. For computer-generated fanzines, there is an element of what Mealing

(2003: 43) terms VAT, or 'Value-Added Text': this essentially is how font or style - such as using block capitals to emphasise your message, or excessive usage of punctuation or exclamation marks - can play a major role in delivering, or reinforcing, your typographic message. As he notes, it makes up for some of the message that is lost when there is no face-to-face verbal communication. In a review of an album from American band **Pig Destroyer** in *The Grip Ethic* (2002), the writer emphasises that the band are a grindcore[81]outfit by referring to the album as "this slab of griiinnnnnnnddddddd!!!!!!!!".

Pig Destroyer
Prowler in the Yard

Ah, there's nothing like a fine wine to pleasure the palate or something like that. Unfortunately my camomile tea went all over my lap as I lunged for my Bach's Rescue Remedy™ about 4 tracks into this slab of griiinnnnnnnddddddd!!!!!!!! What can I say, my life is ruined, most of my grind CD's are now redundant, survivors exist for reasons of nostalgia. There's blokes from Agoraphobic Nosebleed and ex Discordance Axis guys here, if you have ever heard those bands (I haven't) that's supposed to be the reason this is so good. I think it might be because of the super production allied to amazing songs. Jennifer had it rough though so take easy on her if you meet her. Leo

Figure 4.21: Reviews section of *The Grip Ethic* (Issue 1, 2002)

4.8 Language & Writing Style

The homemade and non-edited style of fanzines ensured a certain edginess about fanzine production, and spelling and grammatical mistakes were aplenty. Triggs points to the UK instigator *Sniffin' Glue* (2006: 72) where grammatical errors would simply

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[81] Grindcore is a genre of music that is influenced by thrash metal and hardcore, and one of what Shuker terms as "heavy metal's most transgressive genres" (2012: 120).

be crossed out which further signified the immediacy of the text. Writers were putting their words down as they came to them, and they did not have a premeditated sense that what they were working on was a newspaper or magazine article. At the same time, they also did not possess the professional know-how to write and layout an article in a similar manner to a magazine, and furthermore, they did not have the pool of resources that professional publications had in terms of staff that could proof, spell-check and edit material.

For some fanzine writers, putting together a fanzine was almost a reaction to literacy issues they had themselves. For instance, Thomas McCarthy, who was a fan of *Rejected,* explains what appealed to him about it:

> It used to be his handwriting or typed out on a crappy typewriter. [*Rejected* author] Mero is dyslexic so there'd be all kinds of spelling mistakes. Someone said that's much more in the spirit of *Sniffin' Glue*, fanzines like that; just lash it out (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

Mero's dyslexia is evident throughout copies of *Rejected* – in issue 16 (1996), he talks about "magor lables" – but he wears it as a badge of honour, and pokes fun at it himself. That sense of being an 'outsider', that goes hand-in-hand with being into underground music or fanzine culture, is celebrated, whereas in the mainstream media, his work would never be published. In an issue of the Dublin fanzine *Kickstart* (Issue 1, 1992), the writer takes great joy in his introduction in informing readers that the issue will be littered with grammatical mistakes:

> Dear: music fan, welcome to Issue 1 of our paper/zine/mag, what ever you want to cal it. As you will notice, alot of the typing and printing is pretty poor and you wil see a lot of spelling mistakes, missing coma's etc, etc. Well I don't really give shit because that's not really important. What is the important is the music and the band's/labels/information we will be providin every month. (Hold on, I think I've made a mistake in 'providing'?)

I suspect that some fanzine makers intentionally make 'errors' with their syntax to ensure their publication is deemed to be realistic and written by a fan. This is at odds with the view of some subcultural theorists, notably Hebdige who suggests that fanzines are primarily the work of working class males (1979), seeing them very much as subcultural productions with poor grammar and DIY design. Hebdige's assertion cannot be taken as an indicator of class or education, as fanzines did not have the

editorial structure that was afforded to the mainstream music press. Without sub-editors and a chain of command, it is quite understandable that such mistakes could be made in a pre-word processing era, and the notion that such imperfections were intentional cannot be dismissed.

The mode of address of the *Kickstart* introduction is very much tailored to be directed at a fellow fan from the first line ("Dear: music fan). As with *Kickstart,* many music fanzines adopted quite a conversationalist tone in how they communicated with their readership; while that 'perzine' element of writing is very much evident in many of these publications, it is also noteworthy that the writer tends to talk directly at the reader, as opposed to the more 'expert' and perhaps 'objective' tone that might be found in the mainstream music papers. In *Unfit For Consumption* (Issue 2, 2000), the reviewer of **Agnostic Front** believes that as he approves of the album, so too should all the readers, if their taste buds match the fanzine:

> Miret and company deliver almost a half-hour of what they do best…raging hardcore. If you like **AF**, then you'll eat this up whole. If you've never heard of them (maybe perhaps you were in a coma or something?) then you'll like this too. You can't beat 'em so its [sic] time to join 'em.

Also apparent from an analysis of fanzines is that there are no boundaries in terms of what language can be used, with every type of expletive featuring in them. They are there equally for shock factor, personal venting, and as a textual demonstration of authenticity; by chronicling the words that come straight to the writer's head, or indeed the words that came directly from the musician that was interviewed, the fanzine is representing a true account of events. Simultaneously a vernacular is being used that is representative of the taste community, with specialist terms and words used to describe activities that they are partaking in. For instance, the word 'edge' or 'sXe' appears regularly in fanzines to represent 'straight edge', a movement that "remains inseparable from the hardcore music scene" (Haenfler, 2004b: 409). 'Straight edge', with its 'rules' of abstinence from alcohol, drugs, and promiscuous sex, is not what is important here; instead, it is the fact that only certain readers will comprehend exactly what 'sXe' means when they read an article in a fanzine. Outsiders to the community, who would be unlikely to access the publication in the first place, would not possess that knowledge. Even the names of fanzines are suggestive of the material and writers

that they represented: some are uninviting or confrontational such as *Against The Rest*, *Hurling Abuse, Up Yours!,* and *To Hell With It*; others are self-effacing and play on the outsider tag that fanzine writers sometimes live with like *Loserdom*, *The King Of The Sad People*, and *Good For Nothing*; while some fanzine titles just take on a downright bizarre air (e.g. *I Love Ecstasy, It Kills Ravers* and *Scruffy Nerfherder*).

What does appear in both terms of language and content in some fanzines is a sense that one would need to arrive with some knowledge of the scene to have a real understanding of what is contained within the fanzine. Many of the fanzines published in Ireland over the last three or four decades have contained references to other individuals and bands within the 'scene'. Issues of *The King Of The Sad People* are littered with in-jokes about the punk scenes in Dublin and Belfast, while an edition of *Nosebleed* (Issue 17, 1998) carries an article called 'Merogate', chronicling an altercation between Mero of Rejected Records and *Rejected* fanzine, and Frankie Stubbs from the Sunderland band **Leatherface**. *Nosebleed* treats the whole incident with humour, claiming that "as suckers for damaging gossip, we here at *Nosebleed* (armed with the cities [sic] fattest solicitors) bring you the scandal in all its defamatory glory." At face value it could be taken as a trashy commentary on a potential legal case, but at its core, the fanzine writer is poking fun at the situation. However, fanzines do not always take a light-hearted view when detailing goings on within the underground community or in their opinions on other fanzine writers. As will be further discussed later (Chapter Five), an element of peer feedback is a common feature in fanzine culture. Getting a review from another fanzine was something that most fanzine writers sought as it was an opportunity to promote your own fanzine to a wider audience. While there would have been perhaps a small level of rivalry between various titles, most fanzines would have been complimentary about fellow Irish fanzines. In issue 4 of *Jake's Wrath* (2001), the writer clearly has not received a positive review in issue 2 of *Riot 77,* and feels a need to return the favour:

> This is a great zine done by a complete fool. Maybe that's a bit harsh as I've never even met the guy, but it's not any harsher than some of the mindless shit he comes out with about people he's never met. I'm not going to quote any of it, not for the fear of offending delicate readers, but because it's just too f**kin' idiotic to repeat. I'd like to have given this zine a dire review but I actually like it a lot…the bits that he didn't write anyway.

This lambasting of issue 2 of *Riot 77* is continued in *Bite My Lip* (Issue 1, 2002), which coincidentally also features an interview with the writer of *Jake's Wrath*. It is clear that some of the content in the issue has also upset the author of *Bite My Lip*, but as with the review in *Jake's Wrath*, the attention seems to be on the person writing the fanzine, as opposed to the content itself. *Bite My Lip* reviews *Riot 77* saying:

> This is good but it would be f**king great if Mr. Punk Rock wasn't looking down his nose at people. But what does he care, he doesn't give a f**k what people think. Then why do a zine Ted? Really good informative and interesting interviews with…

In terms of the writing style from fanzine writers, there seems to be a tendency to produce an artefact that textually differs from newspapers and magazines. For writers and crucially their audiences, they are creating meaning in their own specific ways. How that information is presented to audiences plays a role in how that meaning is disseminated.

Formatting of Information

Whereas a long-form article in a magazine can contain more commentary and background information from the journalist themselves as opposed to from the musicians, fanzines tend to follow a more question and answer format. As such, what regularly tends to be printed is the article verbatim and unedited. Anto from *Loserdom* feels that this style of writing leads to a more authentic article:

> Usually in a fanzine you get the transcript of the conversation. If you are reading an article about a band that you like, it's the band you want to read about or the music, not so much what the journalist thinks about them (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

As a result fanzine interviews often tend to be printed exactly as is. In one of the newer fanzine titles that emerged in Ireland *Hatred Of Music* (Issue 1, 2013), an interview took place with the Danish musical act **Damien Dubrovnik** who asked for the writer Ian Maleney to leave out a question. However, that request and the question itself remained in the text, as Maleney explains:

> I left that evasion of the question quite purposely because I thought it was interesting to leave it given the context of the interview. Usually I would leave that kind of thing out. As for putting it in verbatim I mean it has to be on a case-by-case basis (Interview, Dublin, 25 July 2013).

Similarly, some interviews contain what happens in the location such as interviewees leaving and entering the room, drinking a cup of tea, etc. Other situations describe how the interview came about. For instance, in the metal fanzine *Def Trash* (Issue 3, 1989), an interview with the band **Slammer** commences with the following statement from the author:

> While dossing around the vicinity of the Top Hat [venue in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin], I bumped into Paul who is vocalist with young Bradford hopefuls **SLAMMER** and judging by their live show, the LP is waited for with bated breath. Anyhow, here's what Paul had to say…

On other occasions, mistakes within the interview context are often included also. One example of this was in one of the earlier issues of *Loserdom* (Issue 4, 1996), when Eugene (E) interviewed Willie (W) from the band **Bambi** in the following transcript:

> This interview was done with Willie (drummer of **Bambi**) and was done when I was calling down to his place (as I do a lot).
> E: Hmmm to anyone who doesn't know **Bambi** could you give us a history thing?
> W: am well we started in February '94.
> E: Oh very good…how would you describe your music?
> W: Garage hardcore with a mixtuure [sic] between **The Stooges** and **Minor Threat.**
> E: What would be your…Would tha[sic] be your influences?

The interview continues on a similar thread, with stop-start questions and no editing from the original recording. By publishing the article as it happened, and where it happened, the fanzine writer feels that he is creating a more authentic account with this artefact. Some articles also described the mood and appearance of the interviewees. In an *Unfit For Consumption* (Issue 3, 2000) feature with the UK hardcore band **Freebase**, the article includes the following:

> The interview is with Mark (vocals), who whilst appears to be as charming as a bulldog on first impressions is really an approachable, intelligent, fun and knowledgeable lad who I had the pleasure of meeting (albeit briefly) in Limerick when the **Freebase** tornado hit Limerick.

Common Themes and Structures

While I deal with specific content that features in fanzines throughout this research, it is necessary to give an overview of the contents of fanzines at this juncture. Music fanzines do not follow a particular formula, but what they tend to include are items

such as reviews (live, albums, demos, and zine reviews), interviews, personal articles, comics, etc., but additionally content about other aspects of do-it-yourself culture. The following were regular items for discussion in fanzines: left-wing politics and anti-capitalism; vegetarianism/veganism; straight edge lifestyles; alcohol; sports; a discussion about what fanzines were and were not; and numerous debates about what constituted being a punk or not. In the below extract from *Scumbag* (1997), the writer criticises the criteria that has been set by peers within the community under a section entitled "Criticize Me For Not Being Punk".

> CRITICIZE ME FOR NOT BEING PUNK.
> 1. For Being a student, students live 20 quid below the national poverty level every week, no rent allowance or medical card and then those cheeky bastard politicians actually expect you to vote for them
> 2. For eating in McDonalds, buying Nestle and Shell products and buying music on a EMI label even if it's Chumbawamba's brilliant new CD.
> 3. For Paying more than one pound for a can of Beer.
> 4. For not having a mowhalk and an anarchy tattoo on my ass.
> 5. Because I like to go dancing at raves.
> 6. For working and having to go to a job every day.
> 7. For never signing the Dole.
> 8. For not looking 'crustie'

Figure 4.22: *Scumbag* **(Issue unknown, 1997)**

For many fanzine writers whose first love was music, the regular features on the lifestyle and political elements of music fanzines caused some tension. The political elements in particular contribute to a discourse that the production of a fanzine is simply an oppositional practice (see Duncombe, 2008). This ignores the examination of these artefacts as fan works. One of those writers who was perturbed by the lack of discussion about music in music fanzines was Boz Mugabe. He explains that many fanzines in Dublin twenty-five years ago were neglecting to actually discuss the music:

> My ultimate focus for *Nosebleed* was writing about music, which in 1988/1989, I felt was a little lacking. The content of fanzines around that time had veered off into politics, poetry and veganism, articles about vivisection, hunt sabs and McDonalds, at the expense of what I perceived to be everyone's common thread, with maybe the token **Doom**, **Conflict** or **Oi Polloi** interview. I took this other information in and learned from it but didn't want to joylessly regurgitate it because of the prevailing notion that it was what I was supposed to do – knowingly producing more of the same seemed like a parochial modus operandi. Also, the fact that you could send a rudimentary ten question interview to the address on the back of a 7" or cassette and get a reply from the band was exciting, even if it took weeks, or months in some cases (Email Interview, 13 June 2014).

For the readers of *Nosebleed,* there were three central strands to Boz's fanzine: it covered the local music scene in great detail; it featured Boz's acclaimed and unique artwork; and finally, humour was an essential component. While some fanzines had got too serious and politicised for scene members like Boz, *Nosebleed* provided a perfect antidote. It was fun not just for its reader but for Boz also, and there was pleasure to be gained through the production of it - the excitement that he speaks of when awaiting responses from bands to interviews places him firmly in the position of fan (something that will be explored in more detail in Chapter Six).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has given an historical overview of music fanzines in Ireland, with a particular focus on certain music genres of a more alternative nature. While most of the content in this chapter has centred on music fanzine titles that are no longer in production, there are still Irish music fanzines being printed at the time of writing. These titles, particularly a handful of them which are published by younger fanzine producer who have grown up in a more digital age, will receive more specific attention in Chapter Seven, as their position in the music landscape is juxtaposed with an increasing turn towards short-form/ 'soundbyte' music journalism that is easily and instantly accessible.

I have discussed the production of fanzines looking at several key themes and areas, including authenticity, visual subversion, and how fanzines differ textually to other media that also discuss music. The theme of authenticity in particular will continue throughout this research. This section has also looked at how there are very deliberate

techniques used in the production of fanzine texts that make it a calculated object than may be presumed upon first glance.

This chapter has begun to look at the community that these artefacts serve – the musicians, the fans, the writers, and the collectors. This will form the basis for the next chapter, which will properly explore that community, determining how this community looks. Some of the most significant fanzine titles and their authors have featured in this chapter; chapter five will take an in-depth look at the role played by these producers and their texts as gatekeepers in independent music scenes. A central focus will be on how capital is accrued through associations with these publications.

Chapter Five: Community of Fanzine Producers and Users

5.1 Introduction

> I think if you are going to do a zine there is a good chance that you are obsessed with zines (Interview with Willie Stewart, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

Willie Stewart has produced the fanzine *Non-Plastique* sporadically (including a break of eleven years between two issues) since 1995. Originally a publication devoted to both music and film, its emphasis has shifted towards the latter since its return in 2013. Nonetheless, his comment above is demonstrative of a dual role that many participants occupy in DIY cultures; they are often both users *and* producers of fanzines. This chapter looks more closely at communities served by these publications, and how that community is portrayed in the texts themselves. As many of the fanzines featured in this chapter are decades old, most of those fans are no longer identifiable for interviewing purposes; this makes it difficult in particular to detect those who had a more passive involvement with fanzine culture. Instead, the focus of this chapter is on those with an active interest in fanzines.

The producers are mapped in terms of identity, location, and their positions within fluid scenes. 'Capital' is the central component of this chapter, with the position of the writer in the scene examined in terms of how they accumulate 'social' and, in particular, 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984). I will propose that the fanzine writer holds a different position to both the regular fan and the musician, questioning whether or not fanzine makers become gatekeepers within taste communities. The fanzine users in this chapter are predominantly represented as collectors, as these individuals are the most clearly recognisable users of these publications. The significance of collecting seemingly throwaway artefacts is explored in great detail in this chapter, displaying the varied ways that cultural capital is an integral aspect of DIY scenes.

5.2 Establishing the Community

The first step is to determine the community (or communities) served by music fanzines in Ireland, and this in itself throws up some contentious debate over what exactly constitutes a community in a sociological sense. For this research, Bury's concept of an "interactive community" (2005 – see Chapter Two) fits neatly in chronicling a community where discourse is encouraged. For Bury, the interactive community differs from Anderson's imagined communities, in that:

> While both involve a sense of belonging, an imagined community constitutes larger formations such as a nation in which members share a set of identifications but do not necessarily interact with one another, and perhaps more importantly, do not necessarily desire to do so (2005: 14)

For the majority of fans writing and reading fanzines in Ireland, they do desire that face-to-face interaction with other members of the scene. Additionally, and critically, these are communities that are bounded by *taste* (Bourdieu, 1984). The shared *taste* of this community is the music that connects them. The earliest Irish fanzines such as *Raw Power*, *Heat*, and *Vox*, dealt with guitar-based, non-mainstream music, and that has remained the trend for almost forty years since. That is not to say that there have not been fanzines covering other types of music; this research has encountered a handful of other publications that emerged in the last three decades such as the Drogheda-based *Rare N'Rude* (1989 – unknown) that focused solely on the ska scene, while Dublin publication *Anorak* (2002-2005) catered for the city's dance community, albeit dealing with less-commercial genres such as techno and drum n'bass. The community that has been served most by music fanzines in Ireland over the past four decades can be loosely termed as the DIY – do-it-yourself – community. The community in Ireland is too culturally diverse to simply term it as a straight-up punk community, even if connotations of the word 'punk' go beyond the genre of music of the same name. Punk for many equates to being the 'other', or as O'Hara simplifies it as "people who perceive themselves as misfits or outlaws in one way or another" (1995: 97). Many of the sub-genres of punk (anarcho-punk, crust, etc.), along with genres that were either influenced by or formed as a reaction to punk music, conform to do it yourself principles. People may not listen primarily to what is considered classic punk music (as derived from the wave of mid-late 1970s punk bands) but still

consider themselves to be 'punk' or 'punk rockers' due to their beliefs and adherence to DIY culture, and as such they tend to use 'punk' and 'DIY' almost synonymously.

DIY culture, in some respects a successor of sorts to 1960s counterculture, extends beyond musical taste to include other important areas of debate (and, importantly, action) around environmental issues, politics, and resistance to capitalism. Gordon (2005: 35) feels that it is unnecessary to separate DIY cultural production and DIY political activism, as they go hand-in-hand. However, there are members of this community who, while recognising that there is a subtle political undercurrent in relation to the actual production of alternative culture, may not be overtly political themselves. For example, Trevor Meehan of *Unfit For Consumption* veered away from simply using a band image for the sixth edition of his fanzine (Figure 5.1), and instead used a crudely designed cover that remarked on the somewhat jaundiced national reputation of his home city Limerick. He explains it as such:

> It was a little sly dig at people calling it "stab city"[82]; this was for people to know that this fanzine was from Limerick in a way, and also, the Treaty Stone[83] was kind of an iconic image of Limerick and King John's Castle in the background, and this was more of a history of Limerick, and this was more what Limerick should be known for rather than a couple of knifings and whatnot. It was probably my first kind of…is that a political statement or a social statement?...It was probably the first one I ever made anyway, and [laughs] I don't think I made one since (Interview, Limerick 9 March 2013).

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[82] 'Stab City' was a phrase that was used in the media and wider public particularly in the 1980s and 1990s in reference specifically to the city of Limerick, which had a perceived high level of knife crime.

[83] The Treaty Stone in Limerick was erected in 1865 to commemorate the 1691 Treaty of Limerick, which marked the end of the Williamite war in Ireland. It is a significant historical and tourist attraction in the city.
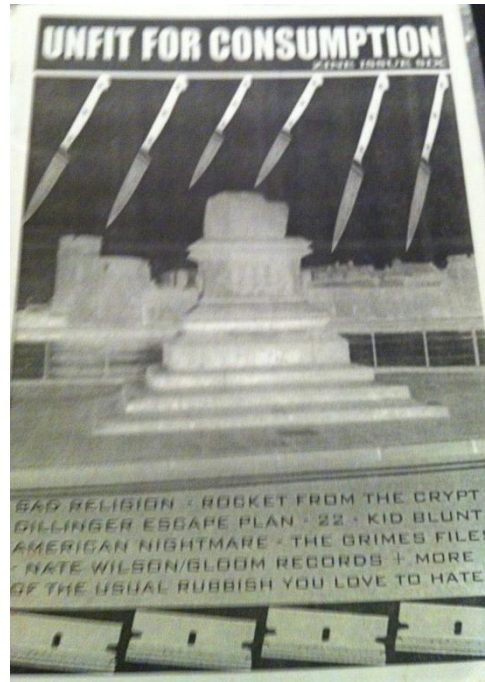
Figure 5.1: *Unfit For Consumption* **(Issue 6, 2003)**

Meehan was one of the first fanzine producers that I encountered when I started attending DIY gigs in Limerick city around 2000. He had just started *Unfit For Consumption* the previous year, and it quickly became the most important fanzine that was coming out of the city. There was a translocal nature to this publication, in that it featured scene reports and gig reviews from Cork, Dublin, and the UK, as well as interviews with international punk and hardcore bands. The rise of his fanzine coincided with the emergence of the Aspersion Music Collective (AMC), a non-profit collective of DIY gig organisers, of which Meehan was briefly a part. During the years of my undergraduate studies in particular, I would frequently attend AMC shows in the city. Meehan was also a regular attendee at somewhat rundown venues such as The High Stool, The Limerick Boatclub, The Savoy, and Costello's (all bar the latter now closed), where he would invariably be carrying copies of his latest fanzine. As a result, he would introduce DIY literature to many of the younger members of the scene, including myself. As with the gigs organised by the AMC– where anything from alternative country to hip-hop to grindcore could feature – Meehan's own palate progressed during the seven years that he ran the fanzine, and any type of music genre could theoretically appear in *UFC*. Just as many Irish fanzine writers found inspiration from international texts, Meehan points to the now defunct UK fanzine Fracture as a publication that strongly guided the progression of his own fanzine:

It covered a lot of the UK but obviously American bands and stuff like that, and it was really good insight into all types of music from around the world really. I think early *Unfit For Consumption* was very hardcore based but eventually I was going for the more *Fracture* model where I had a bit of everything in there really, you know? And obviously more diverse contributions from people as well made it a bit more diverse and covered a couple of different scenes or genres but obviously it was all really under the DIY banner (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

In an earlier edition of *Unfit For Consumption* (Issue 3, 2000), he features an interview with Christian hardcore label Warfare Records, a piece in opposition to the predominantly anti-religious/Christianity discourse in punk and hardcore fanzines, on the rare occasions such matters are discussed. For Meehan, including this label was a way of diffusing the manifestly political stance of fanzines of the time, as he writes in his column of the same issue:

I've been getting a tiny bit bored of reading straight edge interviews and articles…as you know there's a lot more faces to hardcore than that. One of those faces – Christian hardcore – is a strong but growing branch of hardcore so I decided the time was right to throw some light on it…I unearthed some passionate bands playing some of the meanest hardcore around today. Now that can't be bad can it? I also talked via email with some very nice people mainly Jon Mack who set up and runs Warfare Records and Andy from **Diehard Youth**…no matter what people's beliefs are they can be nice people. You don't have to go along with their beliefs, you don't necessarily have to agree with them either. There's always common ground. Music is a powerful tool…Remember respect is the key.

While he may not believe himself to be one that makes social or political statements with his fanzine, Meehan has shown a more egalitarian outlook of the hardcore scene than some other commentators within the community. Additionally, the key ingredient for him in this community of taste is the music itself.

For many producers of music and fanzines within DIY communities like Meehan, they are doing it themselves because there are no other outlets for them. It is important to note that it is not always an anti-capitalist agenda that drives a producer to work independently; sometimes, they just do not have the attitude or skillset to work for a major corporation, while alternatively, the music they either perform or write about will never be palatable to a mass audience. It might be a political statement to do something yourself, but for these particular producers, they self-publish as it is the only route available to them. Writers such as Cian Hynes (*Riot 77*) feel that ignorance

of the DIY community from the wider public has helped shaped it, feeding in to an air of resistance to the wider public and mainstream media:

> All the record labels, they would have been all independent; the gig promoters would have been all independent; and fanzines are just a part of that. I mean if fanzines didn't write about these bands, then no one else would really, and they don't generally appear in mainstream magazines...Every now and then you'll see something about punk rock in the mainstream magazines but they kind of move on to the next thing after that. The only thing that has kept it [punk] going, I think, is fanzines that have continued to cover those kind of bands and promote those labels (Interview, Dublin, 23 March, 2012).

While he may be overestimating the significance of the fanzine movement in recent years in maintaining a punk community, its influence has been meaningful over the past four decades in Irish DIY communities.

Fanzines and Music Scenes

While research participants such as Hynes discuss the idea of 'community', the word rarely features in fanzines. Instead, words like 'underground' and 'scene' pop up in fanzines *Loserdom* (issue 4, 1996), and *Fake* (issue 3, 1996). Shuker notes that "the term 'underground' is also used for non-commercialised alternative scenes, as the performers in them are hidden from and inaccessible to people who are not 'hooked into' the scene" (2012: 300). *Unfit For Consumption* published ten issues from 1999 to 2006, and an analysis of the text shows that there is not even one mention of the word 'community'; however, the word 'scene' appears seven times in Issue 1 and twenty-two times in Issue 2, generally referred to as 'the scene'. As discussed previously, one of the advantages of using 'scene' in a study such as this is that it adapts to the language of those bonding over these types of music and their corresponding fanzine texts. The scene that is predominantly discussed is that related to DIY activity in the city or country of the fanzine writer.

However, it is important to determine how fanzine writers and readers identify themselves and their collective practices. In issue 12 of *Loserdom* (2004), Anto Dillon writes a feature on punk as a subculture, in which he speaks with other Dublin scene members about the concept. Patches on clothing, political beliefs, and adherence to DIY ethics were deemed to be components of a subculture. In his opening to the article, Dillon set out what he perceived subcultures to be:

> For me though I think one of the most important things about being involved in a subculture or scene is the community buzz of havin' friends and people there when you need them and to help you get through lonely times in the city when you feel like an ant or a statistic or something. That theres [sic] movement is important, that bands and fanzines (etc.) get better and progress – not always stuck on that 1st issue or playing the same 3 chords (unless its somehow inventively or fresh), just to keep it interesting and us all motivated.

Dillon uses 'subculture' and 'scene' interchangeably, but as discussed in Chapter Two, 'scene' better suits the field currently under discussion. The flexibility that one has in moving between scenes is an indicator of a more 'tribal' (Maffesoli, 1996; Bennett, 1999) type of behaviour in music scenes, where individuals can move between and identify with different scenes. Richie Egan (*Fake* fanzine), explained that there were two disparate scenes around DIY in Dublin during the 1990s; one revolved around Hope Promotions/Hope Collective and the other around gigs at 'Old Chinaman' scene, referring to a now defunct venue that hosted punk gigs in the city. Rivalries between the two scenes were played out in fanzines, and this shows an interesting dynamic; the music took place in the same locality but there were differences in terms of membership of each sub-scene and the music played. The 'Old Chinaman' was more straight-up punk (or anarcho-punk music) whereas the 'Hope' scene also incorporated different types of alternative music. Fanzines were available at gigs in both locations, and these were also the places where people went to find out about music, listen to music, and crucially, to interact and socialise with each other[84]. Despite rivalries between the two scenes that Egan speaks of, he managed to involve himself in both. He wrote in *Fake* that:

> I don't want to sound like a lick arse here but I can honestly say that the Hope Collective has restored my faith in the Dublin "scene". The non-elitist, friendly and professional atmosphere that you get at their gigs comes across as a breath of fresh air in a city populated with pretentious shits. We need unity not division (*Fake*, Issue 3, 1996).

Microscenes can also mushroom out of larger scenes. Scholars have used the concept of microscene in differing ways; for example, Grazian describes them as "locally bounded yet decentralized do-it-yourself (or DIY) music scenes where participants gather in repurposed urban spaces to perform and enjoy alternative popular music

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[84] References to venues such as The Old Chinaman, The Top Hat, and McGonagles appear in different fanzines as well as record stores such as Freebird and Road Records, demonstrating the importance of place in music communities.

genres" (2013: 128). Grazian not just emphasises that microscenes only exist outside traditional music venues, but also specifies the importance of digital media in sustaining microscenes, something which neither Dale (2012) nor Harkness (2013) do. Dale (2012) uses microscenes in his description of punk and post-punk music to simply demonstrate how particular scenes are (sub)genre-aligned (in his case, anarcho-punk, cutie, riot grrl, and math rock). Harkness, on the other hand, sees a microscene as:

> a distinct component of a music scene, located in a delimited space of mutual social activity where certain clusters of scene members assemble and generate socio-cultural cohesion through collective ideologies, attitudes, preferences, practices, customs, and memories that distinguish them from the larger scene (2013: 151)

This usefully demonstrates how microscenes can emerge out of larger music scenes. For example, the 'straight edge' scene (Haenfler, 2004a; 2004b; Cross, 2011), with its connections formed through shared musical interests and ethics - forms a microscene of a larger hardcore scene. While scenes need to be interactive communities (as per Bury, 2005), they do not necessarily need to be as localised as Grazian (2013) maintains. This is where translocal scenes can be formed where "local music scenes that focus on a particular kind of music are in regular contact with similar local scenes in distant places" (Bennett and Peterson, 2004: 8). Fanzines can facilitate these translocal scenes, with scene reports exchanged between urban centres. In an Irish context, these urban centres all have their own specific local scenes, of which the fanzine is a constituent. However, as will be discussed in Section 5.3, some publications emerge from rural outposts, and do not quite have the same geographic rootedness to the scene. Nonetheless, they may travel to the cities where the scene is more interactive, where they can exchange or sell fanzines, and have face-to-face contact with local scene members. There is a form of articulation taking place here, where the rural music fans appropriate particular practices that are evident in music scenes globally.

The term 'scene' itself has been part of media discourses on music for decades (Bennett and Peterson, 2004), as a simpler way of identifying and understanding a type of music and its participants. This can be mirrored in contemporary alternative publishing; fanzine writers and readers are quick to align themselves to particular

scenes, even if that particular scene may not always be specifically referred to. Articles and interviews appear in various Irish fanzines describing the values and boundaries of the scene, with the opening editorial a regular place for a status update on how a specific scene was progressing. This commentary places fanzine producers as guardians of the community; their views were printed and publicly circulated around the scene, and subtly establishing cultural hierarchies similar to those referred to in Thornton's field research on the UK rave scene (1995: 3). In *Ethos* (Issue 6, 1994), the writer (named Biggley) is in a positive mood about the condition of the local scene: "I am delighted to see so much activity within the Dublin underground scene. Now zines are appearing by the month and cd's [sic] are being released at a phenomenal rate through self-financing." In Longford, a county significantly smaller than Dublin[85], David McGlynn felt that positive elements of the music scene were also worthy of discussion:

> The main reason for getting off my ass to put pen to paper or finger to keyboard, whichever you like, again is the fact that the scene around our area seems to be just going from strength to strength and I just wanted to highlight that with another issue (*No Ego*, Issue 2, 2003).

In *Scrawl* (Issue 1, 2000), the writer feels that his fanzine is not just there to celebrate the scene, but also to educate others about it:

> I am constantly meeting people who are either ignorant of the fact that an underground culture such as this actually exists, or are labouring under various misapprehensions about it…The aim of *Scrawl* is to promote, support, and be a part of the true, independent, DIY network that exists worldwide, as well as hopefully creating a forum for the isolated Irish scene.

It is not all positivity, however, and some fanzines illustrate tensions that exist with other local scenes that, in principle, should provide no crossover. *Carobics* (Issue 1, 1997) features an article entitled 'Hang The DJ! (Please!)' taking aim at the growing dance music scene in Dublin. There clearly is a different ethos between the 'dance' and DIY scenes in Dublin, and the (unidentified) writer's fandom does not stretch to

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[85] The 2011 census notes that Dublin (city and county combined) has a population of over 1.27 million inhabitants. In comparison, the entire population of Longford is 39,000 people. Of the 26 counties that make up the Republic of Ireland, Longford had the second smallest population. Information from http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/populationofeachprovincecountyandcity2011/ [retrieved 23 April 2015].

electronic music; in fact, they are displaying an 'anti-fandom' (Gray, 2003) in that they have some sort of understanding of the dance scene, and are eager to show their displeasure with it. The following segment from *Carobics* highlights a suspicion of such music and the impact it was having on the more DIY/punk community that their fanzine was serving:

> It's understandable why venues book more D.J.'s [sic] than bands now. Two turntables, some guy with a couple of cases of those trendy white label promo dance 12's that can only be found in some back street of London, and a generation of kids drugged to the eyeballs who wouldn't know the difference between a guitar and a hammer if it was distroying[sic] thier[sic] little over-the-shoulder designer label 12" record bag = one very safe way of making money. The advent of this has led to such an unhealthy world for anyone with a bass, a guitar, or a drum kit…It's a pitiful sight when a bunch of people cheer someone who's holding a record up in the air at the end of the night urging him to play one more track. Listen kids, it's not too difficult to mix two records together.

There is also a degree of credibility to be gained by lambasting a different form of fandom and its practices by acting as a form of anti-fan. The writer contends that the fans of dance music lack nous, almost placing them in direct opposition to the refined alternative music fans. The users of the fanzines, thus, will see the writer as a credible voice in the community because they criticised a different scene. Scenes are sometimes critiqued from within; in *PVC* (issue 1, date unknown) an interview appears with Deko, the frontman for Dublin-based punk band **Striknien DC**, in which he states: "I despise Dublin and the majority of the Dublin punk scene. But I live here and I like that cos I know how to stir it up." Elsewhere, Tony Feeney, in his fanzine *One Off* (Issue 2, 1997/ 1998), is in combative mood as he clearly feels that some members of the scene have taken umbrage with his record label Brotherhood of One:

> I would like to clear up a few things about me and Brotherhood Of One. I am not a rich kid like some people think…I live in a corporation area in Dublin's Southside, and I'm f**king proud of it…And I don't do this for money. I don't give a f**k about money. I do give a f**k about my music and the music of other[s] I respect…To call me a capitalist is a joke. You simply don't have a f**king clue what you are talking about.

That rumoured financial gain (or 'economic capital') has caused so much annoyance to the writer, and to others, shows that the scene is somewhat narrow-minded; the communitarian ethos of DIY in theory depoliticises class, but there are occasions when writers refer to themselves in class-based terms. This is a clear attempt from the writer

to demonstrate authenticity: he is suggesting that as he is from a working-class background, he retains more 'punk' credibility, and that on the basis of his social status, he is not financially motivated. Simultaneously, he is attempting to restate the rules of the community.

Later in the issue, Feeney writes about hypocrisy in punk rock, based on a lack of debate as to what constitutes punk and what does not. In a sense, he is pinpointing potential divisions within the scene. On the other hand, Biggley from *Ethos* proposes a more utopian community, and has clearly positioned fanzines as an essential aspect of this community, comparing them in importance to the role that self-released music plays in the DIY scene. In this sense, one can draw parallels with Becker's 'Art Worlds' (1982). Becker looks beyond the individual artists involved in the production but focuses on the collective activity of all those (producers *and* audience) that partake in the process – as Negus (2006) points out, these collaborative networks allow for a shift away from the concept of 'the culture industries' as hypothesised by Adorno and Horkheimer (1972), placing control in the hands of the activists themselves. Finnegan (1989), utilising Becker's framework, envisages music as a "collective action" encompassing everyone from music schoolteachers to music shops selling sheet music to committee members to local halls used for rehearsals. In fanzine cultures, 'art worlds' can exist, with writers, printers, readers, gig-goers, musicians, venues, etc. are all part of the network. As with Finnegan's work, the 'art worlds' that fanzines inhabit are built on a strong sense of collectivism, with shared tastes and codes. Works such as Watkins's (2004) prove that a network can be stronger when profit is not the primary objective[86].

Even the fanzine model of distribution ties into this idea of an 'art world', with the wider community assisting, as Trevor Meehan describes for *Unfit For Consumption*:

> Some of the contributors would take some, friends in Cork would take a bundle, the [Belfast] band **The Dangerfields** they always took a bundle and sold them while they were doing their non-stop touring. Lads in Galway took a few bundles as well, sold them at gigs up there…And then they just sent back the money whenever the fanzines were sold or looked for more…or sent back the ones that didn't sell! Generally there

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[86] Watkins contends that for the hip hop fraternity in Cape Town that "they constantly strive towards creating a community in which the whole is deemed as important as the individual" (2004: 124).

was someone going up [to Dublin] – the Punk Post they called it – someone would bring them up for me (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

5.3 Mapping the Producers

While producers such as Meehan and Niall McGuirk have been introduced at this stage of the study, there is a need to clearly identify the key figures in this culture.

<u>Anonymity, Pseudonyms, and Insider Knowledge</u>

As stated previously, the majority of this work looks at fanzines in the past tense, with the production of music fanzines in Ireland steadily decreasing over the past decade. When researching materials which are often twenty or more years old, there are difficulties in determining who actually wrote fanzines. A reason for this is a regular practice of anonymity attached to those writing fanzines; this anonymity does not always apply *within* the scene whereby knowledgeable 'members' (or 'smart' fans – see Chapter Six) are aware of who is writing what. In other cases, fanzine writers may not want work colleagues knowing that they are working on a fanzine, as it can reflect a different lifestyle they lead away from the workplace, or even alert superiors that they are utilising work time and resources to edit the fanzine[87]. The production of a fanzine can offer a form of escapism as civil servant Cian Hynes notes why he produces his: "because it keeps me sane. I can't just do a day-job and nothing else" (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012). For younger fanzine writers, they may not want parents knowing they are working on a fanzine, or the material that is contained within it. Accounts feature in Irish fanzines that portray adolescent experiences of the writers. In *Jake's Wrath* (Issue 5, 2001), Liadain O Driscoll's summer diary of gig-going features descriptions of various sexual encounters, while she writes elsewhere in the fanzine that she needs to start concentrating more on study for her upcoming Leaving Certificate examinations, and hopes her family do not read the fanzine:

> It's now the second week of September. I'm back in school, shitloads of work to do but I've spent the last week or two glued to the computer writing this up. If anyone read[s] every word of it, all I can say is thanks…but I really hope you're not my mother.

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[87] A handful of my interview subjects noted that they were able to work on their fanzine and gain access to word processing or photocopying at their workplace during work hours.

For the shy fanzine writer, an anonymous identity can allow them to express themselves without the fear of personal retribution. This distancing from the personal and professional lives of fanzine writers was often done by using nicknames or fake names. In *Jake's Wrath*, where fanzine publisher Liadain invited contributors from different people around the country, writers have pseudonyms such as "Skippy", "Jamie Traumaboy", and "Kollin Sometimes" (who also signs his editorials with the same name in his own *Bite My Lip* fanzine). Reading through various editorials and introductions in fanzines, a surname is frequently discarded and instead we just get the first name: *Gutter* is written by Joe, and *Loserdom* is written by Anto and his brother Eugene, or the Loser Brothers as they are often identified. Some of this has to do with familiarity within their respective taste communities. In other cases fanzine writers select pseudonyms that are strongly linked to other elements of the music scene or other aspects of their artistic life – Boz Mugabe, of the fanzine *Nosebleed*, was well known by the same name as both an artist (as he still is) and a member of the band **The Steam Pig**; Owensie, of *Nag Nag Nag*, was known within the punk scene by that name when he played in the band **Puget Sound** and continues to perform (albeit as a folk artist) as **Owensie**; and Mero, who ran the fanzine *Rejected* had initially started Rejected as a cassette label before releasing punk albums on other formats, playing in bands such as **Noise Pollution**, and the name Mero has been an integral part of his punk identity throughout his life. There is another motive to consider for this clear lack of overt identity amongst fanzine writers. Hesmondhalgh (1998a: 237-238) looks at how an independent strand of dance music infiltrated the music industry in the late 1980s and early 1990s, where objects such as white label records brought a sense of credibility from the scene, as well as more of an emphasis on genre than authorship or performer identity. This bears similarities to the DIY punk community, as Hesmondhalgh points out, where a participatory nature and equal status amongst all members of that community is, in theory at least, a given; being anonymous stresses the collective identity rather than the individual.

This sense of anonymity does not apply across the board; in fact, a key part of many pre-Internet fanzines was to include a full name and address of the writer, as this would both illicit contact from readers and provide independent bands and record labels with a postal address to send CDs, records, and cassettes to. Providing a home address is another signifier of authenticity in that the fanzine producer is not based out

of some office block (although the occasional PO Box appears in the contact details). This also indicates interesting trends as to where fanzine producers are located, and that fanzine production is not as Dublin-centric as might be assumed, given the relative size of the capital's population and the abundance of live musical activity and record stores in the city in comparison to other urban centres around Ireland. My research found that 45% of Irish fanzines published (where a location could be identified) between 1997 and 2014 were from Dublin. This does not include those produced by writers in commuter areas who would have access to the Dublin scene (such as Kildare and Wicklow – 5%). Additionally, other cities (Belfast, Galway, Cork, and Limerick) together accounted for a further 23%, and many other fanzines came out of urban centres with their own self-sufficient DIY scenes such as Kilkenny, Wexford, and Derry. Yet, there were a number of fanzine writers disconnected geographically from active DIY scenes, that still managed both to make connections with these scenes (often through fanzine trading – see 5.4) and discuss the limited cultural activities that were taking place within their own catchment area. Fanzine writer Willie Stewart recalls that "it just made sense. It was just a few people getting on the bus at weekends and doing the rounds of the record shops and dropping their zines in" (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

Fanzine Production outside of Dublin

In the mid-1990s[88], two young metal fans from the midlands of Ireland published *Dark Skies Ahead.* They were not restricted by their geographic location in featuring national (interviews with bands from Dublin, Wicklow, and Armagh) and international acts (interviews and reviews on artists from UK, Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway). Additionally, they featured advertisements from record labels based in Spain and France, and this was just in their first issue. In a pre-Internet era, they were encouraging metal practitioners internationally to contact them through the postal service: "Send a biography and contact address and releases to date for fair review. Trades very welcome with anything." There is also a localised context in *Dark Skies Ahead* with gig and demo reviews from local bands, including **Hemlock**, which featured one of the fanzine writers in its ranks. The reviewer, identified as Timmy, is

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[88] I have retained the production years for this publication to demonstrate that fanzines such as *Dark Skies Ahead* were published in a pre-Internet era, and thus, couldn't be part of a 'virtual music scene' (see Lee and Peterson, 2004).

honest in his appraisal of the band: "From start to finish you feel this demo is let down by production. I feel with a little more time, **Hemlock** could be a great rewarding band." This review brings some credibility to the fanzine, in that the writers are willing to publish material that is critical of their own music.

A number of other publications have appeared from all around the country – the aforementioned *Jake's Wrath* from rural West Cork; *Deafecation* from Co. Offaly; the one-off *Good For Nothing* (1998) from Kenmare, Co. Kerry; and *With Harmful Intent* (2000s) from Co. Roscommon. Fans in relatively rural outposts would seemingly have limited access to the alternative press and culture. However, even in pre-Internet times, there were ways of getting in contact with bands: for instance, most album sleeves contained a contact address for the band or their record label. Despite this, writers did not have the ease of access to the music scenes they often discussed, in particular events in Dublin, and would not have necessarily had a strong network within the capital city to sell and/or distribute the fanzine. Gaining insider knowledge – and some form of social capital – about the latest developments in the scene was difficult. Ivan Pawle, who wrote *Good For Nothing*, had spent his time in University in Dublin before returning to his native Kenmare, and wrote:

> I'm writing this from a small town called Kenmare which is just about in the middle of nowhere – you might not have heard about it. Punk rock in Ireland seems to be in a pretty bad state right now from what I can gather although I've kind of lost touch with what's going on over the last year (living down here doesn't help) (Issue 1, 1998).

He also notes that a rare punk gig had been arranged for the nearby town of Killarney featuring **UK Subs** but was cancelled; the majority of the rest of the fanzine contains postal interviews conducted with bands from the United States with Pawle stating that: "There were a couple of Dublin bands I wanted to interview for this but they've broke up so I'm left without much Irish news for this issue." Other fanzine producers did not see their location as a hindrance to producing content, such as Limerick-based Trevor Meehan:

> I didn't ever find that that was a problem really. It covered a good bit of stuff in Dublin, so I think the audience for this stuff anyway wouldn't be basically bothered about where the fanzine came from. People were just happy to see another fanzine I'd say; people that were into fanzines obviously. If you are into music, you want to see

more and more bands for diversity so I presume it's the same if you are into fanzines; you want to check out different fanzines (Interview, 9 March 2013).

There were times when fanzine writers focussed very much on their own small, localised scenes, and generally with not-so-subtle insults directed at their hometown. *Felt Good To Burn* (Issue Unknown, 1994) contains an article entitled 'Summer '94: A Brief History of Longford – Lo-Fi Rock City' where the writer chronicles the limited music scene in the town:

> For those who don't live here, Longford is pretty dull. Night, sorry, nite-clubs are all FM fodder and you are very likely to hear a **Wham!** record at some stage of the night. Or get beaten up. **Dionysus** came and we all had fun. And sweated lots. Thank you John Doran for the only place you could still hear music in…Longford can be found in the Irish midlands. Don't blink or you'll miss it.

It is unknown quite who the target audience for *Felt Good To Burn* was; certainly, an element of its readership would have been the local scene members attending gigs, but by the mode of address above, the writer was directing this content more towards 'outsiders', specifically those in cities like Dublin where fanzine culture was more prevalent. With both *Felt Good To Burn* and *Good For Nothing*, detailing their geographic displacement was almost a badge of authenticity. While these writers would accrue little in the way of social capital because of their disconnect from more organised scenes, they were developing their own skills through the production, and thus a form of cultural capital. They demonstrate that they are ploughing a lonely furrow in rural Ireland, but concurrently, are asking for major cities to take notice of their predicament. At the core of it, they feel that musical taste was what they had in common with their urban counterparts. Music, it appears, as Bennett ascertains, "can bond displaced peoples, effectively bridging the geographic distance between them and providing a shared sense of collective identity articulated by a symbolic sense of community" (2004: 4). As is evident from Figure 5.2[89], Dublin was unsurprisingly very much the epicentre of fanzine production[90], and it is no coincidence that those counties within commuter's distance such as Wicklow and Kildare also had a number of fanzines published.

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[89] There are nineteen fanzines that no county of origin can be found for.
[90] As of the 2011 Census, the Dublin urban area had a population of 1.27 million inhabitants out of a total population of 4.58 million for the Republic of Ireland (Central Statistics Office, 2012: 9-10).
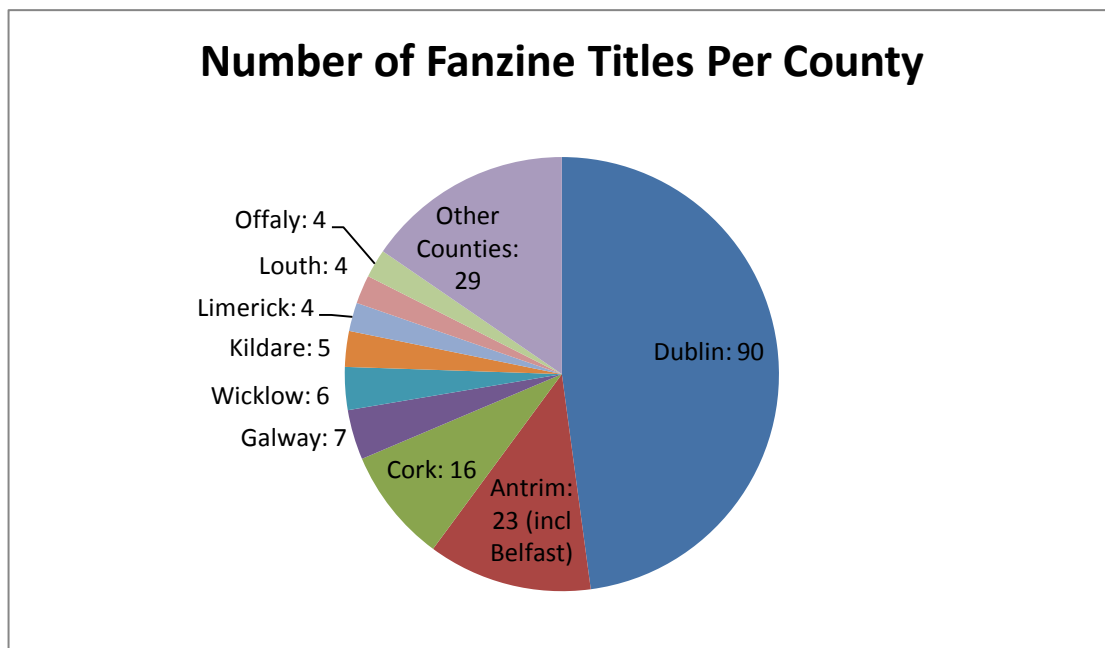
Figure 5.2: Fanzine Breakdown Per County

There were also prominent fanzine writers who managed to put out several different titles from their hometowns, such as Mel Hughes, from Fermanagh, who ran *No Barcodes Necessary* and *Direct Hit*, or Kollin from Galway who had at least three fanzines in *Noiseletters*, *Night Of The Locust*, and *Bite My Lip*. The change in title often indicated a gap in time between fanzine production, as was the case with Mel Hughes who had a five-year hiatus (and change of location to Armagh) from fanzine writing between the two titles. With Kollin, a different title indicated a different format or style – *Bite My Lip* was A4 and detailed, *Night of The Locust* was A5 and free, while *Noiseletters* was simply a four-page A5 freesheet. A new fanzine title allowed for a fresh start and identity, particularly when you were one of the few active fanzine writers in your town. Many of these fanzines have a particular leaning towards activities in their own local scenes, but there is little to suggest that fanzines produced in different parts of the country are any different to each other. Instead, they adhere to the paradigm of production discussed in the previous chapter.

In other urban centres such as Cork, particular eras heralded a strong fanzine culture. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a flurry of activity around Cork city, with "a tradition of mad Cork bands" emerging with "elements of humour, quirkiness and deliberate gaucheness" (Smyth, 2005: 63). There was also a clear DIY spirit in Cork and this resulted in a number of fanzines such as *Sunny Days*, *Protest*, *Choc-A-Bloc*,

166

and *Nay, Nay n' Thrice Nay*. These titles were, in part, influenced by publications from Dublin. For instance, Jim 'Comic' Morrish of *Choc-A-Bloc* noted that it was receiving a copy of *React*[91] from Morty McCarthy, the writer of *Sunny Days* and musician with **The Sultans of Ping FC**, that inspired them to set up a newsletter-style publication. They also undertook a similar distribution model as many of the Dublin-based fanzines, although Morrish was particularly zealous in bringing copies outside of Ireland:

> *Choc-a-Bloc* was free so we'd give it out in venues, record shops, cafes, my comic shop, etc., plus post copies to anyone who'd send stamped addressed envelopes. I always made a point of bringing some with me wherever I went so some ended up in a record shop in Melbourne… [I] would always bring them with me to London, Dublin, and so on too (Interview, Cork, 11 August 2014).

Sunny Days and *Choc-A-Bloc* would provide a useful outlet for fans of local bands to write about these acts, and also as a bulletin board of sorts with local contacts for bands, venues, rehearsal spaces, etc. Many of the users of these publications were musicians themselves, and in this example, the fanzine is facilitating networking and creativity. While some international and national acts feature, there is a strong local undercurrent, particularly in the more personalised elements of these Cork fanzines. The content in these publications indicates that their audience was often comprised of a combination of musicians and friends of the writers. In *Sunny Days* (Issue 8, 1991), the author signs off the issue with the following comment:

> A belated hello to everyone who came home for Christmas, especially Darragh, Colin, Sandra, Maggie, and Gik home from London, as well as everybody else. It's amazing the difference it makes to Christmas in Cork. It just shows that if there wasn't emigration on such as scale we'd have more gigs and more of a buzz around the city.

While these fanzines from Cork kept their focus more on happenings within their own city, the focus of fanzines from more rural outposts was on gigs and bands from larger cities, simply because they were often written by individuals in a town without a regular independent music scene or network. Sometimes, that attention would stretch further than Ireland. In *Blueprint* (Issue 1, 1994/95), writer Ivan Cahill from

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[91] The relationship between *React* and *Choc-A-Bloc* would be solidified with the release of a joint issue in 1993 (*React*, Issue 23; *Choc-A-Bloc*, Issue 16). Two of the pages of the A5 publication included the *Choc-A-Bloc* content, while the back two pages featured the issue of *React*. This pooling of resources enabled the producers to increase distribution outside of their home cities; thus, more copies of *React* were read in Cork and *Choc-A-Bloc* was picked up by more people in Dublin.

Westmeath looks to the United States for his main features on **Nine Inch Nails**, **Rollins Band**, and **Green Day**. The issue boasts an impressive list of underground contacts – bands, labels, promoters, fanzine writers – from around Ireland, the UK, Europe, and the US - with Cahill advertising his own independent distribution of compact discs for alternative bands from the UK like **Altered States**, Irish band **Therapy?**, and US such a**s Girls Against Boys** and the all-girl punk band **Babes In Toyland**.

Why Me?[92] Motivations for establishing a fanzine

This work has looked at those involved in publishing music fanzines in Ireland over nearly four decades in terms of who they are, where they come from, and by questioning if a gender divide existed in fanzine production. Now, it turns to a question that is raised throughout this research – why start a fanzine? It is no surprise that many fanzine writers were also members of bands (see Chapter Six), and that goes back to the very first Irish punk fanzine *Raw Power*, which lasted for two issues in 1977. Stephen Averill (Rapid) was a member of Dublin punk band **The Radiators From Space**, and as someone who had been importing international punk fanzines realised that there was a place for them in the Irish landscape:

> We were aware of those [*Punk* and *Sniffin' Glue*] and we just felt there needed something to be there. There was a slightly ulterior motive as well, in that we wanted something to be a vehicle for writing about **The Radiators From Space**. That magazine had an interview with the band, which was probably the first interview of the band that appeared, but we were also very interested in what was going on with other Irish bands. The second issue was the first interview with **The Undertones**. We tried to seek out like-minded people to write about (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

For Averill, establishing a fanzine was an attempt to capture not only what was happening in a burgeoning musical movement in the city, but also to provide a platform for his band to gain some exposure (see Chapter Six for a more nuanced discussion of fanzines as an outlet for self-promotion) at a time when the mainstream media was either ignoring punk or sensationalising it. Over a decade after *Raw Power* had ceased publishing, Boz Mugabe established the fanzine *Nosebleed* as, like Averill, he felt it was a contribution to an expanding scene:

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[92] *Why Me?* was the name of a former Irish fanzine.

> The appeal was accessibility – typewriter, tippex, paper, glue, ideas and you're in business and part of the network. One fanzine on its own didn't really matter in itself, but a number of them together formed this amorphous information mesh, like an underground encyclopaedia, which varied in substance and style, but could be contributed to by anyone (Email Interview, 13 June 2014).

In the previous chapter, I examined how the design aesthetic and content of fanzines often reflected a rather adolescent male sensibility. For older fanzine writers, it can represent an idealised adolescence where juvenile behaviour and puerile humour is acceptable. On the other hand, some writers start fanzines while they are still in post-primary education, and it offers them an opportunity to connect with music scenes that they may otherwise be excluded from because of age. There is a connection here between how adolescents are attracted to forms of popular music, and the non-conformist ethos of DIY music has a corresponding value in the production of fanzines. Lull describes this attraction to music thus: "Young people use music to resist authority at all levels, assert their personalities, develop peer relationships and romantic entanglements, and learn about things that their parents and the schools aren't telling them" (1987: 152).

A useful example of this can be found in *The Damage Is Done* (Issue 1, 1996), a fanzine written by three teenage boys. This provided them with an opportunity to produce content that was vulgar, zany, and a demonstration of youthful rebellion. For instance, the opening editorial states "BUTT [their capitalisation] no thanks to [the band] **Pet Lamb** for turning up their snotty noses at us… Direct all your prankcalls to [gives number]. Nipples." Elsewhere, in an interview with the band **Gout**, a series of questions are asked such as "where is the best place to pee in town?" and "Yr opinions on porn, Michael Jackson, and Home And Away?". Finally, in the closing comments from the three writers, the following appears: "Kev says f**k you to asshole teachers". This 'humour' throughout is quite juvenile, obviously, but the fanzine provided an outlet for these three teenagers to express themselves, and played a role in their adolescent development. Coleman and Hendry note that "adolescence is usually thought of as a time of both change and consolidation" (1999: 52), and they summarise the reasons for this: physical changes; intellectual growth; "increasing emotional independence" (1999:52); and role changes experienced during this period. Self-esteem is thus a very significant factor in the nature of adolescence, and Irish fanzine

producers found that their association with this creative media was a significant contributor to an increased sense of self-esteem.

Anto Dillon from *Loserdom* first discovered the medium in his teenage years and his initial entrée into this fanzine culture led to a feeling that he could establish one himself:

> Around this time when I was reading them and figuring out some of the bands in them, I thought that this was a good way to express yourself or it was a relevant avenue for expressing yourself …I developed my own opinions and even theories about music…There seemed to be good stuff happening and I wanted to get involved with it and try and support it (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

For others, involvement in a fanzine was a way to help young people communicate more freely with their peers; not only did it increase social capital in terms of the networks that it opened up to them, but it also helped boost their self-esteem. For Thomas McCarthy, it opened up a whole new world: "When you're a teenager especially, it's a good way to find out about other places and music and communicate with people" (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013). It allowed for fans of music to flex their creative muscles, and Leagues O'Toole believes that the independent music scene in Dublin, and his involvement in it through fanzine writing and gig promotion, played a major role in shaping his life:

> I wasn't that confident a teenager and I had no real idea of what I wanted to do with my life…what I liked doing was being in record shops and talking to the guys and buying records and listening to them. There was nothing beyond that…Part of the DIY ethos was to bring people in, it wasn't about who you know. It was open to anyone who had a genuine interest and it encouraged you to be active in your own way, in whatever way you were comfortable with, whether that be writing a review, making a fanzine, putting on a gig, being in a band, learning an instrument, whatever… (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

From conversations that took place with fanzine writers, a recurring theme was that many of them had been socially awkward teenagers. Today, O'Toole seems to me to be a relatively self-assured man who has spent time in the public eye, even presenting television programming. Likewise, Richie Egan is a charismatic frontman for his music project **Jape**. Yet, both of them readily admit that they were shy teenagers. This indicates that fanzines played a key role in adolescent development for many writers. As Egan suggests, they are "an opportunity for

kids to be able to speak to each other and to be able to speak to bands. I think they're good for awkward teenagers who are introverted and really into their music" (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

To summarise, there may be no singular motive that ties all fanzine producers together, but it can be generally assumed that a strong interest in, and identification with, the music is one of the primary reasons for their publications. There are other causes as well, such as social and participatory motives.

5.4 Participating in the Community

> Freaks, geeks, nerds and losers – that's who zines are made by (Duncombe, 2008: 22).

While Duncombe's somewhat crude assessment of fanzine writers is unfair, 'outsiderness' has a resonance in the product itself. Two of this research's participants who have subsequently lived quite public lives within the Irish music scene admitted that they were introverted teenagers. Leagues O'Toole has gone on to present national television programming, while Richie Egan now appears on stage in various bands, and both have an outwardly confident demeanour. Both credit their entry into a world of fanzines and alternative music cultures for developing their confidence and for bringing them respect within the scene. Leagues noted that at a time in his teenage years when he did not feel like he had much direction in his life, reading music fanzines and subsequently writing for zines opened up a whole new network of culture and relationships:

> That was maybe the real transition for me from being a record collector who spent all their time in record stores but had no real ambition or inclination to be involved in the music world. This ended up being a transitional platform into being actively involved in it (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

For O'Toole and many other fanzine writers, this was a way that they could play a role in the scene if they were not in a band. The production of fanzines is for many individuals a cultural and social gateway into a scene, as musician and fanzine collector Thomas McCarthy explains:

I guess for people not in a band, it gives them an identity in the punk scene. You're contributing to or part of the scene. It was a way into the scene if you weren't in a band or putting on gigs. There was a vanity or status aspect to it as well I suppose (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

A relevant way to express yourself and also a way to get yourself involved in the local scene, which seemed to be thriving at the time. In the punk scene, it's the idea that everybody can be a producer or a creator, like the people in the audience could be fanzine writers or photographers, or maybe they put on the gig or are in another band, or maybe they made the artwork for the poster or for the album cover. And fanzines are part of that culture – do it yourself or whatever. For me, that aspect of the punk scene is very important. Other music scenes that don't have that, I wouldn't relate to them as much. At one stage I went through a drum and bass stage…[but] the stage and the people, there is too much separation, and I didn't feel any way to get involved (Interview with Anto Dillon, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

Fanzines offer a legitimate route for non-musicians to become involved in a music oriented community, a way for a 'user' to be a 'producer', and an opportunity to exhibit their fandom; the "fan as practitioner" to borrow from Duffett (2015: 1) again. While there may subconsciously be cultural hierarchies within underground music scenes, they are – if in tune with their DIY ethos – supposedly communitarian with equal status afforded to all participants. Turino's research participants "tended to think of music as being as much about the event and the people as about the sound itself" (2008: 24). In terms of fanzine production, the apparent end result is not always what is the most important; the participatory nature and involvement in any 'scene' that the fanzine emanates from is often considered the priority (Duncombe, 2008: 15-16). Production values do not need to be overly professional, as long as the 'message' gets across, and that one is actively participating in the scene by writing and commentating on it.

The users and makers of fanzines are central to the scenes that they are part of, and there are a number of international examples that illustrate how integral fanzines have been to communities of musical taste. Atton looks at how *Maximumrocknroll* helped develop communities of writers and a network of "self-sufficient fans and musicians" in the 1980s (2002: 65); Schilt points to how the production and distribution of Riot Grrrl fanzines formed fanzine networks across the US (2004: 115-6); while Gosling's (2004) research indicates that anarcho-punk networks established through fanzines allowed fans and musicians to travel between towns with safe places to stay. The DIY attitude of these communities did not just extend itself to the recording and performing

of music; for instance, a short-lived music fanzine *Rhubarb* (Issue 1, 1993) gave readers tips in how to wash their clothes without utilising detergents produced by major corporations, while another article looked at how guitar players could build their own guitar pedals.

A great deal of this scene in Dublin centred on Hope Promotions and the Hope Collective. Niall McGuirk, who was behind Hope, also published a number of fanzines including *React*. Along with reviews, this title was primarily an outlet for previewing and promoting upcoming Hope gigs in the city. McGuirk agrees that *React* played its part in fostering this sense of community amongst regulars at their shows:

> There was this period where it seems we had this little small community and people were happy enough to see it; "*React* is out: great, give us a look", and they'd talk to you about what's in it as they were coming along to the gigs that Hope were doing. It seemed like we were this alternative…different community to what was going on (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

In terms of engagement with its users *React* boasted a busy letters section, something that was not always commonplace in Irish music fanzines. Steve Rapid, creator of *Raw Power* and later a contributor to *Heat* fanzine, acknowledges that in the late 1970s, it was difficult to get readers to connect with the publications in this way:

> *Heat* would get letters from America, Japan, and various places that picked it up, and they would write back and say 'this is great', but for some reason the Irish market was somewhat indifferent to those kind of publications. Unless you said something that someone vehemently disagreed with, they probably just didn't think of the idea of responding and writing (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).

The titles that were the most popular, respected, and regular[93] were those that received a response from its audience, such as *Nosebleed*, whose writer Boz Mugabe found that face-to-face contact with the users of his fanzine was the easiest way of communicating:

> Most of the interaction was from speaking to people at gigs when selling the magazine. This was predominantly people in local punk bands as we had a use for each other. In the early 1990s I was getting fifteen to twenty letters a week but this

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[93] The likes of *React*, *Nosebleed*, and *Loserdom* are in a minority, in that they have published ten issues or more.
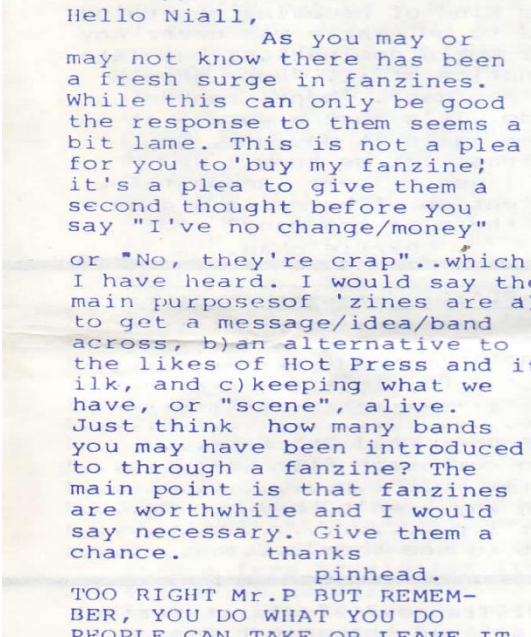
ebbed off by the late 90s when email was becoming widespread (Email Interview, 13 June 2014).

> I used to get letters, and this was pre-internet era really, with €2 in the envelope saying "oh, will you send me a copy of *Unfit for Consumption*?" and an address. Some people used to write big two-page letters which was brilliant, talking about "I saw this band and I saw that band" and there was some people I never knew them, they just wrote to me and I'd meet them at a gig, and I'm still friends with them now (Interview with Trevor Meehan of *Unfit For Consumption*, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

Willie Stewart recalls that as a teenager, he was able to build up a network through his dual position as a fanzine writer and musician:

> Mero was doing *Rejected* [and] from his address I saw he lived in Dun Laoghaire which was really close to me at the time. Through writing, we exchanged phone numbers, and then we just met up, and I eventually started doing his radio show with him. Then just from going to gigs, you realised that a couple of people in the room did this fanzine or that fanzine, and you'd eventually met them, and go 'oh, I wrote you letter', and it was 'oh, yeah, how's things? Finally nice to meet you...' I think being in a band helped as well because people knew that you were in a band and you did this fanzine... (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012)

Thus, Stewart embraced the letters pages of various fanzines to establish connections that flourished once there was a corresponding face-to-face contact. These letters pages had a role in developing small networks of like-minded people (who were often adolescents). Communication in Niall McGuirk's freesheet *React* revolved around the type of gigs that Hope were putting on, as well as their location and timing (one reader complained about the regular Saturday afternoon all-ages shows as they were during their work hours). There was discussion on the fanzine scene itself, with other fanzine writers writing in to two issues in 1991 to complain about a general apathy towards paying for fanzines; and there was even one letter ironically lambasting the space that was taken up in the fanzine through the letters page. The page was a sounding board for various people within the community and provided a platform for the consumers of the music and the paraphernalia that came with it such as the record tapes, CDs, and records, and fanzines themselves.

Figure 5.3 Fanzine correspondence in *React* (1991, Issue 9)

Richie Egan published three issues of the fanzine *Fake*, inspired by the Hope Collective gigs that he had started to attend, and the knowledge he gathered from relative elders such as Niall McGuirk:

> It was an eye-opening thing to discover these American bands such as **Minor Threat** and **The Dead Kennedys**, and that kind of DIY thing and to realise that we can do it here too. It was great to just embrace that culture and to see people embracing that creativity, whether it was in a band, skateboarding, or doing a fanzine (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

However, getting Irish fans to actively partake in debate around music and the 'scene' could prove to be a little more difficult than it seems by reading old issues of *React*. McGuirk himself readily admits that he had to really stress to his readership that letters were welcomed to have any hope of correspondence:

> There wasn't too many letters that came in. The main interaction would be handing it out at gigs so that you're like putting it in to someone's hand and that you're talking to them and there would be people asking questions (Interview, 23 March 2012).

Fanzines attempted to build a sense of community, whereby they were seeking active participation from other members. This demonstrates a connection with the DIY ethics of the music that featured in the scene, where participation is valued more than quality (however that may be measured, and where the community is interactive (Bury, 2005).

Nonetheless, this call for interactivity was not always successful. Interestingly, certain fanzine writers believe this to be evidence of a more reserved Irish scene than some of its international counterparts. For instance, this reluctance to communicate is contrasted to that of international audiences in an article in the fanzine *Ruby Fix* entitled 'A Note On American Scenesters':

> The crowd at shows in San Francisco reminds me of American exchange students in university lectures. If you have ever taken a class with Americans in it, you may have noticed how they somehow feel completely un-intimidated and ask questions and make comments and discuss stuff openly with the lecturer that no Irish person would ever even attempt. Well, this behaviour is not confined to the classroom, as I have recently noticed (Issue number unknown, 2000).

While the fanzine users may not be in a hurry to enter into correspondence with the writers, the producers of fanzines do tend to be eager for feedback and communication with their audience. Some titles issue a policy such "all forms of correspondence will be answered to" (*Áilleacht Na Dorcha*, Issue 1, 1998); other fanzines hope that there will be an incendiary element to the content: "here's my zine, and I hope that someone finds fault in it, or is offended by it and sends me a letter" (*Nag Nag Nag*, Issue 1, 1998); whereas others use it as call out to the community to acknowledge their existence/position:

> I know this is going to make me sound like the loneliest, most desperate shithead, freak on the planet, but if there is a chance of me meaning anything to you ever, then please call me. Otherwise just kill me (*One Off*, Issue 2, 1997).

While writing a fanzine is often a sole pursuit, sometimes there is an invitation for users to help assemble the publication by submitting reviews, columns, or drawings. This idea that any reader can contribute to the publication ties in with the DIY ethos of the community. On both a practical and networking level, some fanzine makers preferred a collaborative process as it made them feel part of a (global) fanzine community:

> I just used to pester people to do something for it. There used to be a really big underground culture and network, and there was a guy in Wales called Leigh and you could just write to him and he'd actually send you an envelope full of drawings, not even photocopies, just mad drawings he'd done (Interview, Thomas McCarthy, *Paranoia Critica,* Dublin, 21 May 2013).
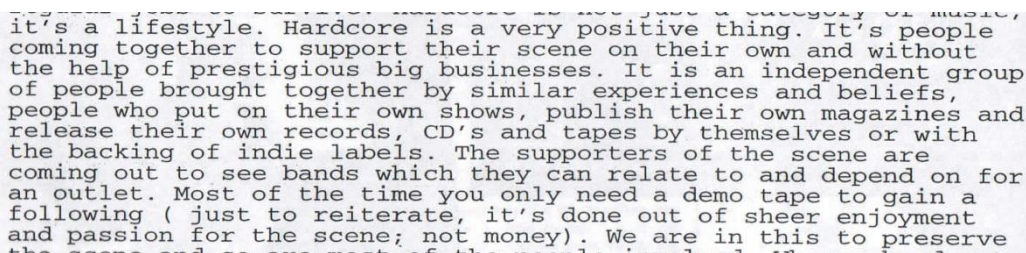
There is a sense that anybody can contribute to fanzines, even if they cloak themselves in anonymity. For example, in *Felt Good To Burn* (1994), the writer prefaces an article entitled 'March of the Pigs' with the following: "This article arrived mysteriously in the post with a brief note attached". In *Jake's Wrath* (Issue 5, 2001), Liadain interviews Glyn Smith, a member of the band **The Dagda**, and also a fanzine maker with *Scrawl*, who argues that the more collaborative a fanzine can be, the more demonstrative it can be of the community:

> I still don't think *Scrawl* is a good representation of what the Irish scene's about, because it's just me doing it. I'd rather it be a forum for people, have people submitting stuff and I put it together. At the moment, it's just me writing articles and writing reviews of the music I like, and I enjoy it but I don't know how valid it is, I'd rather it be a collective effort.

Some fanzines adopted a columns section whereby they allowed various readers to write columns; topics of discussion including their gig diaries, recent listening and musical recommendations, and more personal aspects of their life. Several Irish fanzines followed international trends that were recognisable in the US fanzine *Maximumrocknroll* and the UK fanzine *Fracture* by incorporating columns from various members of the music scene. A recent issue of *Maximumrocknroll* (Issue 358, 2013) contained columns from fourteen different contributors over fifteen pages, and as is the trend, the columns are positioned towards the front of the fanzine, after distribution details and letters. The final edition of *Unfit For Consumption* (Issue 10, 2006) featured columns from nine different contributors (along with thirteen different album reviewers); the content veers from trips to music festivals to job interviews to protest marches. As it was the final edition, it had built up enough respect within the community for people to feel it would be worthwhile to contribute articles and reviews. Issue 7 of *No Barcodes Necessary* (c.1998) features an international flavour with guest columns from fanzine writers in Sweden, England, Scotland, and Wales. Unsurprisingly there were many calls from fanzine writers for columns that went out without reply, particularly fledgling titles. In *Wild Hog Ride,* a Belfast-based fanzine, the writer Baron laments the fact that he has not garnered any columns from others in the scene: "Notice how this zine is missing the usual 'columns' section? Well, it is. I asked a few people to contribute and nobody (except Cormak) did. They all said they would but didn't. Maybe next time?" (*Wild Hog Ride*, Issue 1, 2002).

Columns in fanzines foster a translocal element, whereby scenes in different parts of the world were able to communicate with each other. These scenes not only involve local interaction but also connections with "groups of kindred spirits many miles away" (Bennett and Peterson, 2004: 8-9). Hodkinson (2004: 141-143) points to how members of Goth scenes connected with each other using media including fanzines. Similarly, Irish fanzines connected with the outside world in a variety of ways. As such, Irish fanzines feature contributions from abroad[94], and vice versa, through what are known as 'scene reports'. Niall McGuirk, writing a 'Dublin Scene Report' in the Malaysian fanzine *Vitro* in 1997, talked about some of the city's freesheets and their importance within the local music scene stating that they "give people the chance to communicate freely with others and try and share positive or negative experience[s] with them." It was not just through 'scene reports' that materials were transferred between publications. *Hurling Abuse* (Issue 1, 1999), a one-off publication from Wicklow, includes "An Open Letter To The Scene" from New York hardcore band **Subzero** that featured the following heartfelt plea, which was a clear rejection of the commercialisation of music:

> It is essential that more people take the time and effort to uphold the underground music scene. I am writing in hopes to awaken some of the people who care about the welfare of the hardcore scene and the whole underground music scene in general, yet fail to see the actual danger and threats it faces. I am concerned by the way the true meaning of hardcore has been neglected and vastly misinterpreted.

Figure 5.4: 'An Open Letter To The Scene' in *Hurling Abuse* (Issue 1, 1999)

Peer Reviewing and Social Reciprocity

These translocal articles suggest that the 'interactive community' (Bury, 2005) is mapped in different ways with signifiers such as style and musical interests. It also

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[94] *A Life of Buggery* (Issue 4/c.1990) features a 'Dutch Scene Report', while *Deprived* (issue 1, 1993) contains a 'Portuguese Scene Report'. An 'Irish Scene Report' features in an edition of the Portuguese metal fanzine *Dark Oath* (1993).

interacts with itself in different ways to the traditional media, and this is quite evident in the form of a peer review system that is a major component of fanzines. Generally located towards the back pages, the fanzine reviews section allows publishers of fanzines to send their publications to other writers for review. Fanzines would be appraised on several criteria – content, style, interviewing skills, adherence to DIY principles, layout, and production quality (fanzines could be reprimanded for inadequate stapling, as was the case with *Ethos'* review of *Plastazine* Issue 3, 1996). Generally, the reviews are positive; cynically, one could suggest that a writer would be generous in their review of other fanzines as they sought good reviews themselves to encourage sales, distributors, and advertisers (and to develop capital within the scene). Phil, who wrote *I Love Ecstasy…It Kills Ravers*, said the following in the 'Fanzine Reviews' section of his second issue (1999):

> I think the done thing in fanzine reviews is an attempt to persuade people into buying underground publications. It is seriously worth your time and a little bit of effort to buy a zine as almost all of them are full of genuine sincerity and honesty and they really do deserve support from people. The idea of sending off a S.A.E. to a strange address used to seem strange to me but now I feel it is a tiny bit of effort to make.

There is a sense that this goodwill is more about encouraging others to continue producing fanzines. It indicates reciprocity and collective reinforcement of political as well as aesthetic positions. Willie Stewart started his fanzine when he was fifteen, and he describes the thrill of getting reviewed in another Dublin-based fanzine:

> It was the most exciting thing that I could think could happen; that it was acknowledged and that it was now in the community...This guy actually picked it up and read it, which was really exciting (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

For some fanzine writers, the reviews section also shows an element of cultural accumulation, as well as evidence that they are financially contributing to the scene. Thus, numerous fanzine reviews mention the independent record store or gig that the fanzine reviewed was bought at: in *Fudge's* (issue 1, 1992) review of *Sprawl*: "this is quite old but I picked it up recently a gig for 30p". The writer, in his first edition, is illustrating that he has placed value in buying physical fanzines, as should those who are reading his. In *SLTA Zine* (Issue 1, 1999), Barry Lennon mentions that he picked up a copy of *Language of the Mad* "at the **Freebase** gig off Ian's distro", demonstrating insider knowledge for those who are already in the scene and would

know who Ian (the distributor) is, which mirrors Shuker's suggestion of what the musical 'underground' is. For those who pick it up by chance and are unfamiliar with the city or its musical landscape, this review from *SLTA* will make little sense. In saying that, it is difficult to fathom where one would stumble on a copy of *SLTA Zine* out of such contexts; it was only going to be readily available at gigs in locations such as The Lower Deck in Dublin and independent record stores such as Freebird and Road Records that shared a similar aesthetic.

In *Áilleacht Na Dorcha* (Issue 1, 1998), the writer Paddy has a "Zine Scene" which features reviews of fifteen other fanzines. None of these come from Ireland – instead they come from England, USA, Canada, Australia, Lithuania, Hungary, and Norway – and perhaps as it is Paddy's first edition, he does not criticise any of the other titles. Paddy demonstrates a fandom that is not just centred on the music but also towards some of the individual titles, such as American fanzine *Worm Gear*, which he proclaims "has grown beyond expectations…it just goes from strength to strength." Elsewhere, when reviewing English fanzine *Revenge*, he notes: "So do I like the zine?? Well, the answer is yes because I did not realise how difficult it is to get a zine out and it fills the role of a zine perfectly namely to inform, with band interviews and reviews." His own experiences in assembling his first fanzine have shaped his views in terms of the review, as he can empathise with his fellow producer. There is a corresponding sensibility among DIY musicians as well, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Six – they feel the need to reciprocate the support shown by local bands to them, and this extends to attending live gigs, buying merchandise, and supporting crowdfunded projects.

While not all fanzines contained a review section, it is considered part of an exchange network to review a fanzine that reviewed yours, and is often pinpointed as a fault of a fanzine when it does not carry such as section. *Jake's Wrath* (Issue 5, 2001) argues while reviewing *Nosebleed* (issue 21) that "if I had a complaint about *Nosebleed* it'd be that there are NO ZINE REVIEWS WHATSOEVER – why not? It's how people find out about new zines and I think it's important." This brings up some interesting issues around the rules of reciprocity. Mauss's (1954) work on gift-exchange has been influential in on-going discussions in anthropology since. Mauss focuses on how this kind of exchange helps to develop relationships; however, such gift-giving, according

to Mauss was not always carried out as true altruism. In many cases, people gave gifts as they expected a return, or at the very least, gift-giving was seen by Mauss as a way of enhancing one's honour. Within the societies that Mauss studied, one's authority could be damaged if they did not partake in some form of reciprocity. This provides an interesting platform for examining the expectations around reciprocity in fanzine review sections. Just as Mauss suggests, I content that is that it is not always altruistic motives that inform the exchange. There is an expectation that the exchange will be replicated and that reciprocity will be of benefit to the original 'giver'. Nonetheless, some writers consciously decided not to include fanzine reviews, which they acknowledge may have an impact on the interactivity of their publications. In issue 2 of *Aunty-Hero* (1997) the writer Keith makes this request:

> I have not included any reviews of zines and music, and I suppose this means that I will never get any freebies but please feel free to send articles of any nature or criticisms and any artwork would be great as I can't draw at all.

Newer fanzine titles in Ireland show respect towards the more prolific names in the scene; for instance, *Blag Juice* (Issue 2 /Year unknown) reviews issue 18 of *Nosebleed* calling it "Ireland's bestest zine next to this is back yet again and is better than ever". *Nosebleed* comes across as one of the most valued titles in the fanzine community, and was reviewed glowingly in numerous Irish fanzines. However, that was not pure localism, as evident in an interview with *Nosebleed* writer Boz Mugabe in *Riot 77* (Issue 2, 2000), which noted that *Maximumrocknroll* always tended to give *Nosebleed* very positive reviews, with the exception of one: "the porn issue[95] didn't get a good review, because it was done by some politically correct little girl, who took exception to it." With the esteem he was held in by other fanzines, Boz unwittingly became a gatekeeper within the DIY scene. This is demonstrated not just by the reviews he received from other writers but also in the conversations I had with music-makers in Chapter Six: both Richie Egan and Willie Stewart reveal in that chapter that *Nosebleed*'s approval for their bands played a significant role in cementing their own reputations within the local DIY scene. In a community formed by taste, Boz's opinion was highly valued.

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[95] "The porn issue" refers to an issue (13) of *Nosebleed* that was pornographically-themed at a time when pornography was illegal in Ireland, demonstrating further evidence of the gender specificity of some fanzine publishing. It was issued one month before *Playboy* magazine was legally sold in Ireland in December 1995.

For Irish fanzine writers and readers the fanzine review section had a sense of 'being in the know' about it: writers and scene members were often referred to simply by their first name or nickname, e.g. Boz, Deko, Niall, PA, Cormac, Anto. In an international context, it provided a connection to a much larger community in an era that was prior to widespread availability of the Internet. For the Irish fanzine reader, it introduced titles from places they probably would never travel to – Pittsburgh, Stoke-on-Trent, and Stoughton, Massachusetts are amongst the places that fanzines reviewed in issue 2 of *Unfit For Consumption* (2000) came from. These exchanges are very supportive to the network of producers, but it is questionable just how interesting they are to the ordinary readers. Outside of the real fanzine enthusiasts and collectors, the fanzine review section was perhaps one of the most irrelevant sections to a sizeable portion of the readership. Nevertheless, awareness that the punk 'community' was international would have been encouraging to local groups.

There was another motive for this reviews section, as reviewing an international fanzine was an opportunity to procure it for free or to engage in a healthy fanzine trade culture. For Thomas McCarthy, the opportunity to gather up fanzines from around the world was motivation itself in establishing a fanzine:

> If you got one fanzine, they'd have reviews of other fanzines…and if you *did* a fanzine…that was the advantage of it, you could just trade yours for other ones. So you could just send your crap little fanzine to South Africa or America or anywhere. You'd send it to that zine and then they'd review your zine and send you a copy with the review in it (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

In his interview, McCarthy outlined how as a young teenager growing up in Kilkenny– which he admits was not a bastion for punk activity – this international contact helped to affirm his bourgeoning punk identity. He referred to relationships formulated through pages marked "underground contacts and pen pals" that he has retained to this day. Communicating with 'pen pals' was something that Willie Stewart participated in also. For Stewart, some of those pen pals were more local and people he could arrange to meet up with at gigs in Dublin. A sense that a somewhat disenfranchised young male can find an international outlet and communication base seems to be commonplace amongst what seems to be a predominantly male-dominated community. Boz Mugabe, of the fanzine *Nosebleed*, also felt that one of the key elements of fanzine culture is the friendships and connections made:

I was coming from a hometown stuck in a weird eighties John Hughes movie fantasy so getting to know kids from other parts of the city that I might never otherwise have crossed paths with was the primary highlight (Email Interview, 13 June 2014).

Fanzine Writer as Outsider

Many of these fanzine writers position themselves at odds with the geographic community that they inhabit, but it should be also considered that in some regards, they are different to others within the music scene. Trevor Meehan (*Unfit For Consumption*) notes that he felt part of the Irish DIY music scene, and that it was an important outlet for meeting new people and developing friendships. However, his role as a fanzine writer positioned him as something of an 'outsider', particularly at live performances. While other attendees could immerse themselves in these gigs, he was trying to organise interviews and sell copies of the fanzines he brought[96]. Other studies have shown that active fan interaction in performances alters the experience; for example, Lingel and Naaman (2012)'s research on creators of amateur YouTube footage from concerts found that there was a general consensus that the recording of these shows took away from their participants' enjoyment of the concerts. Similarly, the producers of fanzines wrestle with their cultural experience. On one hand, it is enhanced through their active involvement in the music scene – they are elevated to a status of being 'in the know'. However, in a hierarchical sense, they do not have the same level of authority as members of bands, and when they are 'working' on material for their next publication, they do not get to experience the live show quite in the same way as the fan. In a sense, the fanzine writers are 'mediators', creating and editing representations of live events for those who cannot be there themselves. However, in the process of this mediating, the writer potentially has a different experience to that of the un-invested attendee. Fanzine writers do not quite have the same status as band members (unless of course, they are both a writer and musician), but they still have 'cultural capital' – those levels of 'cultural capital' may be different however, as will be explored in Chapter Six's hierarchy of fanhood.

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[96] In Chapter 4 (section 4.3), Meehan outlined the difficulties he encountered while trying to sell copies of his fanzine at a gig by the punk band **Oi Polloi**. Undoubtedly, experiences such as this one made attending gigs more stressful for fanzine writers like Meehan.

5.5 Capital Accumulation in Fanzine Culture

If the fanzine producer assumes a quasi-outsider role within the scene, there remains the question of what the personal benefits are in self-publishing. While fanzine writers suggest that the benefit is more for the scene than personal gain, they do receive forms of 'capital' through their involvement. At this stage, it is worth briefly revisiting this research's approach to dealing with capital in DIY cultures, as laid out in the literature review. As I detailed in that chapter, fanzine writers accrue some level of both cultural capital and social capital through their associations with fanzines. Alternatives to cultural capital – such as 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995) and 'fan cultural capital' (Fiske, 1992) – were considered, but ultimately considered to be less applicable within this context as Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualisation. This is not to suggest that works such as Thornton's (1995) should be completely dispensed with, as her study is beneficial to my own research work in terms of examining authenticity (as will be detailed later) and community hierarchies. Critically, the forms of cultural and social capital that fanzine producers accumulate (and which I discuss) are only demonstrated and valued within the taste community itself, and are rarely transferable outside of these scenes.

Fanzines are generally not created for financial reward – most fanzine creators are satisfied with covering printing costs. For producers of fanzines, 'social capital' is one of the ways they are compensated for their efforts – they develop networks within the fanzine writers community (as evident in the idea of sharing columns, artwork and reviews with other writers), build up strong relationships with other fans, and their position as a mediator between fans and musicians affords them a certain status. Jim Morrish reflects that those involved in fanzines in Cork were able to develop relationships based on mutual respect with those involved in DIY cultures in other parts of Ireland. He recalls that "we all met loads of new chums via the fanzine network, people like Niall McGuirk of Hope, Leagues O' Toole and dozens of folk through the football zines"[97] (Interview, Cork, 11 August 2014). As Thornton argues,

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[97] Morrish was also a writer for the Cork City F.C. fanzine *No More Plastic Pitches*. He recalls that there was "lots of crossover [with the readership of music zines]; some of the same writers, tons of the folk from 'the shed' [Cork's terrace] were also regular gig and [Sir] Henry's goers so it was very popular. A lot of the local bands would attend [Cork's ground] Turners Cross too, some games were like a who's who of the local alt music scene" (Interview, Cork, 11 August 2014).

social capital "stems not so much from *what* you know as *who* you know (and who knows you) (1995: 10), and for writers such as Morrish, they quickly became familiar not just in their own city but within other DIY scenes dotted around the country.

As well as social capital accrued through fanzine publishing, I also argue that fanzine producers generate a form of cultural capital that is specific to the taste community (as demonstrated at length, I have particular concerns with terming this 'subcultural capital'). The cultural capital that they gain, in most cases, has little impact on the progression of their professional lives. Instead, almost all respondents admitted that they no interest in becoming full-time writers, portraying the fanzine as a labour of love. To quote Trevor Meehan: "I just wanted this to be my little baby and it could look whatever way it wanted to and I could write whatever way I wanted to and that's why I never even dreamt of doing it professionally" (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013). Elsewhere, they pitched themselves in opposition to the mainstream press. *Nosebleed* writer Boz Mugabe viewed traditional press with a degree of suspicion, in comparison to fanzine publications:

> Fanzines were curated information, like a press version of a mixtape from a friend, which always gave them an advantage on a personal level. There's no element of surprise in traditional music press. While most pro journalists mean well, there's no escaping the hard cold fact that the end result is to generate advertising revenue (Email Interview, 13 June 2014).

However, for those few who move from DIY fanzine publishing to commercial publishing, there is scope for developing significant social and cultural capital within the DIY scenes, and having the "associations of credibility" that Shuker (2008: 168) argues that music journalists like Lester Bangs and Paul Morley were able to carry over to the mainstream press. Leagues O'Toole admits that his involvement in fanzine culture with the short-lived *Fudge* and DIY promotion with Hope gave him some credibility that he was able to transfer to the music industry later in life:

> People knew you were a fairly genuine fan that was actively involved in stuff and had some idea about what you were talking about and not just one of these people that is attracted to the music industry because of the glamour and doesn't really know anything about music (Interview, Dublin, 6 March 2013).
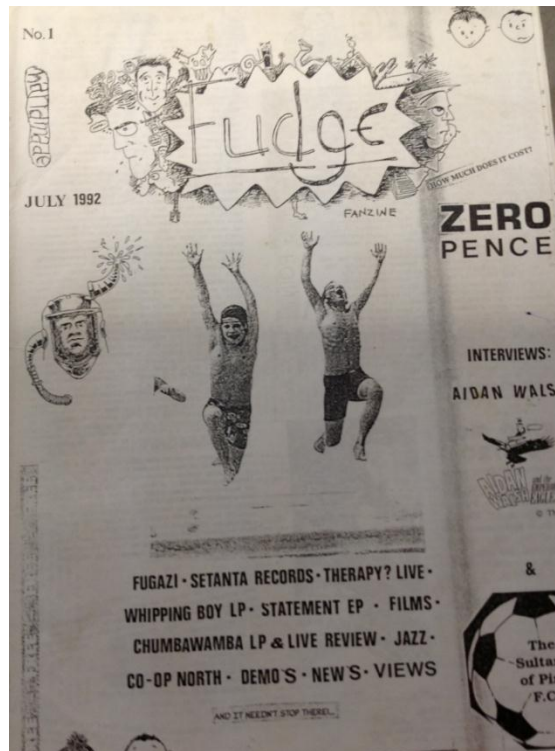
Figure 5.5: *Fudge* **(Issue 1, 1992)**

In an Irish context, few individuals made such a transition as O'Toole, and hence, do not have the opportunity to generate economic capital through these music scenes. As a result, it is 'cultural capital' that fanzine writers mostly gain. In a sense, they become gatekeepers of taste; a review or feature in a fanzine can cement or undermine a band's position within the scene. In this respect, it is clear that performers within various DIY scenes respect fanzines and consider them a credible way of promoting their bands (Chapter Six), due to their independence from any commercial concerns. The following example illustrates this:

> I'd like to thank you for doing the fanzine as fanzine's [sic] are a key element to the scene. It's one of the things that makes the scene cool and different from everything else. You get to express a personal opinion and this is the way to find out about new bands and bands you don't read about in glossy covered magazines all the time…that's really important (Interview with Daryl from **Snapcase**[98], *Unfit For Consumption*, Issue 2, 2000)

The respect shown to fanzine writers by musicians is a critical aspect in developing cultural capital, and it helped cement their position as taste gatekeepers. A good review or feature from one of the more significant fanzines could lead to a unanimous seal of

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[98] **Snapcase** are an American hardcore band that featured in a Q&A verbatim-style interview in this issue of *Unfit For Consumption*.

approval from the community. In the 1990s, *Nosebleed* was one of *the* main Irish fanzines and for Richie Egan and his band at the time **Black Belt Jones**, it was a major coup to get featured in it:

> I always had the impression that people were looking down their noses at the punk-pop stuff, we were skaters[99] as well. So when Boz interviewed **Black Belt Jones**, and for some reason he went "youse[100] are alright", I was really proud of that because I used to really love the interviews in *Nosebleed*. He always knew what he was talking about musically. A music magazine wouldn't really interview you unless you'd an album coming out or a tour, whereas a fanzine would talk to you for any reason (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

This is an important final point that Egan makes as it suggests that the mainstream papers work closely with PR companies to promote sales, and are rewarded with advertising revenue, whereas the fanzine is independent of the music industry in this way. However, some PR companies may be watching fanzines to ensure that they do not miss out on the 'next big thing'. For some fanzine producers, they may be unaware of the influence that they have in their scenes, and feel that they are self-publishing for more selfish reasons – i.e. to get their work and thoughts out to the wider public, or to help develop their own networks (social capital) within the scene. Fanzine writers who were interviewed for this project tended, in general, to be dismissive of their overall influence; one could speculate that they are actually aware of their influence but a demonstration of self-effacement is associated with integrity.

Nonetheless, it is clear that their productions have an impact. Thornton's (1995) focus on club culture saw her coin the phrase "subcultural capital" to help explain this impact. Thornton does not share with Bourdieu the emphasis on educational background as a strong signifier of capital, and her deviation from Bourdieu in this respect has some relevance for the interpretation of my own research findings. While the majority of the respondents in this research have some level of third-level education, I cannot come to a firm conclusion as to whether this experience had a role in developing 'taste' as education was not a central criterion in this study. Taste as a unifying ideal plays on fashion and lifestyle, but first and foremost is bounded by favoured musical styles of individuals and networks. Thornton's conceptualisation has

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[99] Dowd et al (2004) examine the growing scene of SkatePunk in the 1990s.
[100] Dublin slang for plural of 'you'.

some further benefits to this research on Irish fanzines, even though I do not use the concept of subculture in this context:

> Just as cultural capital is personified in 'good' manners and urbane conversation, so subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being 'in the know', using (but not over-using) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles (1995: 11-12).

Like Fiske (1992), Thornton examines the esteem one can receive from their standing within a community of taste and looks at how 'hipness' can contribute to the accumulation of capital. Fanzine writers may not associate themselves with 'hipness' but tend to agree that their opinions have (or had) some credibility within the Irish underground music scene. Thornton adds that subcultural capital may not be considered as valuable as economic capital but that the 'hipness' attached to it can lead to other opportunities that may provide financial rewards or future occupations. This is echoed by some of the respondents to this research; one became a professional writer and publisher, three individuals got involved in graphic design work, and a couple interviewed opened their own store in Dublin that sold zines and books[101]. At the same time, three other interviewees worked in the civil service while working on their zines, a world as far removed as possible from the DIY scenes they wrote about. However, their involvement in the fanzine world generates some degree of 'authenticity', and Thornton argues that "authenticity…offers feelings of community" (1995: 26). To date, discussions on capital have been focussed on fanzine makers; it is also important to explore what kind of capital can be accumulated by their users, particularly through fanzine collecting.

5.6 The Process of Fanzine Collecting

Collecting in music and fan cultures is not a new phenomenon, and has been discussed in the academy as a practice of collectors with an interest in books (Benjamin, 1931), film (Staiger, 2005), comic books (Tankel & Murphy, 1998; Woo, 2012), and music (Straw, 1997; McCourt, 2005; Hayes, 2006; Kibby, 2009). There is a great deal of

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[101] It should be noted that they also worked other jobs to help support the upkeep of the shop. Income from the shop itself was not a significant enough revenue generator to pay them a living wage.

social importance to looking at how material culture takes on a different significance when it is not just a mere commodity but part of a personalised collection. Nonetheless, it is surprising to consider publications such as fanzines to be collectable because of their intrinsic ephemerality and immediacy, and also because fanzines are fan productions, examples of Fiske's notion of 'textual productivity' (1992). Fiske argues that amongst communities of fans, accumulating knowledge is central to achieving high levels of 'fan' cultural capital, stating that "fans, like buffs, are often avid collectors, and the cultural collection is a point where cultural and economic capital come together" (Fiske, 1992:43). Taking this as a starting point for this study of music fanzine collectors it could be expected that the larger - or rarer - a collection is, the more cultural capital the collector has within the taste community. Michael Owens was a regular reader of fanzines in his teens and twenties (he is now in his early thirties) and recalls the significance of fanzine collecting in the community: "It was nearly as important as having a good record collection - having a load of zines in your gaff" (Dublin Focus Group, 31 January 2014). However, size should not necessarily be the basis for knowledge accumulation. Just because one has a sizeable collection it does not mean that he or she has absorbed all the content within it, or even read it in the first place; 'ownership' implies 'knowledge' of the field, but that is not always the case. Before going further, I think it is imperative to acknowledge that the participants in my study who identified themselves as collectors were genuine fans of the medium. Not only did they collect fanzines but they also devoured the content in the fanzines. They also referred to occasions when they would read back through old fanzines, long after their initial use-value. 'Poseurs'– inauthentic punks seen as "dishonest" (Gordon, 2005: 116) or someone "who hops on the bandwagon and blindly conforms to the latest trends" (Moore, 2005: 235) may well exist within DIY cultures. Indeed, they may be present in Irish punk communities. However, they were not encountered in this study, which largely examined retrospective music communities.

For Thornton (1995) participants have to demonstrate their authenticity in order to be deemed as 'hip' as opposed to a 'poseur'; members of the club scenes she studied needed to be able to identify what are the key components of that collection and how best to use it. At the same time, there is an element of gatekeeping at play here, whereby large collectors control the access to their collection, and this in itself conveys

high status amongst the community. However, some fanzine collectors feel that there is a need to share their collection with others:

> I'd say I have all the ones from the [19]90s anyway. I used to have them out in the sitting room where people could grab them and read them if they wanted to, but now they're kind of just stored away. I'd dig them out the odd time and have a look. They're kind of dear to me…I don't think they're worth anything in monetary value…There's people I know now that you just know as penpals, like people who'd be "I'm the only punk in this village in Tipperary" and then you'd get to know them for years (Interview, Thomas McCarthy, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

Thomas made just a handful of issues of his own (non-music) fanzine, and thus classifies himself more as a user than a producer. His usage of fanzines is more active than most, as evident by his avid collecting practices. He feels some responsibility to protect his collection, explaining that: "they are all in good condition [but] they are not really organised; maybe the Irish ones are piled together in a very haphazard way… I'm not sure anyone else would take good care of them" (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013). Thomas feels that he has developed the knowledge to adequately preserve this collection, and does not trust that others would have that capacity or level of archival responsibility that Tankel and Murphy (1998) describe as 'curatorial consumption'; that is, the cultural practice of selecting specific artefacts, due to their significance and meaning, and maintaining them. In this situation, the curator does not just collect arbitrarily, instead targeting exactly what they need to acquire and retain. This ability to discriminate (Shuker, 2004) is for Thornton a signifier of subcultural capital. The knowledge of what is 'collectable' reflects community tastes.

Trevor (*Unfit For Consumption*) started collecting fanzines in the early 1990s. To this day he has retained a large section of his fanzine collection: while it is out of his view in his parents' attic, he has it neatly organised and retained within plastic containers to avoid any damage. He admits that there is some element of curatorial responsibility to keeping this intact:

> I think it's a piece of history really, that's why I've kept it. A friend is always laughing that I'll be a great archivist for the DIY music in that period of time because I have a lot of fanzines from that era…just said it would be a good idea if somebody held onto some of this stuff…someday, somewhere, someone will ask about them, and I'll be the one to have a response, "you know I still have that"… (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2012).

He feels that there will be some type of value attached to his collection one day. Other collectors bear similarities with some of Shuker's (2004) record collectors; 'completism', that drive to own an entire collection of something, is central to the mind-set of many collectors. It is at this juncture that the process of collecting, as Baudrillard puts it, "offers us a paradigm of perfection, for this is where the passionate enterprise of possession can achieve its ambitions" (1994: 8). The front page of *React* said it was "always free and anti-copyright" and "not for material gain". Easily reproducible and of no real monetary value, one would imagine that not many users would hold onto that edition beyond a few months. Not only is a publication like *React* made of cheap materials, but the content is immediate and its importance is relatively short lived. For instance, the "Gig News" section in Issue 22 (1993) detailed events all occurring within a timeframe of a month and in the vicinity of the writer's base in Dublin. Crucially, the section also chronicled the happenings that he specifically knew would interest those offered the freesheet at independent gigs in the city. However, many of the readers that posted £2 to the writer to secure six issues mailed to them would have actually consumed that issue beyond the timeframe of those events. Furthermore, they would have been reading about a scene and a city that they were not familiar with; many fanzine enthusiasts accessed publications from other countries to help develop their collections and to compare the practices of other fan communities, whereby international content is mutually validating of these communities. It also was a form of symbolic exchange; the material might be irrelevant in terms of news content but it can still be viewed as an exotic artefact to the collection.

It was not just international collectors that took an interest in a title like *React*. As back editions of the publication became scarcer, individuals tried different methods to accumulate the titles they needed. In *Industrial Weed* (Issue 1, 1995), which launched five years after the first *React*, the writer is keen to acquire the entire collection: "If anyone has all 26 copies of *React* please get in touch with me at the address at the end of the intro so I can copy them or buy them or something like that". My own access to it came from a private collector, who has kept it over twenty years after first picking it up at a record store. Two reasons spring to mind for why one would retain this publication: 1) a sense of nostalgia for a period of time and community long sing gone; and 2) as a form of 'cultural accumulation'.

There is something of a contradiction in the inherited anti-capitalist ethos often portrayed in the pages of fanzines with the physical collection of them. For instance, one fanzine user told me after an interview that he still had every copy of *Nosebleed* in pristine condition. Fanzines may not necessarily be deemed commodities – after all, they are transferable within an economic system that relies on either a non-profit ethos and/or a form of barter – but there is a fetishisation of these artefacts taking place here. This presents a significant paradox whereby ephemeral publications that are generally made by individuals who the collector knows personally, and that have little value (economically or otherwise), become collectible and revered objects. Thus, the act of collecting transforms the meaning of these publications.

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, many of those who consume fanzines also wrote a fanzine at one stage or another. This is partially due to the trade culture[102] that enveloped fanzine collecting worldwide (Duncombe, 2008). In some cases, the exchange was more presumed than formalised; for instance, one fanzine writer showed me a letter he received from another fanzine producer thanking him for buying his most recent issue, and also informing him that he had bought his latest edition in a shop in Dublin. Richie Egan explained that this trade culture developed his view of an international DIY 'scene':

> You were getting fanzines from America like *Cometbus*[103], and this guy Aaron or something wrote it, and it was just really thick and hand-written, but you're learning a lot about different cultures from the ground and this is before the Internet so it was really exotic to hear about **Green Day** – this is when they were a tiny little band – that was mecca to us to read about something like that. Then you start branching out. I used to get *Punk Planet*, I used to get *Maximumrocknroll*, I used to trade. You're basically able to connect with people into the same shit as you and your voice is sort of solidified, so instead of having to speak, your fanzine is your voice (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

The Significance of Record Shops & Record Collecting

Those that seek scarce fanzine titles are comparable to those who wade through boxes of records in order to complete their personal collections. Most of the interviewees in this project also identified themselves as collectors of vinyl records. Like the limited

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[102] Warner (1994: 176) notes that this trade culture became a facet of science fiction fandom by the 1930's.

[103] A US fanzine that has been published (more sporadically in recent years) since 1981.

amount of research conducted on fanzines, Roy Shuker believes that very little is known about the contemporary record collector (Shuker, 2004: 313). Shuker maintains two links between record collecting and fanzines that are interesting in the context of my research: 1) he sees the independent record store as an outlet that contributes "significantly to the local music scenes" (2010: 119) in a number of ways including the stocking of local fanzines; 2) his study of collectors shows that those who collect records are also likely to be collectors of music-related publications, whether they be books, magazines, or fanzines (2010: 157).

Fanzine publisher Cian Hynes (*Riot 77*) elaborates that being a collector – and particularly of punk records and related content such as his collection of fanzines – has cast him as an outsider:

> I've always been told that what I was doing was 'past it' or dated. When I got into punk rock when I was twelve, which would have been 1989, people were saying "that's dead, that's the seventies, that's gone". When I started buying records and tapes were coming out, people were saying "records were dead", and then CDs came out…for me I've always felt I've always been doing not what would have been seen as the norm at the time (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

Outside of local gigs, the independent record store is the main hub for accessing fanzine literature, and this is something that is not just unique to Ireland. Anto Dillon (*Loserdom*) feels that they are very much dependent on each other:

> Independent record stores – they were the lifeblood of fanzines. Fanzines were very much part of the culture of independent record stores and without independent record stores, you wouldn't really have music fanzines. That's where I discovered them, and where I always found them. Freebird [Records, Dublin] was really the main one (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

Stores like Freebird represent a significant component of this particular 'art world'. The shop was referenced frequently in participant interviews. Trevor Meehan reminisced that checking out fanzines was as important as purchasing records and "punk clothing" on his teenage trips from Limerick to Dublin. The record store was a place where music fans could meet, discuss new titles, and browse the alternative literature that was left on the table. Towards the late 1990s, Irish independent record stores were awash with freesheets and fanzines from around the country. Dave Kennedy ran Road Records, a small but esteemed record store located on Fade Street

in Dublin's city centre that closed in 2010. It was the archetypal independent record store, with one wall covered in racks storing vinyl LPs, and the other wall primarily consisting of CD releases, and very little room in between for the customers to manoeuvre. All available floor, wall, or counter space was utilised to house records, CDs, and literature about music. Yet, it was a place where a music fan could easily spend a few hours, listening to new releases of local and international bands on the shop's turntable while conversing with Dave and his equally amiable partner Julie. Dave is a fan of fanzines, and agrees that all of this activity was closely interlinked:

> It was definitely something we encouraged because it was something that was similar to what we were trying to do; I think fanzines were kind of important to what was happening in the scene as well so it was definitely something that we actively tried to seek out (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

Outside of the traditional record store, there was even a specialist store, Red Ink, that sold 'radical books' and fanzines in Dublin in the early part of the 21st Century that was run by Willie Stewart and his partner Natalia:

> When we were living in New Orleans, we had a zine/record shop in our house every Sunday. When we came back to Ireland, we had loads of stuff with us, and we started selling that at gigs. The scene had multiplied like crazy. Before we left, there were a handful of bands, a couple of fanzines…When we came back from the States, it was like a whole new generation of people who would have been sixteen to nineteen, and they were going wild for zines and alternative literature and stuff, so we figured that we would just open up a shop (Interview, Willie Stewart, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

Nostalgia and Changing Habits

With a shift towards digital technologies, there has been a declining number of local independent record stores internationally and a corresponding drop-off in fanzine publications; nonetheless, there are still people actively collecting. Collectors have a strong emotional connection to the physical artefact, and this is something that prohibits them from fully shedding their collection. Three Dublin musicians I spoke to – Barry, Richie, and Michael - noted that while they may not have their teenage collection of fanzines readily available, these were all still stored in attics, garden sheds, or childhood bedrooms in their parents' homes. They had survived the cull of various spring-cleans over the past fifteen to twenty years, thus retaining a symbolic value beyond their original purpose. McCourt, in his research on digital music collecting notes that "digital sound files lack potential emotive contexts altogether.

They are just data, metadata, and a thumbnail and therefore emotionally less valuable than a medium you can hold in your hands" (2005: 250). That same emotional context can be applied to the fanzine collector who maintains their physical copies of fanzines years after they may seem relevant as the publications form part of their identity. In some cases, it may be an identity that has altered over the decades as personal and professional circumstances change, but is a reminder of a more active engagement with a scene. It can evoke nostalgia for youth, political engagement, and music. Conor 'Curehead', as he was known, was a member of the Cork scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and wrote for fanzines including *Squashed Apple*. In the summer of 2014, he rediscovered a fanzine collection that had stayed in his father's attic for two decades that was far removed from a life he now led in the corporate world:

> After moving to London I got completely disinterested in the scene; I wasn't connected to it anymore. My politics changed and I just wanted to do other things in life… I suppose for a time in my late teens and early twenties, they were a part of my life and it was nice to go through them recently and remember that part of your life…They definitely have a value to me, as it was a difficult time for me personally so it is a reminder of things I went through at the time and the interests I had and how much I have changed since that time (Email interview, 24 September 2014).

While Conor had to downscale that collection he found at his father's house to move it to his own home, there was a sense of nostalgia that came from reading back over older publications, which indicates how some individuals keep these collections as a method of recalling specific times, events, and places. While we tend to collect things from our past of personal significance, we start to separate from 'stuff' (Miller, 2010) as we get older. Interestingly, a number of the fanzine producers encountered during this research were working on their publications while in post-primary school or in University. As producers of fanzines are generally the biggest collectors of these texts, a common occurrence amongst older collectors of fanzines has been that their collecting habits tend to change as they have got older, moved out of home, co-habited, and started their own families – this was very much demonstrated in field interviews with Michael, Richie, Barry, and Conor. It mirrors Shuker's attestation that "buying tends to decline with age, increased family commitments, and with the items still sought becoming fewer and more difficult to acquire" (2010: 126). Indeed, personal space – in both a physical and psychological sense - has become more limited as active members of the fanzine community have progressed into their thirties but

also other commodities and interests have started to fill their lives and occupy their time. Willie Steward (*Non-Plastique*) recalls that as a teenager, he threw himself headfirst into building up a large collection: "I was mad for everything - finding ads for mail order distros in England and sending them money to buy zines. My zine collection was huge, it was ridiculous. I gave most of it away" (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012). Keeping a collection and sharing it – via a mini-distribution or otherwise – demonstrates a social aspect to collecting. While fanzines still play very much a part of his life, Willie readily admits that he does not search out new fanzines as much as he used to. Like Willie, other fanzine producers have decided not to maintain their collection over the decades, including Boz, the writer of *Nosebleed*:

> I did have a huge collection of these at one point but as they became fodder in a box I never opened, I got rid of most of them. I still have well-preserved copies of my own publications and selected other titles, but moving forward is a priority and I dislike hoarding these things like dusty family albums (Email Interview, 13 June 2014).

Interestingly Boz notes that the copies he has kept are 'well-preserved', with a prioritisation of the collection similar to how Miller (2008) proposes – in Miller's studies, the older participants started to discriminate as to what trinkets and objects would be retained within their homes, and what would be ultimately discarded. For Boz, he has shed his collection as he has grown older and moved further away from the punk scene, but retained those he considers most important, and has done so with a careful curatorial obligation. Reynolds (2011) asks "are we nostalgic precisely because our culture has stopped moving forward and so we inevitably look back to more momentous and dynamic times" (2011, xiv). The retention of fanzines is a nostalgic practice, but those collectors like Boz are more closely linked to Boym's idea of 'reflective nostalgia' (2001). Boym uses the word 'algia' (from its Greek roots) to describe the longing that exists for a home or place that no longer exists, a yearning for a different time that has now passed. While that wistful yearning can be there for those who retain collections of fanzines, they have accepted that circumstances and ageing have changed their personas somewhat[104].

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[104] Many punk fans do not necessarily leave the 'scene' as they age; their practices may change but they still associate themselves with punk, buy merchandise and media related to the genre, and go to 'gigs'. Bennett (2006) looks at this in greater detail with his ethnographic study of older UK punks.

Having a strong and 'well-preserved' collection surely gives one some credibility and cultural capital, but it is hard to fathom how far one will go for a rare copy of a music fanzine. From data retrieved for this study, it would not seem that their financial value as collectables would be an added reason to maintain them. An eBay search conducted in July 2014 brought up just one Irish music fanzine. Issue 6 of *Unfit For Consumption* failed to attract any bids, despite a starting price of just 99 pence. However, as it is just a decade old, it is still relatively recent history, whereas a glance at titles from other fields and countries shows that there is value in certain underground publications. For example, a rare copy of the first Irish science fiction fanzine *Hyphen* from 1955 (Issue 15) was on sale for $250 from a US trader. An Irish football fanzine entitled *No Way Referee* (issue 1, 1992), which was written by Niall from *React,* was available for £6 from a UK site specialising in football fanzines. Older international music fanzines did attract a great deal of attention, including an original copy of the UK punk fanzine *Sniffin' Glue* from 1976 (Issue 5), which was listed at £150, illustrating that a format that was so there to represent the 'other' was now considered a commodity, or an antique. However, *Sniffin' Glue* was a title that was far more influential internationally than any Irish fanzine has ever been, and as such Irish fanzine collectors do not believe that their collections will provide for a future financial windfall, unless it contains a rare and significant international fanzine. As the collector Thomas notes:

> I would love if they did have some economic value, but they have none as far as I'm aware, they have a sentimental value to me…I might sell it if I thought it was worth anything, unfortunately I think not (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

Fanzine Archiving

There are other reasons beyond a lack of financial incentives as to why individuals do not sell their collections. Again, Thomas touches on this notion of sentimentality, and this retention of ephemeral publications is a substantial contributor to his emotional capital. Thomas also feels that others should have accessibility to his fanzines, if they want to read them within the confines of his own home, but other collectors have taken it a step further. Either as a way of dealing with having to downsize their collections or because of a sense of communal responsibility, or more than likely as a mixture of both and certainly with an element of 'reflective nostalgia', some fanzine producers donated their collections to the establishment of the Forgotten Zine Archive, based in

Dublin since 2004, a somewhat transient collection that has moved between venues since its inception.

Figure 5.6: The Forgotten Zine Archive, Dublin (May 2013).

The original collection of over 1200 fanzines was donated by just four private collectors, all of whom were at one stage fanzine writers themselves, and has since swelled to over 2000 fanzines. It is interesting to examine a public medium such as the fanzine, which was an outlet for discussion and debate, that subsequently ended up in the private sphere during the collecting phase would come back into an alternative public sphere and be reimagined in a contemporary context. One of the original four donators, Anto Dillon admits he 'discriminated', to use Shuker's terminology:

> I don't miss them as I still have a sizeable zine collection. Zines have been such a big part of my life that I could not give away the zines which hold personal value to me… I'm glad that they are available for others to read and possibly be inspired by, or [to] find some insight and entertainment (Email Interview, 6 April 2015).

Niall McGuirk was a little more cutthroat about shedding his fanzines for the public collection:

> I had quite a few zines gathering dust in my house and thought the best place for them would be a public forum. I had already donated a lot of earlier UK zines to the zine library in Bradford at the 1in12 Club[105] but had kept my Irish ones. Donating them to zine library I felt was a positive way of showing what was going on in the Dublin punk scene. An odd time I miss not being able to put my hand to something relatively quickly but it is better that they exist for wider possible public consumption (Email Interview, 7 April 2015).

In 2013, a group of student librarians as part of their Master's Degree decided to rearrange and catalogue the Forgotten Zine Archive, injecting new life into the faltering library. Two of the librarians have continued to work on the archive in a voluntary capacity, and in the process, have made the materials more readily available. In the summer of 2014, they held an exhibition in Dublin city, and have moved the archive out of Seomra Spraoi for particular events linked to 'zine' culture in the capital such as the Dublin Zine Fair and Independents Day. At the Dublin Zine Fair in 2014, I noticed that the mix of those reading music fanzines from the 1980s and 1990s varied drastically in age – there were the older punks who undoubtedly recalled some of the texts the first time around sitting down beside young music fans who just were not born when titles such as the influential *Nosebleed* were a major part of the local music scene. If collections of music fanzines chronicling the happenings of a scene ten, twenty, or thirty years ago, are to be influential in a current era of ever evolving technologies and diminishing fanzine production, then they need to be readily available.

It would be reasonable to suggest that digitisation of these texts is the easiest way to achieve that. Online, the Irish Metal Archives contain numerous scans of metal and hardcore fanzines. A large number of these titles such as *Deprived* and *Def Trash* cannot be found in the Forgotten Zine Library; this presumably is because their musical style was not fitting with the key musical tastes or ethos that predominated fanzine culture over the past thirty years or so. However, in a blog post, US librarian Kelly Wooten (2009) outlined four key areas as to why she did not partake in the digitisation of fanzines – privacy, permission, copyright, and print culture. While a

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[105] An anarchist social centre based in Bradford, UK.

handful of websites in Ireland have digitised early fanzines, the majority of archival material has only been available in its original form. Mick O'Dwyer, a librarian for the Forgotten Zine Archive, echoes the concerns of Wooten:

> Digitising them would give you the body of them, but not the soul. As they can be highly personal and generally distributed in small runs to like-minded souls, some members of the zine community are uncomfortable with having their work in an archive, even in an autonomous social centre like ours. To put something online for a worldwide audience might be completely against the creator's intentions (Email Interview, 6 April 2015).

O'Dwyer sees these publications as artefacts that are retained within small, autonomous communities. It is questionable whether or not these publications can influence a new wave of DIY fandom, with participants in local music scenes inspired to start their own homemade publications through coming into contact with an archive like this. While there have been a handful of new music fanzine titles in the last couple of years in Ireland, it is hard to imagine that the contents of the Forgotten Zine Archive will go beyond being merely pieces of reflective nostalgia.

5.7 Conclusion

The archival duty that some people feel they have plays a role in maintaining a scene. Through this chapter, I have looked at various ways that fanzines have done that. A great deal of this work done by fanzines in moulding communities has been in the past sense, as fanzines have been subsumed by other forms of communication that will be discussed further (Chapter Seven) when I examine the challenges that exist for fanzine culture in the 21st Century. Nonetheless, those still involved in publishing fanzines believe they are still a major component of alternative music cultures.

Through exploring the scenes, producers, and collectors of fanzines, it is evident that the paradigmatic approach to fanzine production and dissemination that was discussed in the previous chapter places 'authenticity' as one of its central motifs. Various forms of capital have been introduced in this chapter that will be revisited throughout this research. There is a significant part of this community that has yet to be discussed at length – musicians – and they will be the focus of Chapter Six.

Chapter Six – The Relationship Between Fanzines and Musicians

6.1 Introduction

To date, this research has focussed on fanzine makers and users in Irish music scenes who largely subscribe to the DIY ethic, while also examining the aesthetics and methods of content collection utilised by fanzine producers. Yet, there has been little attention paid hitherto to the relationship between fanzines and music makers. It may be a somewhat simplistic statement to make but without the musicians, there would be no music fanzines; fashion, politics, environmental concerns, and anti-capitalist discourses may be unifying factors for many participants within a scene[106], but an attraction to the music itself is the underlying connection, and the primary reason why one would read a fanzine. Thus, this chapter focuses particularly on musicians and fanzine producers, and examines their relationships by drawing on theoretical perspectives from the scholarly field of fandom studies. It proposes a typology of fandom that exists within DIY scenes, and highlights how intertwined various key members of scenes are. It explores how the practices of fandom within localised communities can differ from fandom that is centred on 'stardom'.

This chapter analyses how bands interact with fanzine writers, and how that differs from how they engage with the mainstream music press. Drawing on contributions from musicians who have been active in these scenes over the past twenty-five years, it demonstrates how providing an alternative to the mainstream has been a significant part of the paradigm of fanzine production and consumption. It is important to remember that many of these fan communities are retrospective, so there can be an overly romantic nostalgia for an era when the fanzine was an integral aspect of alternative music cultures. Finally, the chapter also interacts with current, younger musicians to determine their views of fandom and fan media in contemporary scenes.

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[106] It should also be noted that the music may not be always the main reason people remain in a 'scene'; while music may be the initial attraction, it may be how the 'scene' forms part of the participant's social life that becomes the most important factor for staying in it.

6.2 'Already up to their necks in it anyway': the role of Fandom in DIY Communities

While fandom describes fans and their practices, the influential Frankfurt School's cultural critique considered fans as consumers rather than producers. Jenkins (1992a) places them in a more proactive position arguing that the audience has greater agency. In DIY scenes, defining the fan can perhaps be more difficult than in other fandoms, as the behaviours of participants may not be deemed to be 'fanatical'. In the DIY community, fandom is not always acknowledged, something that Lewis (1992) suggested. The fandom perpetrated in this DIY community may be more subconscious than its members know, or indeed, it can be more purposely hidden in order to retain 'hipness', a signifier of what Thornton (1995) sees as subcultural capital. Some participants within these scenes do not want to be outwardly perceived to be a fan of particular bands, turning up to gigs dressed in merchandise[107] related to the band. Instead, they want to be considered as fans of music in general, as well as fans of the scene and its conventions. Duffett (2009) looks at how 'anti-fandom' (Gray, 2003) was demonstrated in early punk, through the encouragement of audiences to heckle and spit at performers to display opposition to the concept of stardom. While Duffett's example demonstrates abhorrence for celebrity culture, it is difficult to agree that it is necessarily an act of anti-fandom. By attending and participating in the live environment, and in particular from finding pleasure in it, they were fans, but their actions helped distinguish them from fans of mainstream cultural activities. Similarly those who participate in DIY scenes may rally against the notions of 'celebrity' and capitalism but they are not quite anti-fans. In order to better understand the complex dynamics within local scenes, I propose a typology of four levels of fandom – 'uber', 'smart/active', 'supporter', and 'friend'. Interestingly, the lines are so blurred between these categories that many members of scenes can be identified by more than one of these labels. Nonetheless, whilst people shift between categories as they leave and join bands or as they age, the categories themselves are valuable. I will briefly outline how these types of fandom differ before placing them within a local hierarchy in the next

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[107] Merchandise – as a synonym for commodities – is an interesting word in a 'punk' context. Most punk bands produce limited merchandise to sell at gigs, rarely extending beyond t-shirts, and some accessories such as pin badges and patches. For larger bands, or those with more ambition and/or capital, the 'merch table' may extend to contain hoodies, beanie hats, baseball caps, etc.

section.

Within the taste community, fanzine writers themselves demonstrate differing degrees of fanhood. Long-term writers with strong links to scenes may deem themselves more of a fan than a first-time publisher. In their study on 'backyard wrestling'[108] (2007), McBride and Bird found two different types of fans – the 'smart' fan, and 'marks' (fans who believed the 'sport' was authentic). The 'smart' fan, possessing vast amount of knowledge about the wrestlers and the real history of the entertainment sport, treat 'marks' with a degree of contempt. While I reluctantly apply the 'smart' fan concept to the fanhood axis featured in this section, as in theory these local scenes are participatory cultures, it does have some relevance in such hierarchies, as the 'smart' fans possess a degree of 'hipness' (Thornton, 1995), and their knowledge and expertise are signifiers of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). In McBride and Bird's study (2007), the terms 'Smarts' and 'Marks' were used within the wrestling scene itself and the term 'Smart' was a method of self-identification, while they used to term 'Marks' to deride other fans. Furthermore, the "Smarts approach the genre of wrestling as would-be insiders while Marks root unreflexively for the most popular faces" (2007: 169). The Smarts vicariously consume information about the scene to ensure that they are not just knowledgeable about current activities but that they are also aware of up-and-coming 'stars' and underground or exotic translocal communities (for instance, Japanese and Mexican wrestling shows). Similarly, the smart fan in the DIY community has an awareness of and connection with other music scenes outside their own locale. McBride and Bird's (2007) conceptualisation is transferable to DIY music cultures in that experienced participants within the scene are aware of the "warts and all" practices of the scene and do not share the same naivety of newcomers to the scene. The 'smart' fan is an insider with privileged access; the rhetoric around scenes may be communitarian but the practice is slightly different. The 'smart' fanzine writer understands the mechanisms that take a band from rehearsal room to stage or a song from studio to record, and how independent gigs operate, as well as being aware of ethical concerns of the scene. There is a divide between experienced fanzine makers

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[108] 'Backyard wrestling' was a phenomenon that grew in the United States in the 1990s when wrestling fans (primarily young males) devised their own independent federations – they "build their own rings, use trampolines as rings, or simply spray paint a square on the ground, where they perform free for audiences of schoolmates and friends" (McBride & Bird, 2007: 165-166). Like the content they were watching on television, these contests' were very much staged events.

and newcomers, who could be portrayed as 'marks'(although I do not use that term in my own formation of a local hierarchy) due to their relatively low levels of cultural capital. The experienced writer is aware of moral values – knowledge, commitment, and effort – that are required in order for a fanzine to succeed. New writers without the insider knowledge and connection run the risk of being ridiculed for their naivety. Cian Hynes (*Riot 77*) has encountered many writers who did not realise the labour required to produce a fanzine:

> The idea of a fanzine appeals to them, but once they get down to the work of it, working seven nights a week on it and all the hassle that goes along with it, a lot of people are quick to get out and say 'no, it's not for me, I thought it was going to be a handy number, but it's not'… I'd say 75, 80% don't get past a single issue (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

While fanzine writing is a fan practice, they do not always feature bands that are objects of the writer's fandom. Of course, review sections of publications are presumed to be objective anyway, with the reviewer placing themselves in the position of judge, with some distance and superior knowledge of music required. Fanzine writers feature some bands that they are friends with, or because they want to be 'supporters' of bands within the scene, without necessarily being a fan. The same applies to many individuals who attend local gigs. Readers of fanzines are expected to be able to recognise people who are referred to by their first name or nickname. In *Indeed U R* (Issue 2, 1996) the writer reviews a Christmas gig held by the Dublin punk label Rejected Records, and notes that the event was attended by every member of the punk scene:

> The spider's web[109] must have been like a ghost town this night because every punk in the country inhabited The Attic this evening. As someone commented behind me: 'it wouldn't be Christmas without the Rejected Christmas Party'.

In small scenes, personality becomes a factor in whether a band should be supported or not. In *The Sitar Catastrophe* (Issue Unknown/ c.1994), the writer urges readers to pick up a new record from **Black Belt Jones** as they "are a brilliant band and sound guys as well", thus indicating his social access to the band. Elsewhere local bands adhering to DIY principles and self-releasing may still garner the respect of fanzine

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[109] There is a presumption that this is a reference to an alternative clothes shop of the same name in Dublin city centre that operated during this period.

writers; rarely will a writer be too critical of a local band, even if the music is not necessarily to their own taste, and many fanzine writers operate a policy where they review all local releases received. The following examples demonstrate a willingness from writers to listen to independent Irish releases, regardless of genre or past experiences of the band:

> Another DIY release from an Irish band…Not exactly my cup of tea but then, anyone who knows *Gearhead Nation* knows we're tasteless gits anyway. It's quite a varied album with hints of metal, punk and indie rock throughout, and with a fair bit of jangly guitar sounds that I'm not so fond of. Worth a listen or two (*Gearhead Nation* review of 'The Freedom EP' by **Stigma**, *Gearhead Nation*, Issue 5, 1994).

> I have to say that I used to think that this band was shit but thankfully they have improved a LOT since the days they used to do **Sex Pistols** and **Beastie Boys** covers…Fair play to them for staying together, improving and getting an independent 7" out (*Fake* review of 7" single by **Bambi**, *Fake*, Issue 3, 1996).

> This was their debut gig and contained a fair sprinkling of cover versions by the likes of **Dead Kennedys**, **Pixies**, **Sonic Youth**, **Chumbawamba** and (ahem) **Not Our World**[110]. Great energy and good enthusiasm. They will get better. This is what everyone should be doing (except for the **N.O.W.** cover) – getting up there, bashing away and making a bit of sense (*React* review of **Tubby Barlow** live at 'Fox and Pheasant', *React*, Issue 22, 1993).

Some participants within DIY music communities simply attend live performance and even buy recorded music because they are friends of the musicians playing; they may have little or absolutely no interest in the band themselves. This can extend to fanzine writers who will occasionally write a piece about bands that they are friends with, or because the band is local. However, it also needs to be made clear that fanzine writers do not just write about local bands because they are just that – local; nor, is there always a personal connection to members of those local acts. Eoghan O'Sullivan was quite adamant that his motivation for establishing the fanzine *We Play Here* in 2013 was not to highlight the work of his friends, but to portray a scene that he feels is an active fan of, with bands that he is as passionate about as any other:

> Issue 1 was a simple, big idea: an overview of the Cork scene. So from that idea we came up with a list of seventeen acts that are based in Cork and currently active… The first band I asked to feature were **Altered Hours**, because if they weren't on board then I didn't feel like I could get behind the idea of the zine: I think they're the best

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[110] **Not Our World** was the band that Niall from *React* played bass in. He is almost embarrassed that his band is the subject of interest from other bands within the local scene.

band in the country, let alone Cork, and I wanted them in there. I'm probably a relative fan of all the bands in issue one, some more so than others (Email Interview, 23 May 2014).

Figure 6.1: Introduction to *We Play Here* (Issue 1, 2013)

The active fan can also contain some of the similar traits to what I term the 'uber fan' – this type of fan is one whose fandom borders on obsession. They will own almost every piece of merchandise related to the band, will have purchased every piece of recorded music from them (sometimes on multiple formats) and will go to see the band in a live environment whenever possible. This type of fan is probably the least present in local DIY scenes.

Local Fanhood Hierarchies

For many uber fans, fandom can be rooted in unattainable fan devotion – this would include, for example, a fan of fictional characters in a science fiction television programme or an Irish teenager that is obsessed with football stars living in Madrid. I argue that one does not need to have the same sense of being fanatical to be a 'fan'; being a fan does not mean that one needs to obsess over the object of their fandom with posters adorning their bedroom wall-space and scrapbooks/online folders

dedicated to their adoration. While this type of fan behaviour is important in self-identification within a community, particularly for younger or teenage fans, adults can adopt different and subtler behaviour. Small indicates that there are different codes of behaviour expected of audiences at symphony concerts where "the autonomy and privacy of the individual is treasured" (1998: 43) than there would be at say, a punk show in a small underground club. As such, the norms of punk fandom would differ from the practices of an aficionado of large symphonic composers. The degrees of engagement differ also within localised music scenes, as attested to by Davey Moor of Dublin band **Little Xs For Eyes**, who also utilises the comparison of football fandom to that of local bands:

> Somebody could be a fan of Arsenal, and they would be a fan of that team, whereas music fans would have their cards a lot more spread out so that's a major difference. It's like a lot more internal the kind of 'fan' fans; there's not that many that would become super fans that I've experienced in Ireland; people that would go to a lot of Irish bands (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2013).

Busse (2013) formulates these different levels of fanhood by referring to Sjöberg's *'Geek Hierarchy'* (2002). Sjöberg's flowchart was a humorous examination of the varying levels of 'geekdom' amongst fans of science fiction and fantasy, with each individual grouping considering themselves "less geeky than" the group below them. For instance, published authors of these works would consider themselves less geeky than fans of those works; those fans are then broken down into different degrees of geekdom ranging from video gamers (low level) to "erotic furries"[111] (more extreme level). To formulate a hierarchy of a 'DIY' music scene would be a difficult task; instead of using the flowchart method, I have chosen an X/Y axis to demonstrate the varying attendees at these local concerts. The X axis represents level of engagement, while the Y axis represents cultural capital. Bourdieu uses a similar approach to demonstrate capital in French lifestyles (for example, 1984: 182; 343; 455) and I have decided to test such a model for articulating the fluid hierarchies that exist in alternative music culture. The problem with the chart (Figure 6.2) is that many scene members inhabit more than one category. For this example, let's take a hypothetical local band playing an independent gig, and look at the potential make-up of the

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[111] 'Furries' are fans of fictional characters animal characters with human characteristics and personalities.

audience; the figure below is not a definitive typological hierarchy but it does give an indication of the types of different fans that attend these performances.
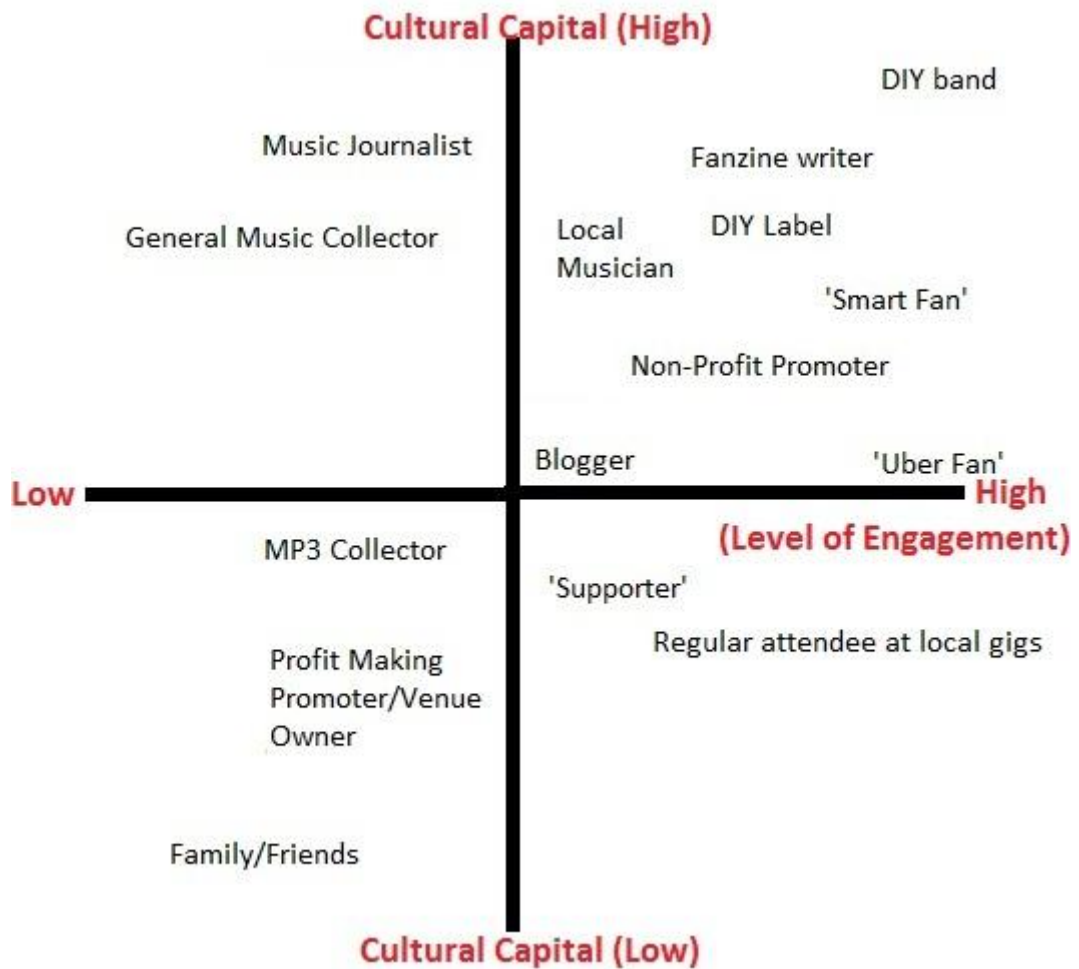
Figure 6.2: Local Fanhood Hierarchy

Firstly, a word on the four levels of fandom described in my typology, as they all feature here. The 'smart fan' has a high level of engagement and a correspondingly high level of cultural capital, which is significantly higher than that of the 'uber fan' (who carries some of the same naïve characteristics as McBride and Bird's (2007) 'marks'). The 'supporter' has a relatively high level of engagement with the scene, but their cultural capital is low on account of their lack of interest in accumulating knowledge. Similarly, the 'friends' category is low on both engagement and capital. On top of this, there are many other categories, and both the music journalist (with perhaps a more traditional level of cultural capital due to educational background) and fanzine writers occupy significantly high positions in the hierarchy, with the fanzine writer having a far greater level of engagement with the scene, due to their somewhat

grassroots approach. Musicians are high in both cultural capital and engagement given their status in the scene, while the DIY band playing at the gig obviously has the greatest degree of engagement. There are complexities within all of this. For example, a local musician attending the gig could be attending merely as a 'supporter' of the local scene, but without interest in the actual band; likewise, a fanzine writer could be there because (s)he is a 'friend' of the band. Additionally, as I will demonstrate later, many individuals occupy a dual position, whereby they are both writer and musician within the local scene. This type of participation also indicates that these are not just communities formed around shared taste, but also 'communities of practice' where actors "sustain dense relations of mutual engagement organized around what they are there to do" (Wenger, 1998: 74). According to Wenger, such communities of practice are formed around a commitment to progress the community by engaging in varied activities (in this case, making music, writing fanzines, and supporting other bands).

There are perhaps less altruistic reasons for individuals participating in different ways in local scenes. If writing a fanzine enables a member of a music scene to elevate their position within that community (as the hierarchy suggests), can this movement within the hierarchy be even more marked if that fanzine is (as Busse describes it) "less mainstream" (2013: 18)? Some fanzines have been lauded by writers for covering different types of music; for example *The Devil On '45* (2005 – approximately 2009) was a respected fanzine that in just one issue (Issue 4, 2008) featured long-form articles about Rock N' Roll and the occult, the legendary producer Joe Meek, and Moroccan Sufi Trance, in a 72-page A4 publication. In fact, only one Irish act (**The Spook of The Thirteenth Lock**) featured in the fanzine, but writer Ed Hannon can certainly be considered a fan of music: he had published a number of other fanzines detailing the punk music scene, and had also established the online 'Irish DIY HardcorePunk Archive'[112]. What *The Devil On '45* demonstrated was that his fandom was more eclectic than many participants within the scene. Fellow fanzine writer Trevor Meehan felt this made it stand out:

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[112] The archive is accessible at http://diyirishhardcorepunkarchive.blogspot.hu/ and features MP3s of recordings of defunct Irish punk and DIY bands. The site started in 2009, and has not been updated since 2011 (accessed 21 August 2014).

> [It] was a good project. While it was a fanzine, it wasn't your run-of-the-mill fanzine, it wasn't just music reviews and interviews; it was kind of people writing a lot of articles and thoughts and pieces on different types of music and what a record meant to them, and various things like that (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

It is interesting to hear Meehan describe it as not a 'run-of-the-mill fanzine', suggesting while criteria such as mode of production and style are important factors in distinguishing fanzines, content is also important to the fan community.

The Musician's Perspective on Fandom

The fanhood hierarchy (Figure 6.1) features both the 'local musician' and the 'DIY band'; the former is attending the gig, while the latter is the performer, hence their higher 'level of engagement'. Many of the local musicians that attend gigs do so to support the scene, even if the band is not one that they are necessarily a fan of, but more a 'supporter' of. This makes one question whether there are actual fans – outside of friends and supporters – for the bands that play to relatively small audiences in cities around Ireland? This was a question that I put to musicians at focus groups in Dublin, Cork and Limerick in 2014. Eimear O'Donovan, a musician in Cork, was uncertain if bands she played in attracted actual 'fans':

> I think maybe you could say that there are fans of touring bands or people from elsewhere but when it comes to a local band, people are usually friends of the band or friends of someone who knows them, so I don't know many people who would consider themselves just a fan of a local band (Focus Group, Cork, 22 January 2014).

Other musicians such as Caoilain Sherlock (**The Shaker Hymn**) disagree, offering an alternative viewpoint where the 'fans as friends' theory is reversed:

> There are certain bands that I am friends with maybe because I was a fan of them first. I would call myself a fan of a couple of local bands, primarily **The Altered Hours** and **O Emperor**. I think you go along initially to support, and then at a point you realise that what you are seeing is as good as anything (Focus Group, Cork, 22 January 2014).

Darren Keane plays in Cork band **Hags**, and finds that most of his friends are either in bands or participate in the local music community in some way or another; music is the unifying factor for them all, but other aspects are interlocked to establish a sort of 'cultural formation' (Turino, 2008: 112):

> We all hang out together. We work in the same places. We all go to the same places and help each other out, so yeah; I'm part of a scene I'd say… Some Cork bands at the moment are probably my favourite bands, and that's just being honest. **The Altered Hours** are really amazing but we knew **The Altered Hours** years ago, so it's strange seeing them being so big now…**Elastic Sleep** are amazing and I live with one of them; I have to always remove myself from that. It's strange being a fan of a band that you're friends with or that you know (Interview, Cork, 22 August 2014).

Perhaps it should be logical that place has a function in how both musicians and non-musicians become fans of bands; aside from the role locality plays in forming a common identity, where cultural quirks and in-jokes are appreciated by a local audience, the local fan may have more of an opportunity to play with or see a band preform regularly.. However, there are cases whereby a local band exits the scene for a period of time, and a certain mystique develops around them in the interim. Bands that play week-in week-out can become overly familiar within the local scene, whereas those who depart can be treated differently upon their return. For example, in Limerick Tara Nix, (ex-**We Should Be Dead**) refers to **Tooth** – a band whose four members she is personal friends with and would have played gigs with in the past - who reunited for one night to play their first gig in nine years in late 2011:

> I've a **Tooth** t-shirt, I've gone to **Tooth** gigs, I've got the CDs and I'm local, and I'm a fan. I think that when you go and see a band that you really enjoy, whether you know them or not, and you really, really enjoy them, that changes a lot. Like that **Tooth** gig; that didn't look like the lads up there playing, that looked like **Tooth** for me (Focus Group, Limerick, 19 March 2014).

To briefly return to the appropriation of Sjöberg's geek hierarchy in a musical context, Nix moves up the ranks from a mere 'supporter' of the band to a full-scale fan, perhaps even an 'uber-fan'. Along the lowest level of the fan axis was what was considered 'supporter', and this I determine to be quite different from a regular fan, and more prevalent in small localised scenes than at large concerts. For some musicians, what differentiates the 'supporter' from the 'fan' is not just their (financial) investment in the band through purchasing music or merchandise, but the lengths they are willing to go to actively follow the band:

We did the Fundit[113] campaign for the last album. The people who pledged to support us were obviously supporting us but…when you are asking people to hand over money for something that doesn't exist yet and promising something in return down the line, we noticed a divide where a lot of people who were supporting us were friends and family obviously and we were very grateful for them supporting us, and then there were fans that we didn't know…There was a guy last week when we were playing with **Land Lovers**, and he was in Limerick and Dublin; this guy Cathal from Athlone. Just drove down to Limerick to go to our gig and drove back to Athlone after, and then drove to Dublin the next night to go to the gig as well…He just wanted to see the bands that much that he drove both nights. He's a real fan (Stephen Ryan, **windings,** Limerick Focus Group, 19 March 2014).

Categorising their fans was something that musicians in this research found particularly difficult to do, feeling there was a miniscule boundary between 'friend' and 'fan'. This is understandable when one considers the size of the communities that they are partaking in. Even in Dublin, the DIY community is relatively small and close-knit. Everybody within a scene knows everybody else, and is a friend or an acquaintance at the very least. This can be echoed in fanzine texts whereby there is almost that understanding that readers will be aware of who everybody is. This sense of familiarity amongst the 'scene' makes the participants slightly suspicious of the motives of those who tend to turn up at their gigs. Davey Moor, (**Little Xs For Eyes**), notes that "once the ratio is over 1 (unknown audience member) to 1 (friend or family member), you kind of think 'this is good'" (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014). Musicians tend to question the objectivity of those they know, but within such a small scene, there is little scope for complete strangers to turn up at their performances. It is unsurprising then that they tend to view outsiders or those they encounter at gigs outside of their hometowns as perhaps more genuine about their fandom than their existing base of friends. In a sense, for DIY musicians, success is not measured by numbers attending these gigs but by the proportion of strangers that turn up. Vincent Dermody revealed that his band **The Jimmy Cake** have had a few 'all gig attenders' who were from outside the social circles of any of the band members, and that this was at times a source of comfort for him, in that he felt his music was actually penetrating beyond his own network. Ruadhan O'Meara (**No Spill Blood**/**Magic Pocket**) feels that most of those who actually attend small shows in Dublin belong to "affinity groups" as Slobin (1993:98) terms them, like-minded musicians drawn together by certain genres of music:

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[113] Fundit is an Irish crowdfunding scheme, where members of the public pledge their support to a band hoping to raise money to release an album, go into studio, or go on tour.

There might be twenty, thirty people at a gig, but they're all in a band. They're all participants more than fans of a scene. Most people are already up to their necks in it anyway, than purely going for the fandom aspect of it. It's hard to figure out if there are that many people that don't ever play music and go to these things (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014).

For most musicians when they are not playing music, they are listening to music, or are attending gigs featuring other local bands and touring acts. Kieran Hayes (**We Come In Pieces**) believes that there is an element of social reciprocity that comes with being in a band:

A lot of the guys who would help you and buy your CDs and stuff would be in other bands. If you're in a band, you're going to go to other local bands, and local bands are going to be more of a fan of yours because they see you more often, and would be more willing to help you out social media wise and whatnot (Focus Group, Limerick, 19 March 2014).

The participatory nature of 'affinity groups' attracts certain performers and fans, who prefer a more intimate and shared musical experience. With that shared taste comes different ways of how people treat and interact with the music that they listen. Bourdieu (1984) looks at the role of taste as a core aspect of *habitus*, and it can be argued that different types of fans and different types of music communities are determined by their role in creating and appreciating their preferred type of music. This can be seen particularly in a live setting: Vincent Dermody, who has played in Dublin bands since the mid-1990s, says that the pursuit of fans for his bands has become less and less of a concern as he has grown older. He admits that the romantic notions of stardom have long since evaporated from his mind as he has become more experimental in his own writing and performing, and feels connecting and interacting with his audience can happen on very different levels:

Certain kinds of music would have a more social aspect to it, and certain kinds of music would have a much more 'you're a nerd, you're here to see the band' as opposed to just bopping your head. I'm not saying one is better than the other. The further left you go, the less likely you're going to have people overawed by your music. They're just there to see it and enjoy it. The difference between **Little Green Cars**[114] and **The Ex**[115] or someone (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2013).

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[114] **Little Green Cars** is a chart-topping Irish 'indie' band signed to Island Records.
[115] **The Ex** is an experimental Dutch punk band.

While Dermody indicates that he does not see fans of one band being "better than the other", my understanding is that he is positioning fans of bands like **Little Green Cars** in the more social aspect of concert attending; attendees will take photos repeatedly on their phone that will be swiftly uploaded to their social network accounts (Chapter Seven), while simultaneously reciting the band's lyrics. On the other hand, **The Ex** belong to a community that is less hierarchical in his eyes – the physical stage barrier is not as intense, and one could estimate that their audience would comprise of a higher percentage of fellow musicians (perhaps with an interest in guitar pedals and equipment used by the band) than would be the case at a concert from a band like **Little Green Cars**. As such, **Little Green Cars** is the type of band that would not sit particularly well with the DIY ethos of self-published fanzines; their musical style and commercial success would be a hindrance to featuring in the majority of fanzines that are and were published in Ireland, whereas a band like **The Ex**, with their independent outlook on recording and performing and espousing of anarchist political views, would be considered an ideal candidate for a fanzine interview.

Fandom Outside Stardom

Hugh McCabe played in a number of bands in Dublin in the 1990s, and has been bassist with **Large Mound**[116] for over a decade. Hugh argues that the music scenes he has been involved in are less stratified than fan communities based around international rock stars. There are similarities within this community to what Jenkins determines as "participatory cultures" (1992b). For Jenkins, an integral aspect of a participatory culture is one that encourages the involvement of all members of the community, and in which all members "feel some degree of social connection with one another… Not every member must contribute, but all must believe that they are free to contribute and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued" (2009: 6). Hugh McCabe links that social connection to bands he feels more of a rapport with; he utilises the example of **REM**, and how he feels that fans of **REM** interact differently from how fans of **Large Mound** interact with him. For McCabe, being part of an underground scene allows for more of a sense of equality between performer and audience:

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[116] At the time of writing (2015) **Large Mound** have not performed live or released any new material since 2012.

214

> Nobody ever has the opportunity to go and approach **REM** after a performance. Any band above a certain stature, there's always this barrier – a physical barrier, and probably a psychological barrier too. On the other hand, you go to see **Shellac** for example, and [Steve] Albini is there setting up his pedals and kind of chatting to people, and there is a very deliberate attempt to make that happen on their part I think (Interview, Dublin, 9 December 2013).

It is interesting that McCabe sees more of a kinship – and not necessarily musically – with **Shellac**[117] than **REM**. **Shellac** very much operate at a DIY level, despite their relative success internationally, setting up and dismantling their own equipment and refusing to play with elaborate lighting shows. While partially for financial reasons, there is a more overt motive for this, as alluded to by Hugh McCabe. If **Shellac** were to start behaving like major rock stars, the strong connection they would have with their fans would be gone; instead it would be replaced by the illusion of celebrity culture. **Shellac** instead demonstrate behaviours that afford them the status of authentic membership of the DIY culture; such behaviours suggest that **Shellac** probably wear the same clothes, eat the same food, drink the same beer, and have the same hobbies as those that attend their gigs[118]. This commonality between performer and audience is very much evident in the way that DIY fanzines approach the interview process:

> I interviewed [hip-hop artist] **Saul Williams**, and I was waiting around outside the venue for a good few hours before the gig and I just saw him and went over to him and said 'would you have ten or fifteen minutes to do a quick interview?', and he said 'oh yeah, if you come back to me in a little while, I'll have time for you'; whereas the traditional magazines would go through the press agent or the band manager or whatever and there's a certain time of the day when they do all their media and you go in and you sit at the table and you wait for the guy to be ready and they call you over. So, it's always been off the cuff with people like that who are playing bigger venues (Interview with Anto Dillon, *Loserdom*, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

Whereas the mainstream journalist is seen as a professional there to do their job, the fanzine writer gets to indulge their fandom by spending time with people they are fans of. The bands who welcome the process of being interviewed by fanzines seemingly

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[117] **Shellac** are a Chicago-based trio that feature renowned recording engineer Steve Albini, who is perhaps more widely known for recording albums such as **Nirvana**'s *In Utero.*
[118] It should also be considered that Frith notes that this kind of proximity is actually a construct of the music business (1981). **Shellac**, however, have frequently placed themselves at odds with the music industry, particularly Albini, who penned a much cited article criticising the industry, entitled 'The Problem with Music' (1993).

are those who come from within the punk and DIY scenes[119], and for the fanzine writers like Trevor Meehan (*Unfit For Consumption*), it provides an opportunity to spend quality time with some of their idols from places such as the United States and England, and it demonstrates the 'regularity' and 'non-glamour' of the musicians' lives:

> I got to interview Brian Baker who was playing with **Bad Religion** at the time…and he opened the interview with 'you're not here to entertain me, I'm here to entertain you', which I thought was great because the guy has probably been doing interviews for twenty-odd years or something…the interview I did with Frankie Stubbs [**Leatherface**] down in Cork, in an old man's pub over a couple of pints of stout, was great: again a guy who had done a lot, seen a lot, in punk rock worldwide, and just a really down to earth guy who gave me a lot of time before the gig, sat down and was in no hurry anywhere, and you know, it was great. I think one of the funniest was probably **Rocket From The Crypt**, the time they played in Dolan's in Limerick, and I thought I'd just have to interview [vocalist/guitarist] Speedo. But that whole gang mentality thing that **Rocket From The Crypt** pedalled at the time, they all decided to sit around me in a circle and try and intimidate me, but it turned out great and they were good craic and again, they offered plenty – they were offering me beer and stuff like that, and it just was great because I was really into **Rocket From The Crypt** (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

The kind of bands that feature in this research follow a very similar model to that of **Shellac** and bands referenced by Meehan; while sometimes out of financial necessity, they are also involved in a community where there is little – if any – boundaries between audience and performer. Large stage barriers that are in place at large venues and festivals are not as common when these bands play. Nonetheless, there have been fanzines in Ireland that have focussed on stardom and successful artists in their reports. In the first issue of *Muse* (1996), the writer John O Donovan gives favourable reviews to two chart-topping acts **Oasis** and **Alanis Morrissette**; while both were regulars in the mainstream papers during that period, they did not necessarily fit the fanzine paradigm. Elsewhere, O'Donovan places himself at odds with the DIY attitude that enveloped fanzine production in his review of Dublin band **The Frames**, where he noted that "hopefully if [major record label] Warners market them well they well achieve the success they truly deserve." On occasions when fanzine writers tend to move outside of bands from the scene, they feel a need to defend themselves:

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[119] Montreal post-rock band **Godspeed You! Black Emperor** refused to give interviews to commercial magazines, and instead featured heavily in fanzine articles, which Hodgkinson feels "reflects the desire to circumvent the influence of the established mass-media" (2004: 228).

I'll say now that I like mainstream bands as well as Funk and Indie and I'll be reviewing albums, singles or whatever I can get my hands on. I know all you punks out there are whining, saying that bands like **P$ARL JAM** etc. already get enough coverage in mainstream press and they don't need any more from zines, but I think I gives U the reader a more broad range of listening material reviewed by your average Jo(saphine) and not some no [sic] it all journalist *Indeed U R* (Issue 1, 1996).

6.3 Featuring In Fanzines

Pre-Internet Importance

Duncombe (2008) pinpoints the importance of featuring in fanzines for independent bands and a good review in an influential fanzine could have led to increased sales (O'Hara, 1995). Modern-day fanzines are probably less significant in that regard, in part because online downloads do not always result in sales. However, prior to the spread of online networks, a feature or review in a fanzine was a pivotal step for many independent bands, as Vincent Dermody recalls:

> When we were starting out, most of our press was fanzines, and most of our giddy excitement about being mentioned anywhere was in fanzine. Most of our gig promotion came through that. The *Event Guide*[120] and fanzines were to the two main places to be mentioned (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014).

Richie Egan remembers that when he was playing with **Black Belt Jones** that there were two distinct scenes in Dublin (Chapter Five). A review of their single in *Nosebleed* allowed them to curry support from both scenes; *Nosebleed* was perhaps more representative of the punk 'Old Chinaman' scene, while **BBJ** were more aligned to the 'Hope' scene, which was served more by fanzines such as *React* and *Gearhead Nation*. Egan felt the *Nosebleed* review was a massive step in the development of the band:

> We were always getting fairly good gig reviews and notices in the Hope stuff but all the punk stuff would slag us and look down their noses at us, so when we put out a 7" [single] and Boz gave us a good review, I was really happy about it because it felt like we'd crossed the divide kind of thing, and that's why it meant a lot to me when he interviewed us as well you know. Suddenly there were more people coming to our gigs (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

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[120] A free listings and cultural magazine that was available in Dublin from 1984 to 2009.

It is important to consider the views of Irish musicians in independent music scenes on fanzines, and what level of respect the fanzine makers received. Some of this respect could be quite public, demonstrating the levels of cultural and social capital the fanzine maker had accrued. For instance, Egan's band **The Redneck Manifesto** titled a song 'The Dillon Family Dancers' (2001) in honour of Anto and Eugene Dillon, the producers of *Loserdom*. As the years followed on from the publication of his own fanzine, Egan would go on to be interviewed by a number of different media outlets, and noticed an evident difference between them:

> A music magazine wouldn't really interview you unless you'd an album coming out or a tour, whereas a fanzine would take to you for any reason. They'd be just happy to talk to you. If it's just one dude doing the fanzine, then it's going to be quite personal to him. It might have stories about his relationship with the band, whereas a music magazine would definitely be more factual so I suppose it's kind of more fun to read the fanzine if it's written well (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

Greg O'Brien (**At Last An Atlas**) prefers the attention to detail that his music receives from fan-generated media than of that from the mainstream press:

> I preferred those avenues, things like zines or personal blogs because I knew that they had got in touch because they cared and would probably reach other people, whereas if you fired it out to *Hot Press* or whatever, you'd probably get compared to bands that I've never even heard. It's almost like that divide. At a certain level you know that people know their bands and what they're talking about and at a higher level it's just like 'I got to write a review'(Focus Group, Cork, 22 January 2014).

Frequently, the fanzine is positioned in opposition to the mainstream music press. *Hot Press*, as the mainstay professional publication that has spanned the lifespan of music fanzines in Ireland, was frequently dismissed in interviews conducted with both musicians and fanzine writers for this research. It was also critiqued in numerous publications analysed, such as *Kickstart* (Issue 1, 1992), who lambasted the magazine for only taking interest in the UK-based Irish label Setanta Records when their acts became successful:

> How dare *Hot Press* refer to Setanta as 'our very own label'. Why did it take the English media to pick up on Setanta and its acts such as **The Frank and Walters**, T**he Divine Comedy**, and the rather wonderfully excellent **Brian**? The answer is really quite simple, because 'our very own *Hot Press'* (yeah right) were far too busy sprawling all over bands that they thought would be the next big thing.

This creates an interesting division where the fanzine writer portrays themselves as more of an expert than the mainstream music press, or at the very least more sympathetic to the professionals that are working within the music industry. Grossberg notes that that: "Rock fans have always constructed a difference between authentic and co-opted rock. And it is this which is often interpreted as rock's inextricable tie to resistance, refusal, alienation, marginality, and so on" (1992: 62). For the writer of *Kickstart,* he believes that he is a 'smart fan' in that he was able to determine through his own taste that **The Divine Comedy** represented quality music to him, and he did not need to be informed of this by the mainstream media.

"Pro-Am" Writing – The Fan Writer

While fanzine makers are in many cases friends with the musicians they are writing about, they still occupy a position further up the fanhood hierarchy that I have illustrated than the 'supporter'. Devereux (2007: 233) notes that "fandom can also be about audience members becoming producers – albeit in a basic sense" referring to the production of blogs, fanzines, and e-zines. Hinton and Hjorth refer to the nature of "pro-am" writing (2013: 59), whereby those audiences that Devereux speaks of become producers of sorts; using professional platforms to get their information out, but sometimes in a more amateur way stylistically and technically.

The participants for this research who were in bands in the late 1990s and early years of this century are unequivocally supportive of the impact fanzines had in terms of publicising their music. Outside of some pirate radio stations and occasional sessions on Dave Fanning's radio show[121], these records were not played on radio. Fanzines served the purpose of letting the local fans know that this music existed. Some of the fanzine writers themselves had a policy of featuring any music that adhered to the 'independent Irish' tag. The writer in *The Swedish Nurse* (Issue 2, 1989) writes that receiving demos and recordings was still a rarity as it was a relatively new publication. Other publications would frequently put out calls for new releases to be sent their way, and that everything would get reviewed. With that in mind, it might appear that it was

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[121] The Fanning Sessions were late night sessions recorded for RTÉ 2FM, part of the national broadcaster, particularly in the 1990s. The bands that featured might have been considered more 'indie' in persuasion, but some local punk bands also featured on the show over the years.

actually quite easy to get one's band's name into a fanzine. Trevor Meehan recalls that he actively encouraged Irish acts to send in material, regardless of format:

> I tried to put as much Irish stuff in as well as international stuff, but at the time there probably wasn't a lot of Irish stuff especially as it was my first [edition of the] zine as well…That was something that grew as the fanzine went on to Issue 10, in that more and more Irish stuff came in. It was probably because people were picking it up and going 'oh, I just picked up your fanzine', and then would send in their record or whatever. Everything got reviewed; there was never anything that came in that didn't get a review. Normally, we didn't knock people for the sake of it; I don't think that happened too often (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

While any new band would certainly face nervous moments sending out their first demo to a slew of local publications for review, Meehan indicates that publications like his were welcoming to local releases, and would treat them with some sensitivity. Elsewhere, Mel of *No Barcodes Necessary* (Issue 6, 1998) claims that "I will review anything regardless of its musical style, though I will not review anything on major labels or major label wannabes". This interestingly shows that many fanzines were against those who aspired to leave the scene. It is also important to remember that when fanzine publishing peaked in Ireland – the mid-1990s – bands were not recording as frequently as they are today. Home/bedroom recording was not commonplace, and pressing of music to anything other than a demo tape was prohibitively expensive. That left the live review and interview sections, as well as 'scene reports', as the places whereby a local band could be mentioned or featured in a music fanzine.

For some of the musicians who took part in this research, fanzines were their gateway into the community. Richie Egan (**Jape**/ **The Redneck Manifesto**) ran his own fanzine called *Fake* briefly from 1995 to 1996. It allowed him as a fan to connect with various bands within the city of Dublin and it crucially offered him a gateway into a community he has been part of since. His recollection of his first interview as an eighteen year old for his fanzine highlights the awkwardness that can exist between performer and fan:

> I organised an interview with **Tension**, and couldn't believe they said 'yes' for a start, and so went to Rathmines. They were playing there and were my favourite Irish band. I was meeting this band – and you know if you go to a gig and you see someone from a band that you really like, it's hard to go talk to them; like, what do you say 'that was a really good gig?', whereas this was a way that you could actually ask them questions – influences and all that shit. And then you realise that they are just normal people as

well so it was a great learning experience. Fanzines were an opportunity for kids to be able to speak to each other and to be able to speak to bands… then I got into being in a band. I started experimenting with loads of shitty bands and doing fanzines, and decided that I'd go with the bands, but still had a connection with people doing the fanzines (Interview, Dublin, 21 May 2013).

Writers in Bands

At the time that Egan interviewed **Tension** (1990s), it was almost a rarity for new bands to be mentioned anywhere bar a gig poster, so to see their music or music of their peers discussed by a third party was something of a novelty. Ignored by other media, new, emerging bands found that the fanzine was a platform to launch their band into the consciousness of the scene. In *Fudge* (Issue 1, 1992), Morty McCarthy from **The Sultans of Ping F.C**.[122] espoused the benefits of fanzines to bands like theirs:

> There's people like *React* and Hope [Promotions] who are doing decent things and no one looks after them and they're not given any recognition. The first people to write about us in Dublin were *React*. I think fanzines are very important.

Given his enthusiasm for fanzines, it is perhaps unsurprising that Morty was amongst a number of musicians who also wrote their own fanzines, publishing the *Sunny Days* music fanzine in Cork, while also working on the football fanzine *No More Plastic Pitches* alongside Jim Morrish.

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[122] That same year **The Sultans of Ping F.C**. would go on to have a hit single with 'Where's Me Jumper' and subsequently sign to major label Epic Records.

Figure 6.3: *Sunny Days* **(Issue 8, 1991)**

The dual position of fanzine writer and musician meant there was some common ground with the fanzine producer, and it was certainly an entrée for musicians to have that fanzine credibility. For instance, in the Belfast fanzine *The Swedish Nurse* (Issue 2, 1989), the editor Martin writes that he "got sent a demo by **Spin Out** called "Melt"…The first song is really good, hypnotic, fuzzy and roaring in restrained way…Your man Robby, the singer, is starting a fanzine, which should be good." While it may just be coincidental that **Spin Out** features a fanzine maker amongst their ranks, the writer feels the need to explicitly include this in the text, as it adds an extra layer of credibility to Robby's involvement in the music community. As previously mentioned, influential fanzine writers like Boz (*Nosebleed*) and Mero (*Rejected*) were also members of bands. Combining the fanhood hierarchy with material accumulated through interviews conducted with musicians, it would seem logical that many of those writing fanzines were also the members of bands, as it was often musicians themselves that were fans. In DIY networks, with an ethos of participation, it is unsurprising that many individuals would hold several different positions. My data indicates that at least forty (close to 20%) of the fanzines featured in this research were written by

people also in bands, and thus, one could say that fanzines are a medium of communication for active musicians.

This writer/musician dual position had its benefits for writers of fanzines as well; the musician was familiar with interview situations, their music more than likely shared the same ethos of the local 'scene', and it provided the interviewee and interviewer with some common ground, i.e. music-making and/or fanzine making. The musician fanzine writer also had that credibility within the community that they were truly doing things themselves – self-publishing fanzines and self-releasing music – to make them an approachable and appealable target for fanzine features. Boz Mugabe's band **The Steam Pig** featured in numerous interviews in Irish music scenes. Invariably, the interviewer would end up asking a question about the *Nosebleed* fanzine as part of **The Steam Pig** interview, so much so that *Nosebleed* became part of **The Steam Pig** identity, and vice versa. For example, in *No Class* (Issue 1, 2004), the interviewer quickly turned his attentions to asking questions about *Nosebleed* as opposed to the band. Elsewhere, in *Riot 77* (Issue 2, 2001) the writer Cian Hynes manages to locate thematic links between both band and fanzine when he notes that "priests and the Catholic church seem to be a reoccurring theme in **The Steam Pig** and *Nosebleed*."

Another regular interviewee in Irish fanzines was Deko Dachau of the bands **Paranoid Visions** and **Striknien DC**. While a member of **Paranoid Visions**[123] in the early 1980s, he started working with fellow band member PA on the fanzine *A New Clear Threat*. By the 1990s, as a member of **Striknien DC**, he was a regular feature in fanzine interviews. Having been involved in two anarcho-punk bands, it was deemed that he had the credibility to be included in these publications, and he was generally quick to give a statement that would illicit some controversy in the scene. For the writer of *OneOff* 1 (issue 1, 1997) – they were "Dublin's finest punk band…and they have a lot to say".

When Willie Stewart start playing in bands as a teenager, he saw immediate parallels between performing punk-influenced music and fanzine culture. It started for him when he picked up a copy of the fanzine *Rejected*:

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[123] **Paranoid Visions** disbanded in 1992, before reforming briefly in 2001, and are active again since 2005.

> Basically I just started playing in a band and we weren't really aware of any DIY scene or the underground…I guess it just looked like the kind of thing – it didn't call to me or anything but it was like 'oh, that is interesting', like, at the time, I didn't realise there was a network of underground Irish bands, and I certainly didn't know that there were publications to go along with that, and that's how people networked. Maybe because it came with a 7" and it kind of looked punk or something, definitely an aesthetic to it (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

Willie's participation in *Non-Plastique* also ensured that his band **Bambi** received some column inches in fanzines; in an interview with *Loserdom* (issue 4, 1996), the interview topic quickly changes from band to the fanzine scene when Willie is questioned about fanzines, to which he proclaimed "all the Dublin zines are pretty cool." Clodagh Murphy was another participant within the Dublin music scene that crossed different degrees of fanhood: as a writer for fanzines such as *Slanted and Enchanted*, she was clearly a fan of acts playing in the city. This was further illustrated through her involvement in various non-profit collectives such as the GZ Collective and The Kids Collective (both of whom had their own briefly-run freesheets – *Gazette* and *The Kids* respectively). On top of all of that, she was also a musician, playing in the band **Easpa Measa**. She argues that fanzines allowed the scope for bands such as hers to discuss the political and sociological meanings of their music at length; in essence, she did not see that the music was enough to communicate the band's ideas, and that the fanzines were an extension of her musical objectives:

> It's something that I and everyone in the band enjoyed and felt honoured to be interviewed in fanzines. The 'crust' style of music we played had, we hoped, thought provoking and insightful lyrics, but couldn't always be deciphered by the listener therefore it was always a nice opportunity to discuss politics in an interview (Email Interview, 23 August 2014).

If one had a band that was not featuring in the local fanzines, an obvious solution could be that members would establish their own fanzine allowing them to discuss and feature their own band. However, with fanzines in particular, it was considered somewhat taboo to promote your band if you were the writer. The whole idea of DIY was that it was providing something apart from the dominant 'culture industries' and that as bands did not crave or expect the stardom and attention of the pop music world, they should not be abusing their powers as fanzine producers. However, I have encountered several examples of fanzines where the writer talks at length about his/her own band. On many occasions, this can be put down to the personal nature of fanzine

writing, where stream of consciousness writing details every event that has happened in the writer's life since the previous issue. Also, because those works are self-edited, these aspects are kept in. It may not necessarily be a case that they are overtly talking about the music itself but more the process of being in a band and partaking in an underground scene.

Steve Rapid admitted that one of his motives for starting *Raw Power* in 1977 was to promote the work of his own band **The Radiators From Space** and other bands that had started to emerge in fledgling punk scenes in Dublin, Derry, and Belfast. However, Willie Stewart is of the opinion that self-promotion should not be an aspect of the written fanzine:

> I think it is a bit of a 'no-no'. Ah, I did it in the first one because I didn't know what else to write about. You wouldn't really write about your own band. The day we got interviewed for *Nosebleed* was just like a career-breaker in punk rock as far as we were concerned. The four members of the band without really ever thinking about it rejected mainstream music and mainstream media. What are you dealing with in *Hot Press*? You're dealing with bands like **Aslan** and **U2.** They're no good you know, and when you are a teenager they are certainly not cool (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

Despite the fact that music fanzines present themselves as subversive alternatives to the mainstream press, content-wise they are still loosely modelled on music magazines; interviews, articles, and reviews appear in them just like they do in *Hot Press* for instance. Additionally, many fanzines mirror music magazines in their aspirations for objectivity, and this stops some writers from discussing their own bands as an extension of the music featured in the scene. For others, they incorporate 'perzine' (Chapter Four) elements to their work: this sense of the fanzine almost being a diary would logically mean that if they were active in bands that that would be discussed within the confines of the physical fanzine. *Nova Wreck* was written by Jamesy, a member of **Yakuza**, and he used issues of the fanzine to chronicle the band's progress. Issue 3 (2000) featured one-and-a-half pages on the band, while Issue 4 had a feature entitled "The **Yakuza** Saga Continues – Chapter IV: We'll Do Anything For A Record Deal." While it was a way of discussing what was happening in his life, Jamesy was also taking advantage of his position as a fanzine writer, giving his band more coverage than any other band.

As a way of introduction, Michael Owens says in *Nag Nag Nag* (Issue 1, 1998) "by the way my name is Owensie. I'm the fat bloke that sings in **Puget Sound**. Our demo is available for £1.50." Elsewhere, there is a subtle undercurrent of self-promotion, with the band listed on the cover alongside mainstays of the international punk scene such as **Oi Polloi**, **Bad Brains**, and **Conflict**. A glance at Northern Irish fanzine *Downtime* provides evidence of another fanzine maker utilising their publication to promote their band. The writer Justin plays in a band with the same name, hence intrinsically linking the two and giving the band a similar status within the music community and vice versa for the fanzine. Justin uses the second edition's (1995) introduction to promote the activities of the band:

> **Downtime**, the band, have a new demo out…It is worth a listen to and is pretty cheap. Look out for it in Dr. Roberts or Heroes and Villains. Also, **Downtime** are seeking gigs with any punk bands. We'll play anywhere with anyone, but preferably not in front of a crowd of bloody metal heads.

Elsewhere in the issue, he praises the Belfast record store Dr. Roberts on a number of occasions; this has mutual benefits for the writer as the full page advertisement run on the back page of *Downtime* is used to promote his band's demo, which according to the advertisement is "now available in Dr. Roberts". The fanzine becomes an outlet for keeping the band in the limelight of the local music scene.

Figure 6.4*: **Front (L) and Back (R) of** *Downtime* **(Issue 2, 1995)**

While not quite taking the cue from *Downtime* to completely align a band to a fanzine, there seems to be enough evidence in *Riot On Your Own* to suggest it was written by a member of the Belfast punk band **Runnin' Riot**. If it was not written by a band member, then it was put together by what I earlier referred to as an uber-fan – issue 3 (1999) features a picture of their lead singer Colin on the back page, and a picture inside of the band with the tagline "**Runnin' Riot** – a real punk band", while they also feature on the covers of Issue 4 (1999) and Issue 8 (2001). Through an analysis of a number of issues of this publication, the band **Runnin' Riot** is very much to the fore in each edition.

Having that experience of running a fanzine ensured that you knew how the process worked in terms of organising interviews or getting your band featured. Boz Mugabe admits that his status with *Nosebleed* allowed him to get **The Steam Pig** featured in other publications. He was also able to utilise *Nosebleed* to feature the band, doing so in a more novel way:

> Because of being a fanzine editor, I was aware that a readable interview with solid content was invaluable. At various points we asked friends of ours from other bands to interview us... once for *Nosebleed* [Issue 16] and once for *Maximumrocknroll* (Email Interview, 13 June 2014).

<u>Inter-Band Rivalries</u>

Not all of the content about local performers in fanzines is positive. On occasions, it became an outlet for some bands to play out rivalries with others. This was evident amongst two Dublin bands **Puget Sound** and **Mixtwitch**. In *SLTA* (*Suppression Leads To Aggression*) fanzine (Issue 1, 2000), the writer Barry Lennon is aware of this inter-band tension, and decides it will be worth bringing up. The following is an extract of the exchange between the interviewer and **Puget Sound** (interviewer in bold text, as per the printing on the fanzine).

There was a gig I was at recently called Vent Your Angst. Mixtwitch your friends played.
All laugh sarcastically
They said Puget Sound are f**kin w**kers and they said 'who likes Puget Sound'? There were a few cheers…
Owensie: Yeaaaaaaah.
They said would their [Puget Sound] fans leave the building. What do you think of Mixtwitch and this comment?
Jon: W**kers
Owensie: This has been going on several years now…Some of the lads in the band are really sound but that Clemo c**t, seriously.
Ror: He's not a punk.
Owensie: It's a fairly sad thing to reduce yourself to, slagging a band that isn't even in the country, never mind at the gig.

The same year, **Mixtwitch** were featured in an issue of *With Harmful Intent* (Issue 2, 2000), and the writer Cormac Sheehan interviewed them just after the 'Vent Your Angst' gig:

WHI: Is there actually anything between you and **Puget Sound** or is it just what they said, was there anything prior to that?
Clemo: **Puget Sound** slagged us off in an interview with *Nosebleed* years ago, and then we just ignored it, we thought they were d**kheads…They said in the interview with your fanzine that we blagged off the Dublin punk but I don't recall ever playing a punk gig with any of those bands in the punk scene. We played with **Puget Sound** once in Slattery's and we gave them that gig…Puget Sound went to Leeds and nobody misses them. Can you see the void, can you feel a vacuum left by **Puget Sound**? NO!!

and we gave them that gig, we never played with Sir Killalot or The Steam Pig, or any bands like them. We
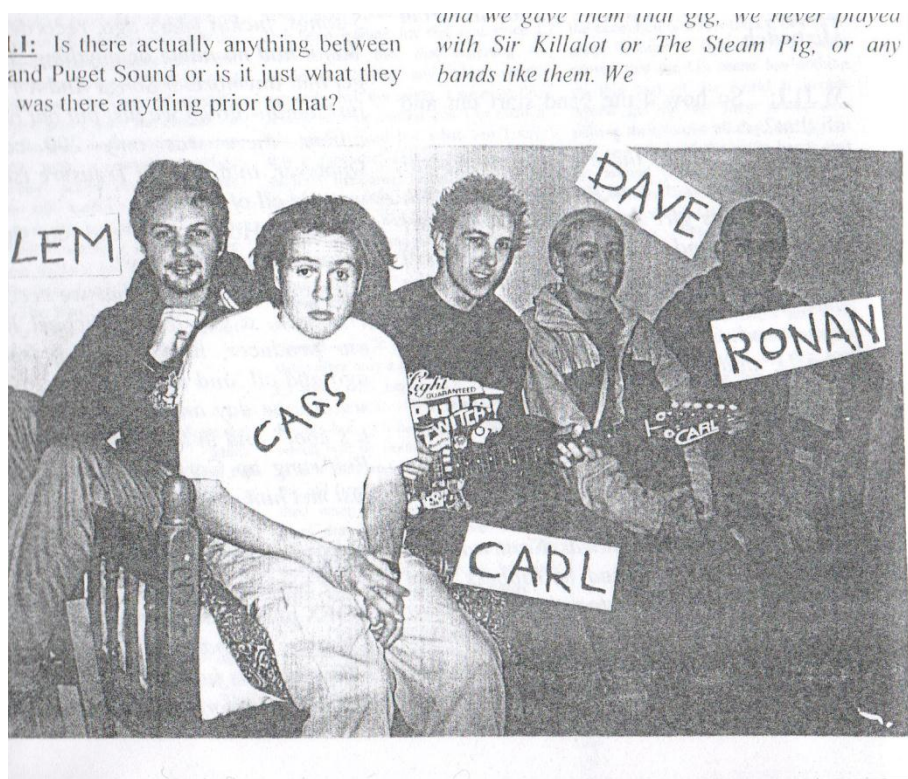
Figure 6.5: Mixtwitch interview, *With Harmful Intent* (Issue 2, 2000)

The inter-band tension between **Mixtwitch** and **Puget Sound** can be traced back as far as the interview **Puget Sound** conducted with *Nosebleed* "years ago" (**Mixtwitch** had formed in 1997; **Puget Sound** in 1996), according to the **Mixtwitch** member quoted above. The verbatim style of publishing interviews allowed for this type of conflict to be presented on the pages of fanzines. As the writer for *With Harmful Intent* did not edit out the section, he allowed for an authentic exchange to take place, and positioned himself as an 'insider' that was privy to this information. There was no real concern with making the article more digestible for the readership by veering away from such bickering, and certainly there were no concerns about potential libel suits. Michael "Owensie" Owens (**Puget Sound**) feels that carefree attitude was one of the things that appealed to him about fanzines, and made the interview process a positive one noting that:

> …the fanzine writer isn't as concerned with their audience necessarily. Sometimes it's a bit more localised about the scene that you're in, that kind of thing. You generally feel a lot more comfortable doing a fanzine interview than a newspaper interview (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014).

Perhaps I should take a more sceptical approach, however. The interviewers in both *SLTA* and *With Harmful Intent* brought up the on-going hostility between each band in the interviews, not the musicians. While it may be a case that the writers were trying to be investigative and clear up what was actually happening between the two bands, there is a little sensationalism at play here also, where the writer knows that he will receive good 'copy' by bringing up this contentious topic. It bears similarities with how other media have stoked up musical rivalries in the past; for example, weekly music papers such as *NME* and *Melody Maker* constantly played out the tensions that existed between **Blur** and **Oasis** at the height of the 'Britpop' music phenomenon, as they knew it would generate interest and sales for their publications. In the introduction section to the issue of *With Harmful Intent* (issue 1, 1999) that featured **Puget Sound**, the writer has already built them up as "delinquent Dublin punkers." Michael Owens recalls the rivalry that existed between his band and **Mixtwitch**, and how it was portrayed in fanzines:

> We were young, full of shit, full of attitude and trying to come across as 'punk' as possible…I think that we learned the whole 'scene rivalry' thing from our original exposure to the punk scene which was via the Old Chinaman Pub in around 1996. At that time, there was a continuous slagging match going on across fanzines between the 'punks' and the Hope Collective. Because Deko gave us our first gig, we based ourselves in that ['punks'] camp. However, everyone attended each other's gigs. One of our first gigs ever was supporting **Jackbeast** in the Old Chinaman, who completely blew us away. However, they were more attached to the Hope scene, so I remember a certain level of ambivalence from the crowd towards their set when they played… In reality, I don't believe that I ever shared a cross word with any other band or person in a social setting, or even had to guts to, during that whole period. The more I reflect on this stuff the more I see parallels with internet trolling, arguments among people on Thumped and Eirecore[124] etc., that never occur in a face-to-face context (Email Interview, 4 September 2014).

Owens believes that there are strong links to the faceless rivalry that takes place in social networks today, but feels that was what is solely was – a textual rivalry that did not transcend to real-life situations. **Mixtwitch** were seemingly a band that came in for much criticism in the DIY community; in a review of their EP "Successful Everyday Living" in *With Harmful Intent*, the reviewer notes that:

> I dunno, people seem to have something against **Mixtwitch**, but f**k it, I like them well enough…Only complaint is that yes, they are admittedly very American

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[124] Eirecore is deemed to be the more hardcore/punk section of the forums at the 'underground music' website thumped.com

sounding, but to be honest, who gives a f**k anyway? That's what they wanna do and it sounds good to me.

While Owens did not use his own fanzine *Nag Nag Nag* to continue the ongoing battle with **Mixtwitch,** he does feel that part of the tension that existed with the band was due to **Mixtwitch**'s perceived commercial ambitions and sound, which did not position them as an 'authentic' or 'hip' punk band within the local scene. This made them easy targets in the punk press:

> As far as I recall, we would have slagged M**ixtwitch** for being pop-punk, commercial and sell-outs. They were courted by…a small-time band manager trying to make his millions off the back of the next **Green Day** or **OffSpring** during that time…I kept my distance [from the manager] following warnings from older members of the scene…Aside from that, we all liked pop punk to some extent, especially [drummer] Ror. But within our own pocket of the scene, it wasn't really cool to like pop punk (Email Interview, 4 September 2014).

6.4 Fan Interactions with Contemporary Musicians

As indicated previously (Chapter Five), the makeup of a community (Bennett, 2006) and collecting habits (Miller, 2010) are all things that change with age. It was no surprise that numerous fanzine publications encountered during this research were written by people either in secondary school or in third level education; i.e. younger participants. In terms of attracting people to the focus groups of musicians that formed part of this research, numerous bands in Cork, Limerick, and Dublin were emailed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of participants in Dublin were aged thirty and over. In Limerick, the participants ranged from early twenties to late thirties. However, in Cork, most of those that took part were under thirty. There are many preconceptions about young music fans and musicians; they can be viewed as purely digital citizens, consuming their music and music media strictly in a cyber-world. However there have been studies carried out to dispute that theory. Hayes's (2006) field research with teenage music fans showed that the majority were fans of collecting vinyl, for the following reasons: "the appeal of LP jackets, custodianship of records, engagement in the listening experience (including participatory aspects of the turntable), and the quest for elusive vinyl recordings" (2006: 52).

The focus group that I convened in Cork showed an interest in fanzine culture that had been recently piqued by the release of a new local fanzine *We Play Here* in 2013. This growing interest in print material and physical music releases was contrasted with an emerging disinterest with online media (see also 'New Fanzine Producers', Chapter Seven). Caoilain Sherlock, aged 24, admitted that discovering old Cork fanzines and vinyl records in recent years has changed his perspective completely:

> It's not really a reaction but a necessity because everything is online and it's become dull. There's a lack of sincerity to stuff being online all the time, because everything is content-driven as opposed to quality-driven. The same with Twitter – you just need to be seen on it. Everybody needs to be seen to be doing stuff as opposed to the love of it (Focus Group, Cork, 22 January 2014).

Musicians in Dublin had interesting perspectives on the differences between how they communicate with young and older fans. Vincent Dermody (**The Jimmy Cake**) feels that his interaction with bands and fans has changed in the last decade. He no longer feels the need to communicate directly with the bands that he goes to see, nor does he see a need to talking to 'fans' after shows:

> When you're young you go up to bands because you're really excited about the whole thing. As you get older, you got kids, you got to get home and all that. When we were playing in 2000/2001, we used to spend about an hour after a gig talking to people, whereas now we'd go offstage and hide upstairs for a few minutes (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014).

However, some of his fellow musicians believe that the dynamic has changed, where young fans do not feel the need to talk to musicians in person, with a combination of social media and a generation gap prompting them to interact with these bands in other ways aside from face-to-face contact: Ruadhan O'Meara notes that he finds that "old dudes are actually the most chatty after gigs. Guys in their forties and fifties", while Tim O'Mullane adds that "I think the young people today are way too cool to come to talk to you" (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014). O'Mullane's comment is interesting. Firstly the type of music his band **Hidden Highways** play – an alternative country/folk blend – appeals to an older audience (30+); an audience that often contains many participants who would have been found at punk and DIY shows ten years previously. More interesting however is his assertion that young fans are "too cool" to approach bands as it brings me back to Richie Egan's recollection that fanzines were a gateway into the community for him as they gave him an excuse to

talk to bands. With a decrease in fanzine publishing, those avenues obviously become far more limited and the interaction between fan and musician becomes somewhat less personal and far more virtual. Nonetheless, there are young musicians and fans such as Aisling O'Riordan (**The Morning Veils**), who aged 23, prefers a personal connection:

> If I liked the band I'd generally come up to them and chat to them afterwards. I think people a lot more private about that, and reckon they can hide behind their Twitter page and say they like a band from that as opposed to going up. They might see it as a more convenient way (Focus Group, Cork, 22 January 2014).

6.5 Conclusion

O'Riordan's contestation that more and more fans are starting to hide behind social media profiles illustrates that the dynamic of fan to musician interaction is changing, and perhaps it is those fans that are still willing to communicate (or attempt to) face-to-face with the objects of their fandom that are higher up the fanhood hierarchy. I contend that the fanzine writer – with a large degree of what Hills (2002) calls 'fan social capital' – find themselves in a somewhat elevated place in that arguably quite flexible hierarchy. As a fan and a writer, their participation is two-fold. In many cases, the musician also has a direct involvement in the production of fanzines. This, along with the 'friend' and 'supporter' positions in the hierarchy, makes the authenticity of DIY fandom somewhat questionable. Nonetheless, musicians interviewed agreed that the fanzine was a significant player in communicating how local scenes operated, and was aligned to the DIY ethos of the music practices that the musicians themselves were undertaking. The pitfalls of 'pro-am' writing aside, music makers saw fanzines as a positive facilitator of information between themselves and fans.

Finally this chapter has taken a look at how social networking is playing a much larger role in how musicians interact with their fans. The anonymity of the cyber world can elicit a more forceful type of contact, without fear of retribution, although it should be remembered however that there were many fanzines written under pseudonyms also. While what was once the preserve of the fanzine – asking bands questions that would not be asked elsewhere, such as the mainstream press – is now something that can be done instantaneously via a Facebook message or comment, or a tweet on Twitter.

What impact this has had on fanzine culture will be explored in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven: Fanzines in an era of Digital Reproduction

7.1 Introduction

My research (particularly Chapter Four) has drawn on Hamilton's analysis of French humanist photography and the dominant paradigm of representation in terms of aesthetics, economics, and identity (1997). While this photography was a significant part of French society in the early 1950s, its significance waned due to a number of factors; socio-economic changes, the spread of 'new' media (television), and the consumption of these photographs in other environments (conferences and exhibitions) meant that the photographs resonated in a different way. Hamilton argues that the medium, its content, technologies of production and consumption, audience tastes, political and economic environment are intrinsically linked in a single paradigm; a change in any single factor inevitably producing a reaction in all others. It is my view that fanzines can also be similarly considered in a paradigmatic context, and in this chapter I will discuss the impact of technological changes upon fandom and fan communities in Ireland.

The larger part of this research has looked at the fanzine as an artefact existing almost solely in the past tense; this is a rational approach given that Irish fanzine publishing peaked towards the end of the 20th Century (Chapter Five). This particular chapter examines the different options that have appeared in the past two decades that have allowed members of local scenes to communicate in new ways. I will begin by exploring the first wave of DIY web 2.0 fandom, which saw the spread of e-zines and bulletin boards. Attention will then turn to the blog, perhaps the medium with the greatest scope to replace and indeed replicate the physical fanzine. The chapter will look at perceived issues surrounding labour and authenticity related to music bloggers in Ireland. Perhaps the most significant change to the musician/ fan/ amateur media producer dynamic has been the rapid increase in social network sites (SNS), which boyd sees as a form of 'networked publics' (2011). This chapter sets out to see if these 'networked publics' offer similar experiences of community compared to those afforded by fanzines and the networking that is an aspect of alternative cultures. At its essence, this chapter acts as a comparison piece: it compares the usage of other types

of media to the usage of the fanzine, and seeks to determine do they provide similar experiences of community membership.

7.2 21st Century Fanzine Alternatives

This section considers different alternatives to the fanzine that have been used in music communities since the late 1990s. It looks at 'new media' technologies and platforms that allow for accessibility and interactivity (McQuail, 2005) and 'double articulation', whereby 'new media' is not just the object but also a connection between the private and public spheres (Horst, 2012).

<u>The Difficulties with E-Zines</u>
Writing in 2002, Chris Atton looked at international e-zines (electronic magazines generally distributed by email but available through other methods online) as a potential successor to the physical fanzine. In theory, these publications were to be emailed to subscribers as opposed to accessed through websites or (later) blogs. Atton found that the motivations and production values of the e-zine makers remained the same as the physical versions – e-zine producers generally created their content alone, and, like fanzines, the project was very much seen as something that one made for fun, not for financial gain, and for a community of individuals known to the producer. Nonetheless, there were significant differences between the printed and electronic fanzine, with Atton stating that "e-zines mostly appear as poor simulacra of the printed original" (2002: 68). What Atton was primarily arguing was that the e-zine did not manage to capture the same design and style of the fanzine; this failure to retain that DIY look would be a factor in their failure to infiltrate local scenes.

Yet, the e-zine could still be considered to be an outlet for DIY activism at the turn of the century. Its relative cheapness – so long as one had access to a computer – and the near ubiquity of internet availability in 'the West', meant that it had potential for both 'fan producer' and 'user'. It offered the fanzine producer an opportunity to reach a new audience, and address an existing audience in different ways. With the physical punk fanzine, the producer aimed to break even; social or cultural capital gained was considered more important than a profit. However, the e-zine producer was not in the

position to generate revenue in the early 2000s, and may have had some costs to cover (for example, time at an internet café) during a period that represented the early stages of e-commerce. For an e-zine producer, it would have been extremely difficult to sell their publication online[125] to return any 'investment' made.

Atton pinpointed two further constraints of the e-zine: portability and physicality. The former seems increasingly ironic given the technological advances that have occurred in the past decade, whereby many music fans now get their information directly from smartphones or tablets. Yet, in 2002, many online users were dealing with unwieldy desktop computers and slow internet connections. As the e-zine was either embedded in the email text or attached as a Word document, particularly before the proliferation of PDF documents, it was lacking the mere physicality of the printed artefact. Of course, the reader had the option to print out an e-zine but it never quite has the same look and feel as that which the producer had envisaged. This suggests that the physical publication has acquired a special status that cannot be reproduced in a digital format. The physical fanzine is considered somewhat unique, and this is even evident in individual copies, where a poor photocopy or an incorrectly inserted staple can distinguish one copy from another. This does not transfer to the electronic process, where one is consuming an identical copy regardless of whether they are reading it in Dublin or Dubai. Furthermore, the practices of production are appreciated by the reader, particularly within a DIY context. As they become scarcer in an era of digital distribution, printed fanzines within taste communities become more valued.

Smith (1999: 89) points out that e-zines allow for a far greater (and more global) potential audience for fans who are self-publishing, as it cuts out the expense of printing and posting. This wider distribution network impacts on the fanzine paradigm, as it becomes less localised. However, Smith's work on e-zine comic books in the United States actually illustrated that the majority of e-zine producers were not individuals who had been producers of fanzines; instead, it was first-time fandom self-publishers that adopted the platform. The e-zine has not enjoyed the longevity that Smith predicted. Its continued existence as a mode of communication has not been as

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[125] More than a decade later and there are still ongoing debates around selling media content online, primarily related to the professional media's issue of introducing paywall structures, i.e. charging for certain content, on the websites of magazines and newspapers.

an alternative cultural artefact but more as a marketing tool for large corporations. This was something envisaged by Atton (2002) who saw the e-zine as a potential hub for promoting products based on his analysis of an online archive of e-zines[126]. This is supported by Grimes and Wall's recent UK-based research (2014), where their Google search of 'punk webzine' found, for example, that a DIY record label had appropriated the term 'zine' to generate traffic towards their website and ultimately purchase records and merchandise from their web-store. In this case, the record label feels that aligning itself to the traditional punk fanzine – in name at least – will attach an element of authenticity to its public profile, but in doing so they are also marking a shift of meaning for the term 'fanzine'.

My research has indicated that the e-zine in Ireland was never a real presence in independent music scenes. Just a handful of music titles have been uncovered; one e-zine was entitled *Pacer*[127], which still has some articles and interviews from 2000 to 2002 accessible, as well as a link to information about a physical edition of the zine, but there does not appear to be much in terms of what distinguishes the e-zine from an actual website. There is nothing on the site that still exists to suggest that *Pacer* published discrete issues as e-zines, instead existing as a series of sporadically posted reviews and features, much as a music website or blog would. However, it does actually show links to fanzine culture (in contrast to Smith's study), with prominent fanzine authors such as Boz (Mugabe) amongst the listed contributors on the website for *Pacer*, thus suggesting that it was an outlet that was considered by fanzine writers at the time.

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[126] Atton cites John Labovitz's archive (started in 1993) as one of the largest online and utilises it for his research. The archive was available at htttp://www.meer.net/~johnl/e-zine-list at the time of Atton writing, but is no longer available. A subsequent site from Labovitz of his list at http://www.e-zine-list.com/ is also no longer accessible (October 2014).

[127] http://www.angelfire.com/zine/pacer/ (Accessed 9 September 2014)

Figure 7.1: *Pacer* **Screenshot**

Nonetheless, *Pacer* was something of an anomaly, indicating that the e-zine was not a format widely adopted by the community. Another publication encountered (in title only) was the electronica-based e-zine from Dublin called *Autocue* (2002), which is no longer accessible online. This illustrates a potential problem with e-zines not distributed through email but instead hosted elsewhere: longevity. It is ironic that older print fanzines can at times be more accessible than their online counterparts who fall victim to hosting sites and platforms that become obsolete. The e-zine producer that publishes their material more as a 'webzine' – i.e. does not distribute it through email or other downloadable methods – also has the ability to edit and delete material if they end up disagreeing with their own opinions a few years after publication, a luxury that the fanzine writer does not enjoy. This suggests that the webzine retain less of an aura as a result; the fanzine as an artefact becomes very much 'of its time', whereas the edited webzine places less significance on time and place.

While the e-zine did not replace the physical fanzine, some fanzine titles have used the e-zine as a platform to promote the physical fanzine itself. For example, the Belfast-

239

based metal fanzine *War On All Fronts* utilised Scribd[128] software to publish an e-zine version of its second issue (2013). However, as the writer Matthew Moore noted at the online e-commerce site Etsy (which hosted the online sale of the physical edition), the e-zine version was more of a preview, albeit one that contained 87 pages of material. The printed fanzine would feature 120 pages, and Moore utilised the fact that he had key interviews with US metal band **High Spirits** and Swedish death metallers **Bombs of Shade,** which were exclusive to the printed versions and served as a selling point. The fanzine maker is placing emphasis on the physical product by offering these extra features, and as such, this was placing more value on the physical version making it the more authentic version.

This also resonates with the aesthetic position of contemporary DIY cultures in Ireland today. A quick survey of a handful of Irish independent record labels and bands showed that there is a strong preference for physical artefacts. For instance, the Dublin-based music collective Popical Island – which is run by members from a number of its constituent bands – released four vinyl records, two cassettes, and two compact discs in 2014. While all of these releases were also available digitally, the emphasis in the label's promotion was in the physical editions. A blog post recapping the year[129] did not even mention the digital versions that are widely available. One of their records was a split label release – an irregular but accepted participatory aspect of DIY labels – was with my own record label Out On A Limb Records, which since 2012, has had ten releases on vinyl records, three on CD, and just one (a single) released as digital only. Elsewhere, the Seven Quarters club established by Barry Lennon – a one-time fanzine writer (see Chapter Six), former label owner (Richter Collective) and singer with hardcore band **Hands Up Who Wants To Die** – has released four 7" singles in the past twelve months. Each of these singles adopts the split release approach with two acts featuring, and the vinyl records become an artefact associated specifically with the live gig that accompanies them. These singles become physical reminders for members of the taste community that attend these performances.

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[128] Scribd is a digital library where users can access various e-books utilising the Scribd reader.
[129] The posting can be found at popicalisland.tumblr.com, Retrieved 22 August 2015.

What these examples demonstrate is an appreciation in DIY cultures for tangible and collectible souvenirs. The same applies with fan media, as can be seen with *War On All Fronts* and the subsequent reaction it received. This is particularly evident by the introduction to an interview with Matthew Moore, the author of the fanzine, on the Metal Ireland website[130]:

> There's a new zine on the block, and in an era where there's less and less of them, it's one you should take the time to read. Matty Moore has put the latest installment of his *War On All Fronts* zine together with care and attention to detail – not to mention a lot of time and effort…you can download a PDF of it at the bottom. Make sure to pick up the printed article!

Within the interview, Matthew explained his reasoning for the e-zine edition of this issue:

> I've accepted the digital revolution a little bit more this time with *WOAF A.D. 2013* by doing the free e-zine edition, but to me printed zines are still timeless, and that's why the PDF version is not the full completed product. To me you don't get the full experience of an album unless you have a physical copy of it so why should it be any different with zines? My business model I guess is based pretty closely on Bandcamp[131]. There's so much out there on the market these days that you have to give people a taste for free.

It is clear that the writer's preference is the physical model, and that he still views aspects of that as a paradigm where the texture plays a major role. Even the placement of the fanzine on Etsy, a site whose tagline is "your place to sell and buy all things handmade"[132] and is used by craft producers of clothing, ornamental objects, and accessories, is noteworthy; Matthew uses the Etsy site to also sell patches, an important accessory within the metal community where fans distinguish themselves by sewing patches onto items of clothing such as jackets and other accoutrements such as back-bags. Even if his publication looks more professional in layout and design than a typically ragged, 'punk' looking zine, the usage of the word 'handmade' on the Etsy website gives it a more unique feel. As such, the material object becomes a signifier of 'authenticity'; the metal fan that is seen with clothing, merchandise, and media that supports the 'scene' is seen as a credible fan by his or her peers. With all of this in

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[130] http://www.metalireland.com/2014/02/03/matty-moore-war-on-all-fronts-zine-interview/, Retrieved 1 October 2014

[131] Bandcamp is an online platform that allows bands to upload their music for streaming and/or downloading purposes. Bands are able to sell their music directly through the site, without having to pay distribution charges or deal with external distributors.

[132] https://www.etsy.com/, Retrieved 10 October 2014.

mind, the writer does not see the e-zine as a replacement to the physical fanzine, but more as an accompaniment or taster. As I have discussed previously (Chapter Two) and will examine later in this chapter, this is similar to what Calhoun (1998) has proposed about virtual communities – they work, according to Calhoun, when they accompany activities that take place offline.
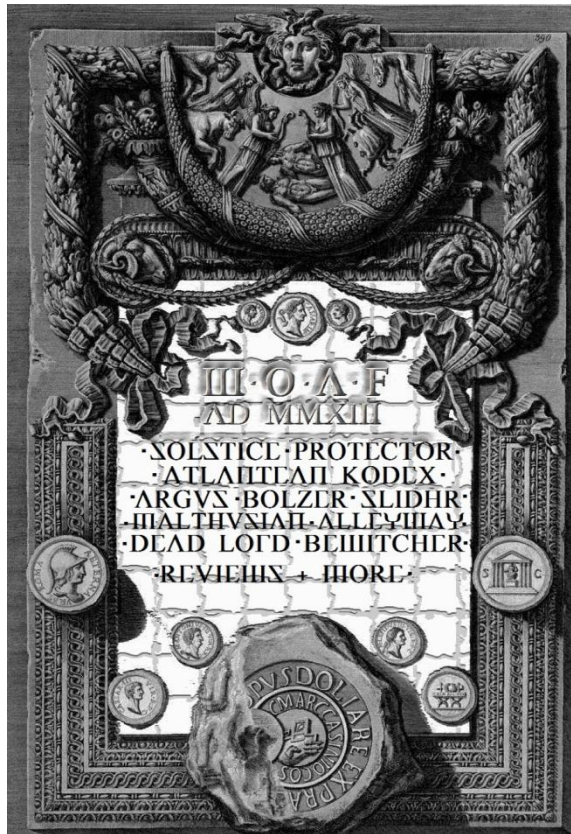
Figure 7.2: *War On All Fronts* **(Issue 2, 2013)**

As with the case of the publisher of *War On All Fronts*, it would be wrong to suggest that fanzine culture has completely ignored online media. For instance, current[133] Irish fanzines such as *Loserdom*, *Hatred of Music*, and *We Play Here* all have either a website, blog, or a Tumblr[134] account respectively. All three have some presence via social networking media (Facebook and/or Twitter). Yet, whereas one could read practically an entire edition of *The Irish Times* newspaper through their website, fanzine producers still remain guarded about allowing all of their content to feature online. *Loserdom*'s website features videos of the production process of the fanzine. It

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[133] All of these fanzines published editions in 2013.
[134] Tumblr is a short-form blogging and social media website.

can be argued that this is here for two reasons: 1) as a way of portraying how much work goes into fanzine publishing; and 2) as a method of suggesting to others how it can be done in a true DIY sense. Anto Dillon explains his approach to using their website:

> We update it every issue – you might put one article up but I don't put up all the content. Maybe I should because *The Guardian* puts up all their content and a lot of other places do. I'm just really into the print, into the layouts, and just holding it, so I don't think it would go that way (Interview, Dublin, 23 March, 2012).

For Dillon, the means of production and dissemination are very important (maybe as important as the content); the physical copy is also an embodiment of his fan labour which perhaps does not transfer to digital production. Other fanzine makers utilise new media as a way of promoting their fanzines or offering supplementary material such as outtakes from interviews that did not feature in the current issue, such as in the case of *We Play Here*[135]. However, as Smith (1999) suggested, not many people have made the leap from producing fanzines to producing blogs and websites, or even e-zines.

Bulletin Boards - a more participatory mode of Web 2.0 communication?
Running concurrently with the e-zine, bulletin boards and message boards (also called web boards) were a major part of DIY scenes around the turn of the century. Whereas the e-zine – like the fanzine itself – was frequently the opinion of an individual fan, numerous members of the music scene could be simultaneously active in various debates on message boards and bulletin boards, and they crucially facilitated "asynchronous topic-based group interaction amongst people who did not need prior connections" (Baym, 2010:16). In Limerick, the Aspersion Music Collective's[136] website theamc.net was a focal point for local members of the underground[137] music community to discuss music, local gigs, and other common interests whether they were political, sporting, or cultural. The Cork equivalent was the messageboard at

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[135] For example, http://weplayhere.tumblr.com/post/72758380912/we-play-here-issue-one-outtakes-more-from-jim-comic, Accessed 30 September 2014.
[136] A non-profit collective that organised DIY gigs in Limerick City from 1999 to 2006.
[137] Participants saw themselves as 'underground' in that they played in and/or frequented venues not located in the main streets of the city, and not considered to be the main concert venues. The music they played, and that was played at the gigs they attended, would not be heard in more 'mainstream' bars and clubs in the city.

Freakscene.com, the website for a long-running alternative club night[138] in the city. Fans of the club would visit their webpage, which was particularly busy from 2003-2006 (approximately), to discuss their favourite music from national and international bands, promote upcoming gigs and releases from local bands, and to chat about happenings at the club itself. DJs would post playlists of the tracks they had played the previous night which could be dissected online by their audiences. By far the most popular forum-based website in the underground community was Thumped.com (known simply as Thumped by its users), a website set up by Dubliner Pete Brady in January 1999[139], that has acquired over 9,000 registered members[140]. Brady set it up as a forum for like-minded fans, and a sense of value was placed on the site; independent bands, labels, and promoters, along with some enthusiastic supporters of the site were encouraged to help cover the hosting costs the site through annual subscriptions of €20. In turn, the bands and labels would be eligible for banner advertising on the site, giving them some credibility as supporters of this platform within the 'scene'[141]. In bulletin boards, it is the members who initiate the debate, and that debate is moderated more than 'written'.

At its peak (circa 2005/06), Thumped.com had thousands of different users logging on weekly, and a thread on the forum may not stay on the front page beyond a few hours, such was the regularity of new thread creation. For Hugh McCabe (**Large Mound**), Thumped.com was, and still is, an important part of his identity and a very useful tool for conversing with other fans and musicians: "The whole explosion of bulletin boards and things like that has brought the punk rock community thing out of that world of A4 photocopied magazines and stuff, which has potentially broadened the scope of that activity" (Interview, Dublin, 9 December 2013). For McCabe, it represented an outlet for punk enthusiasts to network in a way that could not have been imagined by other media, including the fanzine. While music interests are more diverse on Thumped than would be the case in a single fanzine title (due simply to the amount of

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[138] Freakscene was a Cork-based "alternative" club night (disco) that ran in various venues around the city from 1994 until 2013, and still hosts irregular events.
[139] Brady, P (n.d.). In: *About.* Retrieved October 2, 2014, from http://thumped.com/about
[140] It is important to note that registered members does not necessarily equate to registered users. Many individuals register numerous different accounts under different identities. A figure of 9,053 was provided by Pete Brady through email correspondence (November 2014).
[141] An indicator of a declining influence the site has on the DIY 'scene' can be found in the lack of these banner advertisements on the page. Instead, ads for mobile phone companies and hotel search engines are generated by tech companies that tailor ads for specific users.

users on Thumped) there is still an element of it being very much an anti-mainstream website, particularly in the hardcore-oriented 'Eirecore' sub-forum of the site. As can be seen below (Figure 7.3) the main topics of discussion on Eirecore are on aspects of Irish DIY scenes, with three of the topics about gigs and the other about DIY releases.
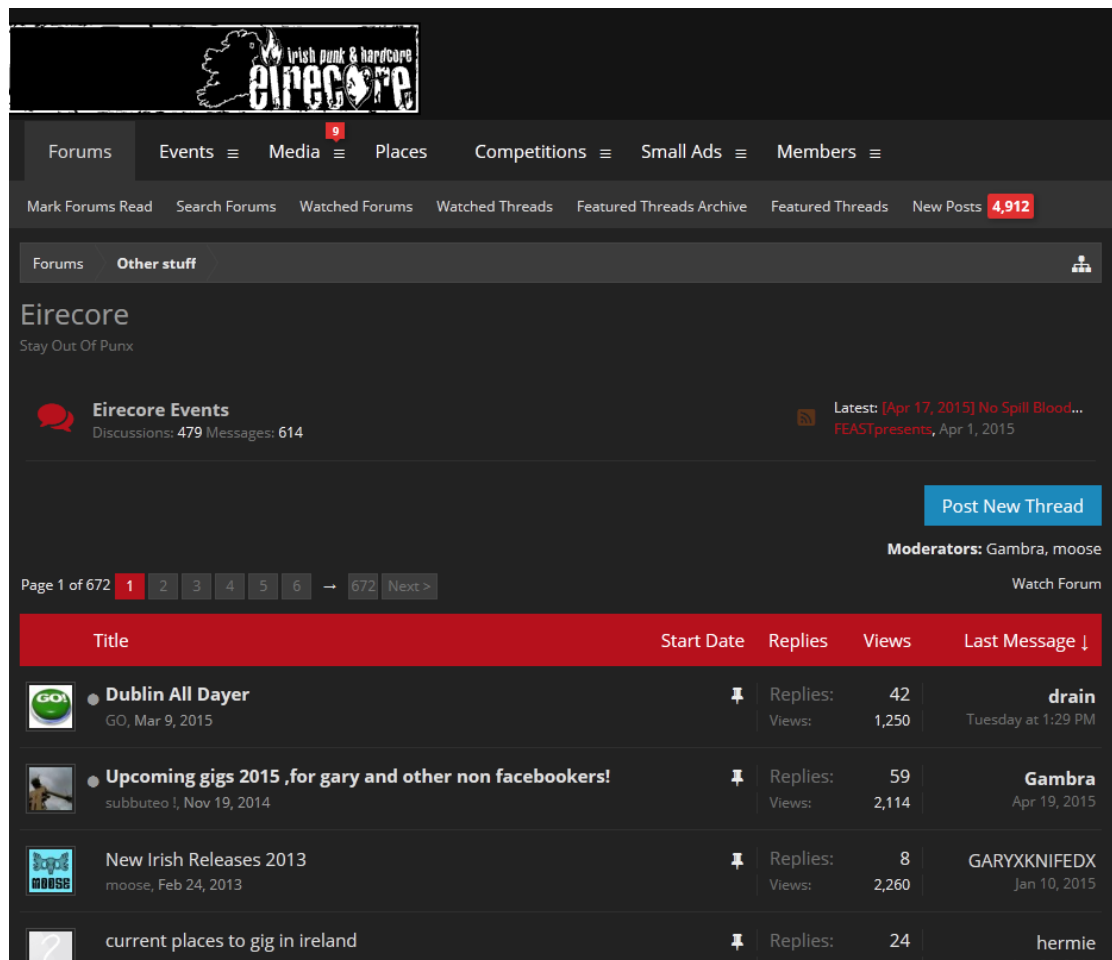
Figure 7.3: Screengrab of 'Eirecore' from Thumped.com

Similarly to fanzines, Thumped has positioned itself in opposition to the mainstream press. While a thread announcing a new fanzine on the site is generally warmly received by the members, there is a degree of distrust towards professional publications such as *Hot Press*. In return, the users of Thumped are portrayed as quite militant by the mainstream press, and there appears to be long-term grappling with the music journalist Jim Carroll (*The Irish Times*). As a writer with a daily broadsheet in Ireland, Carroll represents the establishment to many users of Thumped, operating in the popular music press that is part of the commercial media (see Jones and Featherly, 2002), and does not offer significant support to the unsigned or independent bands that

are posted about and post on Thumped. This attitude is illustrated in a Thumped.com thread in April 2004[142] entitled 'Jim Carroll in The Ticket'[143] that features the following first two postings:

#10-7 [User Name]: Did anyone read what Jim Carroll wrote in *The Ticket* about Irish bands? He basically wrote off everyone, and said **Franz Ferdinand** were the most amazing band in ages. F**K OFF! There are plenty of Dublin and Irish underground bands who interest me more than **Franz Ferdinand**.
Hugh [User Name]: Still at it then is he? There's a simple reason for this attitude. Bands like **Franz Ferdinand** pay his salary. Bands like [The] **Redneck Manifesto** don't. F**kwit. He's worse than Mark Steyn[144] actually.

It is clear from this exchange on Thumped.com that Carroll is deemed subservient to a capitalist media, and as such, he is subjected to insults on the bulletin boards. It is questionable whether this abuse would take place through fanzines; while there are of course instances where individuals are lampooned in physical fanzines, it would be much rarer, due mainly to the fact it is the work of an individual or small group of people. It should also be considered that the physical fanzine writer may have an elementary understanding of defamation law, particularly given that one of the earliest Irish fanzines *Heat* had to cease publishing due to a legal case[145] in the late 1970s. The anonymous users of bulletin boards feel empowered to abuse other individuals without risk of being identified. Sinclair has conducted extensive research into the Irish heavy metal scene where he found that online participation had a "less civilizing effect on the behaviour of the heavy metal fans" (2014:210). The fans he had met offline were quite different to their online personas, who were often sexist and abusive towards fans in these online spaces. Furthermore, Curran contends that "the internet can spew out hatred, foster misunderstanding and perpetuate animosity" (2012: 10), regardless of its international reach or interactivity. With the case of Jim Carroll, there is a more parochial reasoning for the tensions that exist. Carroll has taken swipes at Dublin instrumental band **The Jimmy Cake**, a band that contains at least two prominent and vocal members of Thumped: "publications cover the **Jimmy Cake** who would never

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[142] The full thread started on 29 April 2004 is accessible at https://thumped.com/bbs/threads/jim-carroll-in-the-ticket.12920/ (Retrieved 26 September 2014)
[143] *The Ticket* is a weekly arts and culture supplement that appears in *The Irish Times* every Friday.
[144] A comparison to Mark Steyn, the conservative US-based (Canadian born) political commentator.
[145] *Heat* was sued for libel by Paul McGuinness, the **U2** manager in 1979. The fanzine received support from numerous bands in the local punk scene and a benefit concert was held in the National Ballroom (Lynch, 2006).

cover a band as poor as that in a million years if there was not that local interest" [146].
While there is not necessarily a major difference in terms of Carroll's musical taste
with that of the Thumped users, he is demonstrating that he is a professional journalist
who is aware of how the industry works, as opposed to the 'pro-am' writers and
bulletin board users. Sometimes, this is done with little more than a subtle taunt at the
users of Thumped.com: in a blog post from June 2009 (Carroll, 2009) about the
Primavera Sound Music Festival in Barcelona, Carroll lampoons the debates that take
place on sites like Thumped over issues such as corporate sponsorship of festivals:

> …would all those **Sunn O)))** [147] fans be as tolerant and nonchalant about the huge
> amount of sponsorship and branding which Primavera have on board to help them pay
> the bills and keep the ticket prices low? Listen bud, there'd be a 14 page thread about
> that on Thumped before you could say "Raybans".

In recent years, there have been less visible clashes between Carroll and Thumped,
coinciding with a period where the forum has become less influential in the scene.
Nonetheless, Thumped has played a critical role over the past fifteen years, where an
album receiving kudos from respected board members was an important milestone for
an emerging band, just as a favourable review from a fanzine like *Nosebleed* was.
Musicians such as Ruadhan O'Meara (**No Spill Blood**) question whether Thumped
holds much currency for current musicians:

> Thumped was a huge thing. Even going back to like 1999, that was quite a big thing in
> so far as finding out what was going on, talking to other bands, organising gigs, all
> that sort of stuff. It has gone to the wayside now big time since Facebook and all that
> came in (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014).

Indeed, the propagation of postings on bulletin boards has been greatly affected by the
rise of social media since 2010. For instance, in Cork, Freakscene allowed their .com
domain to lapse and instead concentrated their online attentions on a Facebook
account. To give a fuller picture, I have analysed two weeks of postings from the
'General Forum' [148] at Thumped.com. The first set of posts are from February 1-7

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[146] Retrieved 10 October 2014 from comments section of
http://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/ontherecord/2008/07/16/kraftwerk-the-full-bill/
[147] **Sunn O)))** are a cult drone metal band from the USA.
[148] The forums section has a number of forums and sub-forums, dealing with areas such as literature,
travel, football, hardcore-specific (Eirecore), publishing, computing, etc. My research focussed on just
the 'General Forum' – as the site's most populated forum, it features the most posts related to music,
the primary common interest of the site's members.

(inclusive) 2004; the second set are from February 1-7 2014. The results below are conclusive evidence of the drop off in usage of bulletin boards such as Thumped.
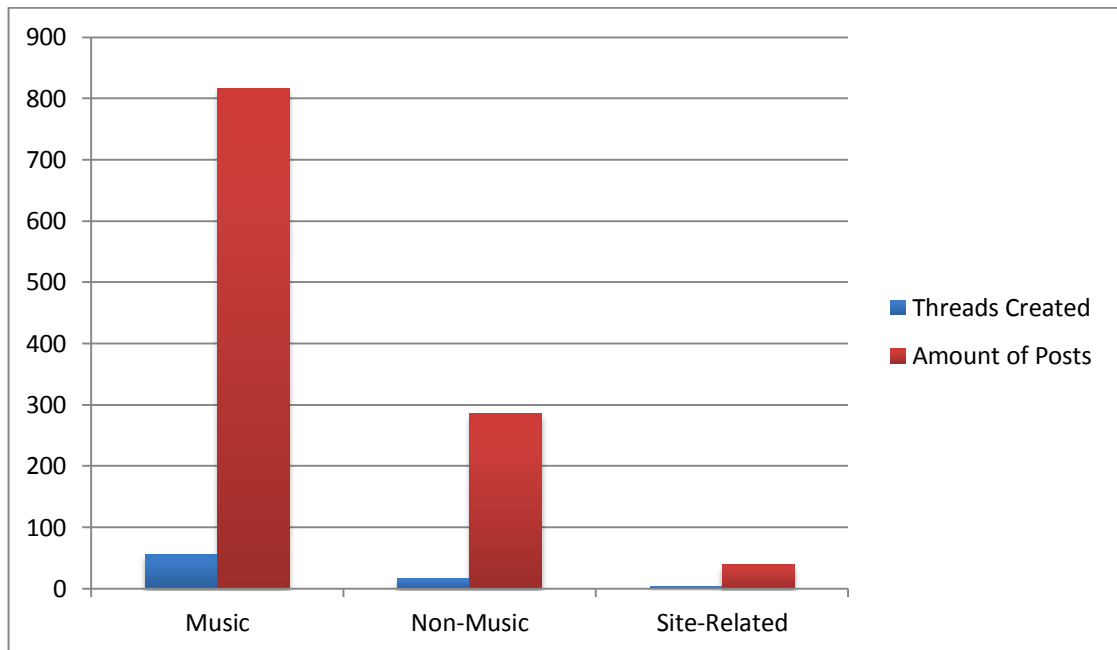
Figure 7.4: Activity on Thumped.Com 'General Forum' – 1/2/2004 to 7/2/2004
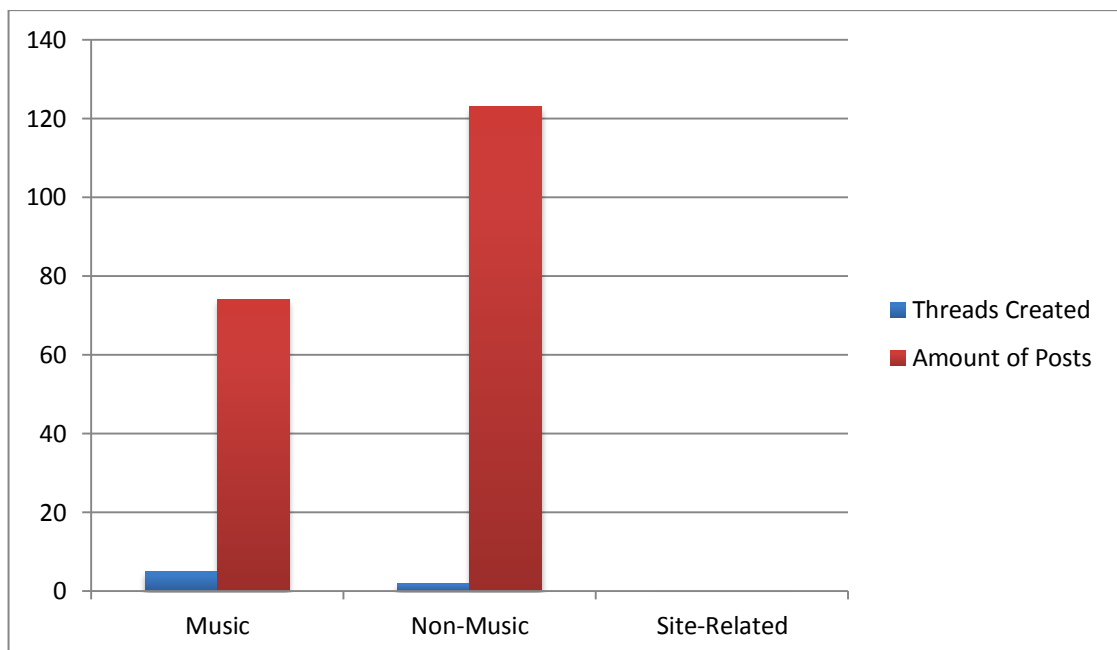
Figure 7.5: Activity on Thumped.Com 'General Forum' – 1/2/2014 to 7/2/2014

Both sets of results are broken into three categories – music (of which there were numerous sub-categories: Irish, non-Irish, promoting own band, recent gigs, musicians' advice), non-music, and site-related – and determined on the basis of the

number of new 'threads' opened on topics relating to each during the week, as well as the total amount of posts over the course of the week. The first significant difference is the volume of posts. The week in 2004 saw a total of 1,142 posts and 77 threads created. Many of these individual posts were one word long or just an image, while others were more articulate. One thread saw over 100 posts about a band called **Morello**, with the majority being uncomplimentary (again highlighting the role of cyber anonymity), while another thread complaining about Dublin delicatessens received thirteen responses. **Morello** were considered to be a band that were attempting to attract the attentions of a major label (and subsequently would sign a short-lived deal with a subsidiary of Universal), and as such, were not considered authentic participants in DIY culture. The material on Thumped drifted from the inane to more considered and deeper musings on music, but there was significantly some form of a virtual community forming there, with most active members posting more than once over the week; for the most part, this 'virtual community' existed as an appendage to offline relationships that existed between members (Calhoun, 1998), or helped to form new networks. It was evident that this is where people came to find out about and discuss gigs that were not publicised in the mainstream media, already demonstrating that the influence of the fanzine had started to diminish by 2004. Few threads on Thumped – besides some that blatantly promoted members' own bands or gigs – received no responses. During the exact same week ten years later, there is less than a fifth of the amount of posts on the site with a total of just 197 posts. Even more revealing is that only seven new threads were created in that week, showing that there had been a serious migration away from the bulletin board. Whereas the 2004 sample contained numerous posts about local music within the 'scene', the community seems more disjointed come 2014; the majority of the posts appear in the 'non-music' category, and there is no discussion about other site members, illustrating that it has become a community less habituated. Additionally, the most prominent music threads is entitled 'Desert Island Pricks' where members pick out their favourite albums of all time – it is the kind of generic topic that could be found on a messageboard in any country, and makes it less aligned to a distinctive scene or community.

The role of these bulletin boards seemed to be as a nucleus for the interactive multi-person discussion that was generally absent in fanzines, and only found in a truncated form in sporadic letters pages. As the sole remainder of the trio of websites discussed

here, Thumped.com has markedly changed its approach, perhaps to combat the spread of social networking sites that has taken away many of its members. It has done this by increasing the number of long-form articles and reviews on its site, written by various writers (some of whom have had work published in professional publications also). Within this realm, Thumped is now a direct competitor to bloggers and other social media users who can publish content as quickly as they wish, or in some cases, perhaps too quickly.

Blogging as Premature Publishing

Lars Nyre (2008:39) refers to 'premature publishing' whereby young amateur musicians can upload raw demo-quality bedroom recordings pretty much as soon as they have them recorded. New bands are utilising streaming and download-ready platforms such as Bandcamp and Soundcloud[149] to simply and cheaply achieve global distribution. Bandcamp and Soundcloud can be considered Web 2.0 technologies in that they allow users to generate the content, and for other users to share, comment, and approve of the content, a development that is actively intended to foster sharing and community formation[150]. Very little knowledge of the workings of the music industry is required for one to establish an account and upload their music.

A similar phenomenon occurs within other outlets with Web 2.0 capabilities where "the ability of users to control their own data with the introduction of new technology" (Booth, 2010: 87) can often lead to that data emerging that is either unfinished or unprofessional. For the purposes of this research, this is perhaps most evident in blogging. While referring more specifically to news blogging, Curran's suggestion that "most bloggers lack the time to investigate stories" (2012: 20) is applicable to music blogging too. Many bloggers in Ireland also have 'day jobs' away from the industry and this limits the amount of time they can spend on their sites. As a result, a regular practice is to copy and paste a press release, add a picture and embed a piece of audio and/or video. As soon as the blogger has the story typed and presses 'publish',

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[149] Soundcloud is a similar service to Bandcamp in that it allows for the uploading, streaming, downloading, and embedding of audio. Its notable difference to Bandcamp is that it does not operate as a web-store where music acts can directly sell the audio as WAV/MP3s. Instead, Soundcloud generates its income by selling plans to users who want to upload more than two hours of audio.
[150] Despite this promotion of 'community' it must be remembered that Bandcamp and Soundcloud's ultimate goal is the generation of revenue.

the piece is unveiled to the cyber world. Looking at this positively, Hinton and Hjorth argue that: "Web 2.0 makes creating content vastly less complicated, and this, in turn leads to much more control being put online as the technical barriers to creation are removed" (2013:19). Niall McGuirk of *React* understands that a new generation of music fans want their news a lot quicker now, and can see why fans engage in blogging rather than fanzine creation. However, he does add that:

> Maybe we require immediacy a bit too much. That's probably a sociological issue because people now need their information straight away, but you don't *really* need it straight away. But if you do a fanzine, sometimes with reviews of records, it goes out of date, but if you are interviewing someone, it doesn't necessarily go out of date (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

Contemporary hard copy fanzines published in Ireland tend not to discuss Web 2.0 and the impact it has had on their media: a content analysis of Irish titles that have published since the rise of blogs circa 2005/06 sees no discussion on the topic. Either it is purposely ignored or its effect is not registering on them to a significant level. Additionally, it is not just people that grew up with fanzines as their source of music information that wistfully speak of an era when music news was not so rushed and frequent. Despite being over twenty years younger than Niall, Cork-based musician and promoter Aisling O'Riordan argues that the appeal of fanzines could be in seeing how they documented a place and time specific to the writer, as opposed to immediate news that emerges online and is swiftly forgotten about. She says:

> Blogs are completely instant. Something happens and it's on twitter and then someone has written a story about it, whereas when you did a zine, there was a band that didn't exist by the time the zine had come out. That's great – that's what's really nice about it as well (Focus Group, Cork, 22 January 2014).

Fellow Cork musician Eimear O'Donovan added that bloggers feel a need to constantly be seen as active; if the level of activity drops, so too does the blog's reputation and profile with her arguing that bloggers "need to update a blog every day or every week, whereas [with] a zine you can wait until you really want to talk about anything" (Focus Group, Cork 22 January 2014). Indeed, fanzines function in a different temporal cycle to blogs; even if the material is outdated, it still is deemed to have significance to the time when it was written. On the other hand, the online material that is often in more digestible news pieces is turned around quicker; I would

contend that as a result of this – and the obvious textural differences – it has less enduring appeal as a collector's item. It is a different quality of information and fanzines are not necessarily just about 'news' anyway.

However, it can be also argued that this is a nostalgic view of fanzines. While the grammatical mistakes and production deficiencies that are commonplace in fanzines help construct a production paradigm of an 'authentic' publication, there can also be an element of 'premature publishing' in their amateur content. Frequently a fanzine has to be ready in time for a particular gig that is on, as this is the ideal 'market' for the publication; thus, the production may be more hurried than the writer actually wants it to be. This is mirrored in the production of blogs. To use the framework of Actor Network Theory (ANT) monetarily here, the non-human actors – in this case, the blogging technologies or the devices used to blog – play a role in this process. ANT places greater agency on the role and flexibility of technologies that are constantly in flux; these non-human actors are significant factors in the way that people articulate what they feel about music at a 'pro-am' level, and it needs to be considered that as a consequence authenticity itself is constantly redefined (see Yu, 2013) within this context. The interactivity of technology in Web 2.0, with 'comments', 'notifications', and 'invitations', changes how groups are formed, whereby the technology is automated to seek community members. However, as I will explore in the final section of this chapter, these technologies are not necessarily creating communities but are more supporting existing communities.

7.3 The Labour Debate: Fanzines V Blogs

A common theme that emerged amongst my research participants was a suspicion that the process of producing a fanzine was more labour intensive than blogging. Even bloggers accepted that their medium was less 'punk' than the printed fanzine, and thus closer to 'pro-am' productions than fan-generated artefacts. This, for some fanzine writers, made it difficult for them to acknowledge the blog as a proper successor:

> It [blogging] is not as labour-intensive so people are probably more inclined to do something online or electronically, whereas with a fanzine it is a lot of work. So I

think you have to be really hardcore and really into it to give up all of your spare time to do it…people that are more serious about what they do (Interview, Cian Hynes, *Riot 77*, Dublin 23 March 2012).

For Hynes, there is a presumed value to the labour carried out in producing an issue of a fanzine. For him, this level of labour has more of a 'seriousness' attached to it, and that is manifested most apparently in the act of assembling a physical fanzine. This view does not consider other factors in the production processes for both blogs and fanzines; for example, a blogger may spend longer in terms of putting a blog post together than a fanzine writer spends on a corresponding article for their publication. It also does not take into account the time spent in establishing and designing a blog, and the backend work that goes into developing a cyber-publication. After all, should time spent virtually not have the same value as time spent in non-virtual life? However, for Hynes, there appears to be something deeper here, and it connects to what he sees as the ethos of the punk music that he champions in his fanzine – he does not believe that the blogger gets their 'hands dirty' by having to go out and communicate face-to-face with other members of the community. This is echoed by Trevor Meehan (*Unfit For Consumption*):

> I mean you just type something up and upload it to the net and that's it…I don't really view blogs as DIY really. Proper DIY was a struggle really. It was tough to get stuff done, you had to do stuff yourself; like carrying a bundle of fanzines around is no joke, trying to sell them at a gig, chasing up bands and interviewing them face-to-face. I don't know if a lot of blogs do that sort of stuff (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

Meehan's language suggests a sacrifice made by the fanzine producer – their commitment to getting the fanzine out is for the benefit of the community – and he believes that 'sacrifice' is not replicated in the 'blogosphere'. Like Hynes, he also wonders how bloggers communicate with the scene and its music-makers. In focus groups with musicians, most respondents said that interactions with bloggers took place primarily electronically. This also extended to the e-mail interview, with answers subsequently copied and pasted into the online article. For Meehan, this made the blog more effortless as they did not have to find the band, organise a time to meet, record the interview, and subsequently transcribe it. However, this needs to be understood within a wider change in how the media – both amateur and professional – communicates with others; many professional music journalists also utilise the email interview for efficiency purposes. While he was referring more specifically to the

production and performance of music, Frith points out that suspicions relating to technology date back to the work of the Frankfurt School and their views on the mass production of culture. However, he goes on to argue that "For the told-you-so school of mass cultural criticism, the argument for technological progress does not amount to much…technology has also made possible new forms of cultural democracy and new opportunities of individual and collective expression" (1986: 277-278). Similarly, Yu's recent work (2013) on DJ culture which I have drawn on shows that 'authenticity' is constantly redefined by new technology adopters.

The technology (non-human actors) that has become ubiquitous and allowed bloggers to create posts with embedded images, videos, and music to complement their text is providing new ways for music fans to articulate their fandom. The systems of production may have changed significantly from the heyday of fanzine publishing but that does not necessarily mean that there has been a decrease in the work-load for the creator of fan-generated media. The blogger now has to wade through much more music that is submitted to them for consideration that the fanzine writer ever got, because of a) the ease and cheapness of recording music in the 21st Century, and b) the ease and cheapness of distributing said music to bloggers. Additionally, every blog producer needs to make their site more noticeable which requires hours of time devoted to promoting the website, primarily through social media, and to changing design and layout templates to make it more appealing to readers.

It is not just the platforms used by bloggers than makes them appear less 'authentic' DIY fans to the fanzine writers; the content itself does not reflect the same scene ethos. There are very few music blogs in Ireland that deal with more transgressive genres of music such as hardcore, punk, or metal. Blogs in Ireland tend to write primarily about what can be loosely termed 'indie' music, with some also featuring more electronic genres (particularly nialler9.com). As of early 2013, I identified 41 active[151] music blogs in Ireland, and they all tended to discuss primarily Irish-produced, indie music. Notable exceptions were nostalgia hubs such as the self-explanatory Irish Metal Archive blog and the Irish DIY HardcorePunk Archive. The more 'subversive' genres of music are presented in a more retrospective and archival manner online as opposed

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[151] Active was determined to be any blog with more than six posts in the previous year.

to the more contemporary viewpoint on indie blogs. The music blog is a relatively easy way for independent Irish bands to get exposure regardless of location – perhaps even easier than the more localised fanzine – but several musicians that took part in this research were unsure whether this was a positive move. A general complaint was that the blog format often simply copied and pasted press releases they received, without any real commentary or dissection on the music. Caoilain Sherlock (**The Shaker Hymn**) thinks this is the opposite of fanzine production, and more evocative of 'premature publishing':

> Because it takes so much work [to produce a fanzine], you are putting the time into the things you love and the things you really want to talk about, whereas blogs, it's more like 'ah, I could put that up' (Focus Group, Cork, 22 January 2014).

As an individual who uploads material without the same carefully curated consideration that the fanzine writer applies to their publication, the blogger is not portrayed as a genuine fan of the music they feature. Again, this is a partial judgement; many of those who write music blogs write as devoted aficionados. However, for musicians like Ruadhan O'Meara, blogs like these are in the minority:

> Everyone is trying to talk about the same kind of stuff whether they like it or not, so their fandom doesn't come into it as much. It's what is in the ticker tape today, what is in the bulletin as opposed to "this is the shit, check out track 3 or 4 on this, they're crazy"… The people who are truly talking about something they want to talk about, that's something I engage with. (Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014)

A number of the musicians interviewed for this research pinpointed the Cork-based blog *Fractured Air* – the work of twin brothers Mark and Craig Carry – as one of those blogs that they want to engage with. The following exchange came from a focus group with musicians in Cork (22 January 2014):

> Caoilain Sherlock: I love *Fractured Air* who do really brilliant, really insightful interviews…
> Aisling O' Riordan: But they really immerse themselves in the band beforehand. It's almost like a novel; it's a piece.
> CS: It's like an art as well as an article. If blogs were more like that I'd be so more interested in them than content-driven ones. If they're both blogs [Fractured Air and content-driven blogs], they're not in the same area.
> AOR: Fractured Air is closer to what a zine is than something like The Point Of Everything…There's something about them as people….they're still quite innocent…they're just both massive music fans and they haven't been tarnished with any of the negativity that exists in the music scene which is lovely about them.

Rory O'Brien: They get to choose completely who they want.

While their focus is more on international artists, and certainly not those of a punk persuasion[152], the creators of *Fractured Air* are considered to be insightful and genuine music fans by their readers and the wider music community they operate from. This perception places them in a minority, as the general consensus amongst participants in this study was that those involved in blogs were using it as a 'stepping stone' to a career in journalism, thus removing the fan-ish behaviour that comes with the writing that appears in fanzines.

A Winged Victory For The Sullen is the collaborative project of like-minded artists and musical luminaries, Adam Bryanbaum Wiltzie (Stars Of The Lid) and composer Dustin O'Halloran. Last year marked the highly anticipated return of A Winged Victory For The Sullen's stunningly beautiful and deeply affecting neo-classical based compositions in the form of the duo's sophomore effort, '*Atomos*'. First glimpses of the pair's new material – and follow-up to the mesmerizing eponymous debut, released in 2011 – was beautifully captured in '*Atomos VII*' EP; comprising two original compositions recorded in the summer of 2013 in Brussels, Berlin and Reykjavik. This stunning release also featured Icelandic composer Ben Frost's rework – appropriately dubbed '*Greenhouse Re-Interpretation*' – of '*Atomos VI*'. What remains vividly present on the pair's newest masterwork of '*Atomos*' is the infinite beauty and unlimited emotion that pours from the intricately layered compositions of piano, strings, drone sounds and modular synthesizers. A haven of celestial sounds and heart-wrenching emotion unfolds with each and every beguiling piano tone and ambient pulse of heart-wrenching strings. As ever, the gifted duo explore new possibilities through sound with results nothing short of staggering.

Wayne McGregor, founder of Random Dance Company and resident choreographer at the Royal Ballet, approached Adam and Dustin to see if they could write the score for his new oeuvre as part of the Random Dance Company. The duo were given complete artistic freedom and would record more than sixty minutes of music over a four-month period during the summer of 2013 with the assistance of their long-term sound engineer Francesco Donadello. In contrast to the group's debut full-length, '*Atomos*' was sculpted in a very short time-period, resulting in a broadened sonic palette containing elements of electronics, harp and synthesizers. In the words of Adam Wiltzie: "*We tried to balance the discordance between being creative, and fulfilling our duties for a commissioned soundtrack with a very strict deadline, and all the while staying true to*

Figure 7.6: Interview with A Winged Victory For The Sullen (Fracturedair.com, 13 February 2015)

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[152] The name 'Fractured Air' comes from a song title by the 'Americana' band **Calexico**.

<u>Blogging as Careerism</u>

> I don't think anybody ever set up a fanzine in Dublin thinking that "if I do really good writing in this fanzine, then I could get a job with *Hot Press*". I don't think it was ever the motivation, whereas with blogs, I can see them as attempts to leverage themselves into the mainstream music industry (Interview, Hugh McCabe, Dublin, 9 December 2013).

I focus on three of the main music bloggers in Ireland since 2005 – Niall Byrne, the creator of *Nialler9*, Naomi McArdle of *Harmless Noise* (and formerly of *Off Her Rocker*), and Eoghan O'Sullivan (*The Point of Everything*) – to determine whether or not careerism is a motivation in establishing music blogs. However, O'Sullivan believes that a career in music criticism is just not feasible:

> In Ireland, I just don't think that's a credible aspiration...Maybe, being a radio DJ would be more realistic, but I just think there are such limited possibilities and all the roles are already filled, and there are not going to be more coming on stream (Interview, Cork, 16 March 2013).

Byrne has been the most commercially successful, despite being the only one of the three who entered blogging without any journalistic aspirations. He founded Nialler9.com in 2005 as a portfolio website after completing his third-level web design course, as an outlet for promoting this work to potential employers, initially writing about music as a way of keeping up-to-date with new web technologies. In fact, when he entered music blogging in its relative infancy, he was doing so for much the same reason as others involved in music blogging at the time - because he was a fan. This first wave of music bloggers did not envisage online publishing becoming an income generator, so were in many ways similar to music fanzine writers, simply writing content as a labour of love. Byrne outlines that he was not an avid reader of fanzines:

> I guess the zines that I had seen were more niche than my tastes were, so I wasn't that interested in them…They are more tactile; they are more of an end result. Blogs exist and they are on-going until they stop, whereas a zine is a different way of thinking about things…Zines for me have always been associated with things that are either more niche or alternative, even more alternative than blogs I guess (Interview, Dublin 15 August 2014).

Similarly, neither Naomi McArdle nor Eoghan O'Sullivan (who subsequently set up *We Play Here* using the fanzine model) had much exposure to fanzine culture prior to establishing their blogs. However, both started blogs while studying for qualifications

in journalism. McArdle's first blog was *Off Her Rocker* for the website of *Hot Press* in 2006. Her association with the magazine came about when she began an internship there as a photographer's assistant, and realised that there was another outlet for featuring the bands that she was photographing:

> I felt this [Off Her Rocker] would be perfect for bringing more bands into the magazine that I thought could add something to the quality of the mag, in terms of 'there's better stuff out there than is being featured right now' (Interview, Limerick, 9 September 2014).

Her experience was almost the reverse of Niall Byrne's; while he went into blogging as a music fan and ended up generating a livelihood through his own blog and, later, writing and talking about music, Naomi entered the world of music blogging seeking a career but came out as a music fan with a zealousness that matched many fanzine writers that had preceded her. That was evident by the fact that when she left *Hot Press* in 2009, she took a few months before launching her own blog *Harmless Noise*. It would become the second most popular Irish blog after *Nialler9*[153]. However, *Harmless Noise* received a different response from musicians than other blogs, as illustrated by the interaction below from a focus group in Dublin (31 January 2014):

> Vincent Dermody: *Harmless Noise* writes from a fan's perspective, in fairness.
> Ian Maleney: Nay [Naomi] writes in a very unique way whereas most blogs around do follow a very set way.

The views of Dermody and Maleney place *Harmless Noise* in a similar category to respected fanzine writers. She was seen as a visible fan who attended gigs and spent time 'at the front', and wrote exclusively about bands that she was a fan of – as opposed to just updating her blog with every bit of news that came her way about Irish bands. While both McArdle and Byrne can be considered tastemakers – and Byrne one with more reach – Naomi's selectivity has led to a perception that she is more authentic by the musicians that I spoke to. The consensus was that if something featured on her blog, it was because she was a fan of that band. Additionally, she did not rush into publishing. Prior to launching the site, she felt she had to research and immerse herself in the music scene to become a more authentic voice:

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[153] The ATP Survey (2011) I conducted found that 52% of respondents were regular readers of *Nialler9*, 48% regularly accessed *Harmless Noise*, while the consumption of Thumped.com had slipped to 10%.

> I spent less time going to [Dublin venue] Whelan's and the usual haunts and more time exploring places like [art and performance spaces] The Joinery and Block T and the BYOB ['bring your own beer/bottle'] scene; less conventional areas of music that previously I wouldn't have wanted to write about on the *Hot Press* site because I wouldn't have known what to say, and you need some time to not have an opinion about anything and just digest what is coming in (Interview, Limerick, 9 September 2014).

By taking that approach, and explicitly deciding that she needed time to "digest" the music, McArdle positions herself as a discovering fan, encountering new music, bands, scenes, and spaces. *Harmless Noise* contains some of the same hallmarks of the fanzine in that it unsurprisingly features the music that the writer likes. Similarly to McArdle, Eoghan O'Sullivan had ambitions to become a journalist, starting *The Point of Everything* blog while he was undertaking a Masters in Journalism:

> I don't think it was for Journalism [in University]; it was just because I was a fan of music blogs. I've always said that I've always liked to have been like *Nialler9* sort of thing because I think that's a great blog…it's kind of like half being a fan of music blogs and just wanting to write about music because I hadn't gone after the likes of *Hot Press* or anything to try and get published. It was like 'why do I need to do that, I can do it by myself' (Interview, Cork, 16 March 2013).

More so than proclaiming to be a fan of music, he identifies himself as a fan of the format, and simultaneously bestows cultural capital on Niall Byrne. Secondly, he has appropriated the DIY tag to his mode of communication, and places himself in direct opposition to the established music press, i.e. *Hot Press*, in Ireland. In January 2010, O'Sullivan started his blog with a brief post about American band **Vampire Weekend**. By March 2013, the site had published 1,022 posts, all created by O'Sullivan. One month alone – October 2010 – saw 72 separate posts on the blog. *The Point Of Everything* can be considered to be more of an 'indie' read than the typical fanzine – the acts most tagged (as of March 2013) include **Villagers** (25 tags), **Squarehead** (18) **Jape** (17), **Two Door Cinema Club** (16), **windings** (15), **Toby Kaar** (14), and **Bon Iver** (13). All but one of these is Irish, and all bar the electronic producer Toby Kaar could be loosely termed as indie. None of them can be aligned stylistically or politically to bands like **Paranoid Visions**, **Striknien DC**, and **The Steam Pig** who featured prominently in Irish punk and hardcore fanzines from the 1980s until relatively recent times. Despite this, O'Sullivan feels he would not be a fit for Ireland's mainstay music magazine *Hot Press*, as it does not have the scope for what he covered, and does not offer the same independence as running his own blog. He believes that

his fellow bloggers, such as McArdle, Byrne, and Gary Meyler (*The G-Man Blog*), are genuine fans of music:

> I've talked to them a few times, and it seems that all of them really support music and obviously they write about it and try to publicise it…They also put on shows. They always try to push bands, like 'support this band' and 'support this Fundit campaign'… I know they all buy records as well because you'd see their Instagram posts of the records, which is what we all do (Interview, Cork, 16 March 2013).

Interestingly, O'Sullivan puts weight on the participation of bloggers in live scenes, by curating and promoting their own events with Irish and international artists (again, similar to many fanzine writers). As opposed to seeing this as an outlet for promoting their own blogs, he believes this is illustrative of how supportive they are of the music that they also write about.

While all three bloggers can be perceived as genuine fans, they have garnered both cultural and economic capital, writing music articles for national newspapers (Byrne with *The Irish Independent* and *Irish Times*, McArdle with *The Irish Sun*, and O'Sullivan with *The Irish Examiner*) and receiving advertising revenue (Byrne). This is in marked contrast to the majority of fanzine writers who never received any form of financial impetus for their publications, but instead received other perks such as CDs, records, guestlist slots at gigs, and access to musicians, as well as the role of cultural gatekeepers within the music scenes they represented. Whereas fanzines were truly free from, and frequently opposed to, capitalism, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter that host advertising for large corporations are clearly compromised, and "unfortunately, not much is currently known about the long-term effects of corporate participation in social network sites" (boyd, 2008:123). Even Blogspot, one of the largest blogging platforms, is owned by Google. In interviews with fanzine publishers, there were clearly defined terms as to who constituted a reputable (in terms of community ethos) advertiser, and these are primarily independent promoters, labels, bands, distributors and record stores. When fanzines advertise outside of this circle – for example, *Riot 77* and concert promoters MCD (Chapter Four) – they leave themselves open to criticism from the wider community. Blogs that accept advertising do not tend to come under as much critical scrutiny, which shows a different type of audience that blogs attract. In order to run his blog as a full-time professional entity, Niall Byrne has been the biggest benefactor from commercial advertising. He admits

that leaving his advertising in the hands of a third party brought about content that had little relevance to the material on his blog:

> I changed who was in charge of my advertising two years ago because I wasn't happy with the stuff that was on it. I didn't want McDonald's ads, irrelevant stuff; I wanted stuff that at least made sense to be there… I didn't want to see this s**t up on my site (Interview, Dublin 15 August 2014).

During 2014, Byrne received sponsorship from alcohol brands to run 'sponsored stories' (advertorials of sorts) about Irish and international bands and music events. This included a large campaign with Absolut which focussed on the launch of a new song from the Dublin electro band **Le Galaxie**, who Byrne had previously championed on his blog. The campaign allowed fans of the band to partake in their new video, produced in co-operation with the vodka brand, and with the *Nialler9* blog being almost a subsidiary 'brand' in the project. Despite the obvious commercial overtones of this whole campaign, the blog was able to retain some credibility due to its past positive associations with the band, while generating some income and promoting the blog to a wider audience through a seemingly participatory project.
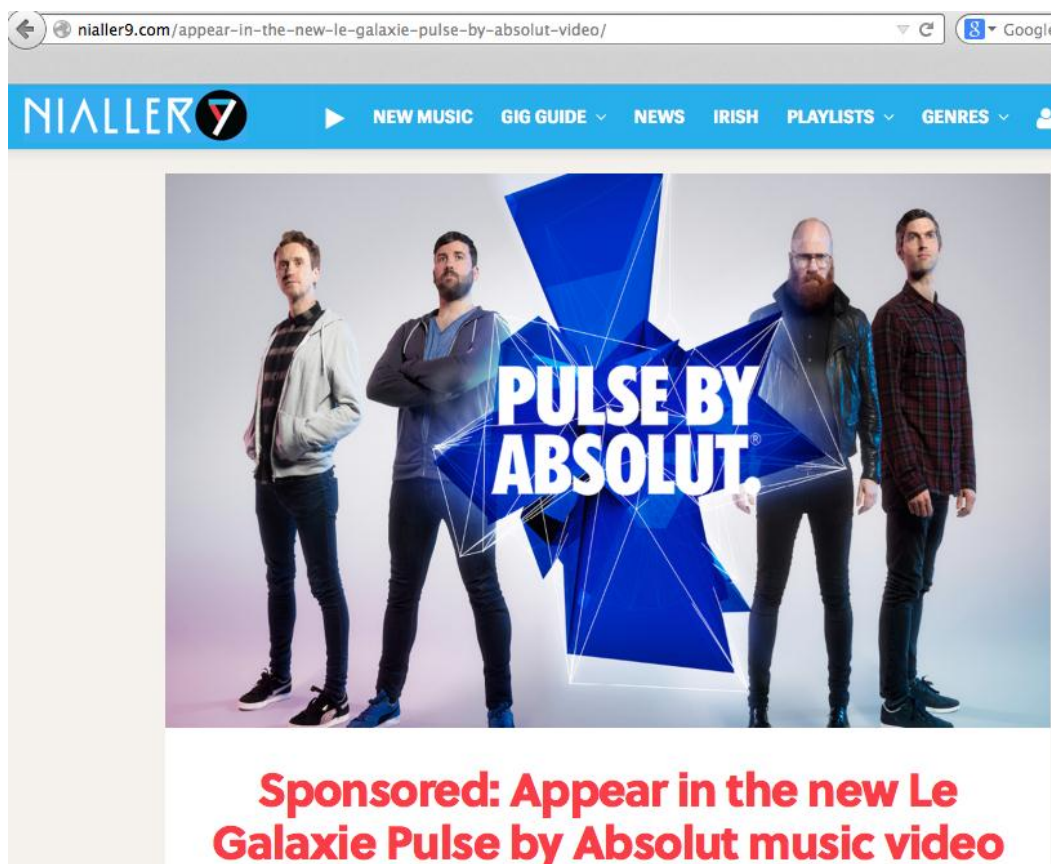
Figure 7.7: Screengrab from Nialler9.com

Aside from the work on his site, Niall Byrne was a founding editor with the short-lived print music magazine *State* in 2008, and has contributed to national broadsheets. Additionally, several brands and festivals have invited him to work for them as an event curator, music supervisor, and DJ. Eoghan O'Sullivan has perhaps the most traditional media day job of the three, in that he is employed by The *Irish Examiner* as a sub-editor. While this role may have come about more because of his journalism qualifications than his blog, the blog has given him the cultural capital to be in a position to write occasional feature-length articles on music for the newspaper. Similarly, Naomi McArdle has received income from her work as a writer. In May 2011, she announced that *Harmless Noise* was going to cease publishing in a blog entry entitled 'This Is The Last One That I Will Spin' (McArdle, 2011). In the post, she noted that her reasons for ending the blog were financial:

> The fact is that if you're good at something, it's really important that you don't do it for free. I've been doing too much for free for too long. If I were a musician I could sell albums but as a blogger, I can't take money for the posts I write. It's unethical and not the reason why I'm doing it. I just hoped for other opportunities that never materialised. Since the start of the New Year the worry of finding a job has never been more than a thought away (Macklin, 2011).

Here, she clearly places an economic value on her work. Unlike the fanzine, she cannot generate income purely through the text alone as that model does not exist for online publishing, with the exception of paywall and advertising software adopted by larger newspapers and magazines. Chapter Four demonstrated the difficulties in retaining 'authenticity' in DIY cultures when fanzine makers were required to sell their publications. McArdle differs in that she is explicitly asserting that her time dedicated to the blog needed to equate to a financial return, and it is also worth noting that her blog experienced a greater longevity than most fanzines. The decision to close *Harmless Noise* was quickly reversed, after an internet campaign to save the blog culminated in it becoming part of the website *entertainment.ie* within a week. While it would only be hosted at that site for approximately seven months, it showed that there was a move towards looking at the blog as a commercially viable source of revenue. This shows a major difference between the two media - while some of the more 'ripped and torn' aesthetics of the 'classic' punk fanzine were appropriated stylistically over the decades, mainstream publishing organisations did not see commercial potential in developing Irish fanzines.

This is not the only variance between the blog and the fanzine. If we assume that a blog is simply an online portfolio for potential employers, it is arguable that it would be without the personal musings or the 'underground' scene focus that are seemingly inherent to fanzine culture. Indeed, at least twelve of the writers of the forty-one Irish music blogs have had their work published professionally (i.e. have been paid for writing) in newspapers, magazines, and/or websites. Three of them – Jim Carroll (*The Irish Times*), Lauren Murphy (*The Irish Times*/Freelance), and Aoife Barry (The Journal.ie) – are fulltime print journalists who worked for print media before their blogs appeared, whereas others have been published sporadically. The only obvious example of a print media journalist that came out of the fanzine movement in Ireland was Leagues O'Toole, but this existed during a different timeframe to his short-lived fanzine writing experience. On the other hand, blogging can work as a complimentary platform for mainstream publications, with many journalists encouraged by their superiors to maintain a blog alongside their newspaper output. Experienced fanzine producer Niall McGuirk believes there are links between bloggers and fanzine writers; however, he argues that blog writers are using the medium to gain an audience and a career:

> The people that write the blogs are probably the 21st century version of some of the people who were sitting in their bedrooms writing the fanzines... Anyone can write a blog and anyone can do a fanzine… but they [bloggers] are the kind of music journalists that would have been maybe writing for *Sounds,* like good magazines or writing good stuff for the likes of *Sounds* or maybe even *Hot Press*…They're still the journalists (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

This fact that bloggers are considered to be journalists by others also ties in with the potential for distribution that the blog has. A perceived advantage of an e-zine, website, or blog, is undoubtedly the scope for limitless distribution. While such as *Nialler9* can boast 35,000 unique visitors per month[154], fanzine producers and users view such figures with a degree of wariness, feeling that just because one visits a blog, it does not mean that they read all the content. In fact, on many occasions, they will not even read an entire article:

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[154] Byrne, N (n.d.). In: *About.* Retrieved February 28, 2014, from http://nialler9.com/about

People who write blogs were able to come along and say "20,000 people read my page every day". I have no idea how to verify that, whether it was true or not; at least I could turn around and go 'I've sold 100 copies of that fanzine' and then we'd put an ad in, and it was a very easy way to gauge it (Interview, Dave Kennedy, ex-Road Records, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

Those who read blogs could theoretically just stay on the page for a few seconds, or even have the tab open for an hour while they are viewing other material online, whereas the fanzine has a more direct distribution model. However, despite uncertainties about the actual distribution of these blogs, all three bloggers have become gatekeepers of taste within the online community of music fanzines. Their opinions are respected as is illustrated by these two comments:

I got a nice Facebook comment from someone saying 'you really are pushing Irish music, it's obvious that you're a really big fan of it', so I guess it's nice in that respect that people have noticed as well (Eoghan O'Sullivan, Cork, 16 March 2013).

I noticed that difference three years ago when everybody went 'oh that's that guy who has been stuff for years, we should ask him to do stuff'…I had been doing stuff and nobody really cared…it was like a weird silent recognition that happened. I've seen how people talk to me when they talk to me about the site, and it seems to mean something to some people and that's nice I guess (Niall Byrne, Dublin, 15 August 2014).

Approval from readers develops social capital for the creators of these blogs, and gives them a sense that what they are doing is worthwhile. Through the 'commenting' and 'sharing' mechanisms that are available on blog posts, approval is also something that is actively sought, and arguably much easier to gain than the physical fanzine that relied on word-of-mouth or written correspondence. This approval has also led to closer links to a formal music industry; for instance, all three bloggers have served as a judge at the relatively prestigious Choice Music Prize, an annual prize for the best Irish album. It is difficult to imagine the Choice Prize inviting a fanzine writer to be part of its judging panel, thus highlighting the different position the blog occupies, with a closer relationship to the music industry. The industry clearly sees bloggers as important taste formers and their 'independence' from the industry gives bands selected more credibility. Nonetheless, the prize usually generates heated debate amongst blog writers and readers, and bloggers sometimes position themselves as an alternative, providing a critical voice against the selection – or in more cases, the non-

selection – of particular albums for the shortlist. For instance, Karl McDonald (2010), of *Those Geese Were Stupefied* blog wrote:

> So what does the Choice do? Picks a panel of judges who are evidently quite a bit more conservative than the average Nialler9 reader and gets them to come up with a consensus album of the year?...Last year **Adebisi Shank** were left off. This year **Patrick Kelleher** and **Hunter-Gatherer** were left off. Maybe they're not consensus material. Or maybe it's just time to get it straight in our heads that the Choice isn't there to reward musical risks that pay off. Next year I won't get mad. Well I will, but I'll try not to be on Twitter when the shortlist comes out.

McDonald is almost articulating the anti-music industry critique that could be found in fanzines. An event in 2010 showed that the blogging community believed in the mechanisms of established music criticism, and particularly the rewarding of artists. In resistance to what was perceived to be the narrow scope of the Choice Music Prize, a number of Irish music bloggers established their own awards. The Digital Socket Awards lasted just one year but the organisers believed they were developing a more communitarian competition than the industry-orientated Choice Prize. Fans were allowed to nominate their favourite Irish albums by genre, along with other categories such as best artwork and best independent label, with the shortlist then voted on by twenty-six judges, who were a mixture of those blogging at a professional and amateur level. However, this whole process is not as egalitarian as it seems; by having this judging system, the bloggers are positioning themselves as 'experts' within the Irish independent music community, and giving their opinions more credence than regular fans.. Inevitably, the selection of 'winners' and 'losers' is completely at odds with the communitarian ethos of DIY cultures.

This period – 2010/2011 – was actually a peak period for Irish music bloggers, a time when their opinion was considered most important. In an e-mail correspondence with a musician, he argues that bloggers do not hold as much influence as they did a few years ago: "We've reached Peak Blog. They've become exactly like the British Music Press circa the turn of the Century. Condescending, patronising, and utterly unaware of their impending irrelevance" (Stephen Ryan, 23 October 2014). Halavais notes that "blogging repeats a pattern of all communication technologies" (2013: 109); once the technology is pioneered, "mass adoption" follows, and then a form of "resistance". This resistance can come from the audience as they investigate other communication

technologies that are more suited to their needs. It can also come from the producers as they realise the limitations of the platform that they use. Some of these platforms give the audience and the artists more agency, and even more scope for direct contact with each other. As musicians see the blog as less and less relevant, there has been a corresponding drop in the activity of bloggers. For instance, *Harmless Noise* ended in early 2014, its author (McArdle, 2014) pinpointing a lack of resources for its demise, but there was also a realisation that there were other ways for music fans to now communicate:

> …how desperate would I have to be for acceptance to give up everything I hope and dream of, just to keep other people happy? How much of a crackpot fangirl, to pretty much lay down my life for the sake of music?...There are now so many possibilities for bands online that didn't exist when I started blogging about music.

New technologies play a significant role in how music is disseminated, and non-human actors have increased power. Music streaming sites like Spotify automatically recommend artists to their audience; it is a tailored service that uses data to allow for it to feel personalised to each individual user. Bloggers such as Eoghan O'Sullivan feel that music fans will seek less and less information about the music they listen to, instead utilising their time to simply consume the music. He feels there may not be a need for tastemakers within music scenes; instead, non-human actors will carry out this gatekeeping duty, and this is echoed in a dwindling number of participants in the music blogging community: "now, we're down to four or five [bloggers]…we're the last few remaining people before the likes of Spotify kill us off (Interview, Cork, 16 March 2013). The perceived objectivity and professionalism of the mainstream music press may seem to be more authentic or 'official' than fan-generated media. In turn, those working on fan generated media – whether blogs or physical fanzines – may believe that their work is more objective than that of fans who do not write at length about the objects of their fandom.

7.4 Fanzine Production: 2010 – ?

<u>New Fanzine Producers</u>

The cultural base that fanzines gave music fans has been dissipated with the ever increasing availability of online hubs for self-expression such as SNS. Nonetheless, an interesting development emerged in Ireland in 2013 and 2014: the arrival of new music fanzine titles. Jenkins (2006: 13) writes that "history teaches us that old media never die – and they don't even necessarily fade away. What dies are simply the tools we use to access media content." What Jenkins argues is that the delivery technology may disappear but that the media itself evolves – in the case of fanzines, that could apply to the evolution into e-zines and music blogs. Contrary to this, the early part of the twenty-first century has seen the increasing fetishism of twenty-century popular culture (Reynolds, 2011): this can also be seen in the styles of music appropriated, and the resurgence of vinyl LPs amongst certain music communities. In terms of the formats used to listen to music, it may seem that there would be a corresponding move towards downloading (legally or illegally) music. Unsurprisingly, respondents to this research who favoured the printed fanzine were also more inclined towards purchasing physical music:

> I've never downloaded anything. I don't know how to, and I don't really have any interest in it so perhaps that's the side of me that also prefers fanzines. Some people have said that it's an age thing but there seems to be plenty of younger kids into it now [record buying] (Interview, Cian Hynes, Dublin, 23 March 2012).

During this research, interviewees did not put any real emphasis on downloading. Regardless of whether one was more inclined towards using the fanzine or the blog to find out about music, there seems to be little to indicate that downloading has had a significant impact on DIY scenes. While the mainstream music industry has suffered greatly from downloading, it needs to remembered that there never really is a substantial profit in DIY music. Furthermore, there is a growing, if limited, popularity for arcane formats that Jenkins would deem obsolete such as the audio cassette. Small labels have popped up in places such as London (Kissability), New York (OSR Tapes), and even Dublin (Fallow Field) specialising in cassette recordings[155]. It is not

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[155] This phenomenon has even seen the birth of the first Cassette Store Day in 2013 (see Pelly & Pelly, 2013).

surprising that an individual behind two of those cassette labels – the Quarter Inch Collective and Fallow Field – decided that his next creative project would be a fanzine. At the age of twenty-three, Ian Maleney is the youngest music fanzine publisher in Ireland, releasing the first edition of *Hatred Of Music* in the summer of 2013. *Hatred Of Music* differs from older fanzines in a number of ways – firstly, Maleney has worked as a music writer for several established print and web publications such as *The Irish Times* and *The Quietus*; secondly *Hatred Of Music* commenced as a blog before becoming a fanzine. Maleney agrees that this makes him different to others who make fanzines "because I am journalist, I probably have access to people and methods that maybe a random person on the street wouldn't have" (Interview, Dublin, 25 July 2013).

The articles in *Hatred Of Music* are long-form and do not act as reports from the 'scene'. Instead, it primarily comprises of commentary pieces on a number of topics from Maleney, such as music criticism and the role of corporate sponsorship in modern music. Content-wise, it seems different from what the perceived traditional fanzine is, but it looks and feels like a fanzine and contains that same self-expressionism. It bears a lot in common with its predecessors; while it may have been compiled utilising a laptop, it contains a deliberate 'anti-design' (Atton, 2010) ethos that is something of throwback to the early years of fanzine production. Black and white and A5 in format, it suggests a reaction to overly-designed modern magazines and websites, as Maleney notes: "I wanted it to be the opposite of the Internet so the zine is just white paper, black text, no images. There's nothing else in it – just straight paragraphs of text" (Interview, Dublin, 25 July 2013).

Figure 7.8: *Hatred Of Music* **(Issue 1, 2013)**

Just a number of months after the first issue of *Hatred Of Music* was launched in Dublin in July 2013, writer Eoghan O'Sullivan (of *The Point of Everything* blog) started his own fanzine *We Play Here*. Like Maleney, O'Sullivan is in his twenties and was unaware of fanzines when growing up in West Cork. While fanzine writers have not tended to move from the physical fanzine to what may seem to be a natural successor in the blog with ease, O'Sullivan and Maleney have done the reverse. Both would already be considered gatekeepers within taste communities – their online reputations and professional output has garnered them a degree of credence within the independent music scene in Ireland. It is hard to imagine that the production of a fanzine would have any significant bearing on their professional portfolio, even though *We Play Here* is very stylishly and professionally designed and produced compared to most fanzines. There are no real financial motivations either, as any fanzine producer will tell you that their sole monetary aim is to break even. Maleney outlined that as he only prints fifty copies of *Hatred of Music*, the maximum profit he can make is €100, for anywhere between ten to twenty hours work. By producing at such a small scale, he is making something that is rare and unobtainable, thus affording them a somewhat special status within the DIY community. O'Sullivan adds that without fulltime employment he would not be able to afford to produce the fanzine, calling it "a pretty expensive ordeal and quite a lengthy process" (Email Interview, 23 May 2014). So, the question you may ask is why do they feel the need to produce these artefacts, and why is there this mini-resurgence in ephemeral publications?

There has always been a sense that fanzines exist in opposition to the mainstream, yet it is also important to note that the sheer volume of content produced online has made it more difficult to get noticed. It is quite paradoxical that an online post with the potential for infinite distribution may receive less attention than a photocopied A5 black and white fanzine that is limited to fifty copies. Ian Maleney explains it as such:

> They get so much information that it's just hard to retain any level of it so I felt that if people were going to consider the information that was in the pieces, the best way to do it was to have it on a table in front of them, or on a bus, or whatever (Interview, Dublin, 25 July 2013).

For O'Sullivan, the message that his blog portrays is rather transient:

> The blog can be quite throwaway; a post can be just a couple of lines about a song, and I think a lot of the time people don't really care about what they're reading…But a zine is there to be flicked through, and it's a permanent thing (Email Interview, 23 May 2014).

Those still producing fanzines admit a nostalgic longing for disappearing formats in the face of technological advancement. Natalia Beylis, a zine writer and collector, adds:

> I kind of miss coming across a really good black and white photocopied zine about what you did last summer, your favourite band at the moment, and all that. The ones I've done recently are more kind of comic-y, illustrated stories but I'm thinking of doing an old-school black and white photocopied zine some time again soon (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

Niall McGuirk published the fanzine *Hope* in 2014, almost twenty years since his last fanzine was issued. In the interim he had presented an internet radio programme and infrequently blogged but felt the time was right to return to his preferred physical format of fan communication: "It was important to me that it came out on paper because I feel it is nice to have something in your hand, a physical output to your work" (Email Interview, 23 May 2014). McGuirk is illustrating that the materiality of the fanzine has a value beyond its content.

Producing a 'Fanzine' in the 21st Century – A Personal Example

In 2013, Out On A Limb Records (OOAL), an independent record label I run with a friend, celebrated its tenth birthday with a gig in Limerick. For the event, I organised that a special one-off 'fanzine'[156] would be created. The contents of the A5 handwritten publication included articles and illustrations from band members related to their experiences with the label, alongside old gig flyers, clippings from original lyric notebooks, favourite memories from fans of the label, and a handwritten centre-spread family tree to show the interconnectivity of the acts who have featured on the label, and heralding the community ethos amongst them. As much as possible, we (subconsciously) stuck to the more orthodox fanzine making techniques – scissors, glue, pen, and paper - but we mixed the production with more contemporary tools and programmes such as Microsoft Word and colour photocopying, before stapling them

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[156] The term 'fanzine' can be used quite loosely here as it actually featured bands talking about themselves and their relationship with the label, as well as contributions from 'fans' of the bands.

together individually. That we adopted this approach to the production of the fanzine demonstrates that there is an inherited aesthetic to the making of these publications that has not changed significantly in the intervening years since it first appeared at Irish punk gigs.

In all, fifty copies were produced, and were available on the night free of charge on the proviso that 'fans' purchased at least one item from the 'merch table'. It would become the most sought after item of the night, with all copies snapped up within a couple of hours. Perhaps there was something of a novelty factor to the fanzine, but those who attended remarked uniformly that it was unusual to see a fanzine these days, and that they sought out that physical artefact to have and keep as a memento of the night. The popularity of the fanzine also demonstrates a nostalgic interest in such material artefacts. Almost a year later, I ran some questionnaires with people who had taken a copy of the fanzine on the night. One of the respondents, Brendan, still had his copy and made a salient remark about the convergence culture of old media (the fanzine itself) and new media (content from social media sites that was inserted):

> It had that look that only a fanzine can pull off. The artwork front and back is great, especially as it was created by OOAL artists. Adding online comments to the fanzine was a nice touch, not just because one of mine was there! Sad to not see more fanzines at gigs. It's always a good companion to a new record purchase at a gig (Survey Response, 5 July 2014).

Another attendee at the gig, Mary said the following about the fanzine:
> I enjoyed all of the content but the photocopying on some of the pages was a bit blurry but this didn't take away from my enjoyment of the fanzine. To be honest I guess it actually made it more authentic as OOAL aren't into the glossy manufactured sound are you so why should something representing you guys have a look that doesn't fit in with the music! (Survey Response, 23 July 2014).

This response demonstrates that the discourse of authenticity is still present in Irish DIY scenes, and that fans themselves see the correlation between the aesthetics of the sound of DIY music and the "rough and ready" production style of DIY fanzines. For other readers of the zine, such as Niall, our publication was representative of the music and the people involved:

> A fanzine should take the ingredients from any given scene and throw it back at them to add to the feeling of being part of a community. The main ingredient at any

OOAL show I've been to bar the bands are the fans, or rather friends and acquaintances of the bands. So it was nice to see supportive tweets, stories and drawings from the people who make up the very scene it's aimed at. I loved Matt Hedigan's drawings and it [the zine] has pride of place on my shelf beside my stereo since (Survey Response, 14 July 2014).

It illustrates that there still is this longing for seemingly out-dated forms of communication. Interestingly, others have followed suit, with at least two Irish alternative bands (**Bouts** and **Anna's Anchor**) utilising 'zines' to coincide with releases of new material over the past year.

7.5 A Sociality in Sharing?

A cluttered online space, which persuaded Ian Maleney and Eoghan O'Sullivan to try the fanzine format, has seen the influence of the blog within music scenes surpassed by the rise of Social Network Sites (SNS). boyd and Ellison (2007) define these sites as:

> …web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (2007: 211).

Sites like Myspace, Bebo, and Facebook have allowed music fans showcase the types of music they are interested in. In some cases, the music itself becomes the basis for the connection, and those communicating with each other online only do so through the text. However, SNS users frequently know their online connection 'in real life' already (Ellison et al, 2009), and in an Irish context, with a relatively small population and even smaller alternative music scenes, people tend to see others in person. What the network provides is an opportunity to alert their real-life friends and acquaintances as to what music they are listening to and what gigs they are attending. It is a relationship built on voluntarily sharing information with your connections, and recommending various music artists in a manner similar perhaps to a more orthodox 'word of mouth' process. More than that, from both the artists and fans perspectives, it

removes the intermediary of media-generated content, whether that be professionally based or fan-created (such as blogs and fanzines).

Whereas in an earlier model of the fan-artist relationship, the fan would need to be in a more elevated position in a fanhood hierarchy to gain access to the musicians – through an interview perhaps – now, they can communicate directly without a human third party (the non-human actors/technologies such as the usage of Facebook and Twitter on smartphones being the third party). Smaller bands operating on a DIY scale in Ireland see some advantage to using SNS, particularly as it does not require a budget to promote their act:

> The thing with Facebook is the more you use it, the more interactions you get, and the bigger your band will seem. If you are putting up videos of cats and getting shitloads of likes, your band will get more likes, that's just the way the internet works. Therefore, when you put up a post with something to actually say, more people will see it (Darren Craig, Focus Group, Dublin, 31 January 2014).

The other advantage of SNS for bands is that it is a direct message to their audience. It is their perspective on their own music, and not a third-party account from a newspaper, blog, or fanzine. Furthermore, starting with Myspace (circa 2004), bands were now able to share both their music and information simultaneously online. The inbuilt music widget gave them more agency than a demo CD sent off to radio stations in the faint hope of airplay. Social network sites also allow for a sociality between audience and band to take place in a location away from the traditional gig space, and one can argue they foster relationships that are developed by mutual sharing from the artist and the fan. The fan shares photos, videos, and other content with the band, which in turn the band may share with a wider audience if they deem fit. It has encouraged the creation of participatory cultures, and as Horst's (2012: 70) research on fan fiction shows, digital media allows for greater levels of engagement and feedback between fan-producers, active creators, and audiences.

Despite the degree of sociality that exists within online fandom, it is still questionable whether social network sites have a role to play in establishing identifiable and structured communities for those interested in DIY music. Niall McGuirk is glad to see younger music fans participating in fanzines and not allowing all content to be swallowed up by SNS: "the important thing is that people are trying to pass their views

on not just by utilising social media" (Email Interview, 23 May 2014). For fanzine writers the cluttered cyber world is not conducive to the consumption of long-form content, and for McGuirk, a sense of community online is more ephemeral than that promoted by independently published fanzines. The opportunity for 'textual productivity' (Fiske, 1992) that saw fans develop fan fiction, fanzines, etc. "appeared to demarcate fan communities and identities since non-fan audiences would be far less likely to engage in these practices of textual production" (Hills, 2013: 133). Fiske's position presupposed Web 2.0; since then, it has become increasingly difficult to establish whether an online 'user' on a SNS can also be considered to be a 'fan'.

Irish 'DIY' Bands and Social Networks

To ascertain whether online SNS users can be considered 'fans' in the Irish context, I decided to analyse the level of communication that takes place online between bands and their audiences, analysing the social media output of two Irish bands that released albums in early 2015. **No Spill Blood** are a reasonably popular band in the Dublin scene that has a wide social network through the participation of their three members in other local acts. Their sound differs from many other local bands in that they eschew the usage of a guitar, instead relying on synths, bass, and drums. Despite this, **No Spill Blood** produce rambunctious and intense rock music, both on record and in live music spaces. Their own label (and iTunes) has classified them as metal, while the UK-based website *The Quietus* said the following in a recent review: "Starts loud, stays loud. Hallelujah…Hit hard, riff righteously, and get all weird and sci-fi on the keys now and again: the system works" (Diver, 2015).

No Spill Blood have a higher international profile than most local bands as they are signed to an American independent label with international distribution. Their debut album was released on 10 March 2015, and I examined the content that featured on their Facebook and Twitter pages throughout March. On their Facebook page, **NSB** have over 3,500 'likes'. They posted 21 times that month, mostly links to album reviews and streams, event pages for gigs, and various photographs. There were 714 likes in total (an average of 34 per post); 38 shares (two of which were from a band member, and four from one of the album's engineers); and twenty comments, three of which were the band responding to queries from 'fans'. The interactions showed a dislocated community of followers; one commenter said "come to Moscow", while

one Welsh fan shared six of their posts on his own personal homepage or 'wall' as it is termed by Facebook. There were repeat visitors and 'likers' from Dublin also. The band had 24 posts to their wall during the month, but these were primarily links to interviews and reviews, with the exception of one follower, Andy from Glasgow who asked: "Where can I buy a CD copy of the new album that isn't Amazon and gets the best deal for you guys?" Here, there is a sense of a translocal scene, whereby Andy is keen to adhere to DIY ethics by not purchasing the album from a conglomerate, and also by supporting the band as strongly as he can, despite being located in a different country. In the same period, **NSB** tweeted 25 times to their 1,100 Twitter 'followers', and 'favorited' 33 tweets, mostly tweets related to the band and other bands in the Dublin 'independent' network. There were three tweets from the band answering fan questions such as stage times, availability of merchandise, and future touring plans.

A different proposition is the band **Burnchurch,** who do not have a Twitter account and are listed as 'DIY punk hardcore' on their Facebook page. While both **Burnchurch** and **No Spill Blood** perform what could be considered loud music with traces of metal and punk influences, and have a crossover in audiences, they inhabit different spaces in the local and virtual scene. **Burnchurch**, unlike **NSB**, do not frequent some of the main small-medium sized venues in Dublin such as Whelan's and The Workman's Club, instead playing at spaces considered more subaltern (for example, Fibber Magees, which perhaps could be thought of as an heir to the Old Chinaman pub). Their album came out in late January, with no official release, as it was to be distributed by small, local 'distros' as opposed to record stores. Like **NSB**, however, there was an international element, with two Polish labels, a German label and an Irish label co-releasing the LP. During the period of January 2015, **Burnchurch** posted eight times to their 436 followers; receiving 39 likes (approximately five per post); nine comments (two which were from the band) and one share. There were no external posts to the band's page during that period, but unlike **NSB**, they did like (three of the) comments left under their postings complimenting the band and the album.

The one thing that becomes apparent by looking at the Facebook feeds of both groups is that there is no significant community forming through these pages. It may be that an extension of the fan community could exist online, but it is not in itself a

community. There is not enough evidence to consider them 'interactive communities' (Bury, 2005), as they lack a sufficient amount of inter-fan communication; there is no discussion between fans about what they think of certain live shows or debating the merits of certain tracks on the albums. It is simply a case of approving of the music and moving on, with a limited amount of repeated championing; in essence, it frequently becomes a one-way conversation in these online spaces. The example of these bands based in local DIY scenes differs from music-makers in the realm of stardom of course, as does the nature of fandom within these scenes. For instance, Beer looks at the fans of the musician Jarvis Cocker and how his approval of over 60,000 to join his Myspace or 'Jarvspace' account fostered a sense of closeness to the star figure, "a perception of proximity" (2008:232). Even if it is a case that performers communicate with the performers when it suits them (Duffett, 2013b), making it a less democratic process, Sandvoss suggests "there can be little doubt that many fans themselves imagine these networks as a community and equal to other friendship ties" (2005: 56). Similarly, Miller's (2011) participants found comfort in describing their Facebook worlds as communities, bearing similarities with Rheingold's (pre arrival of SNS) belief "that the loss of traditional community values can be regained through communication via the Internet" (Jankowski, 2002: 35).

7.6 A Virtual DIY Community

This brings the conversation back to one of the central concerns of this project: determining the 'community' in DIY cultures and whether these can exist as 'virtual communities'. Rheingold's (2000) view of the net as an alternative reality does not really fit a community whereby face-to-face communication is still required. Therefore, as previously suggested, this research favours Calhoun's (1998) approach, which indicates that these online networks are supplementary to communities organised offline. Nonetheless, Rheingold's work is not completely superfluous to a study such as this; he argues that certain etiquette exists on the WELL in order for members to gain respect, and this can be seen in how there are still certain codes to how web producers and users communicate. Cavanagh suggests that for acceptance one has to show proof that they have worked hard at contributing to the online community – good quality posts, commenting on and sharing others' work - to gain a

high status amongst their peers (2007: 111), similarly to how Thornton (1995) views the accumulation of subcultural capital. My research shows that participation remains an integral aspect of music communities and the media that surround them; that applies to online networks and face-to-face networks. However, those involved in 'virtual communities' can tend to retreat further and further online in the pessimistic way that Turkle (2011) predicts. They use SNS to communicate with others and to demonstrate their involvement in local scenes. Bloggers, in particular, need to be seen to be partaking in the online conversation about new music, but there are other reasons why the blogging community seemingly favours virtual communications – it removes the 'awkwardness' of real-life contact.

> It's a lot easier to talk to bands, I find, online. Back when we had the [college] radio show and we would have gone to live shows and done interviews with bands, I was always hesitant about going up to them and saying hello because I was kind of in awe of them, even the small Irish bands who ten people have heard sort of thing, I was like 'wow, you're amazing' [laughs]. But I think it's easier to do that online (Interview, Eoghan O'Sullivan, Cork, 16 March 2013).

Some bloggers that I interviewed did not identify themselves as members of a community. Niall Byrne outlined that he felt there was a 'community' amongst bloggers that was both a virtual and real-life community, but that it was only inhabited by bloggers themselves. This consisted of a 'support network' that gradually dissipated after a few years as blogging became more commercially viable, and thus, more competitive.

As music fans move from different media, and interact with their objects of fandom, there has been a decrease in the level of face-to-face communications. The fanzine is in itself illustrative of this change – from a mode of distribution that depended on personal interactions at record stores or independent gigs, to the content which was often written in a more first-person manner than the standardised music blog, the fanzine represents an era of more interpersonal communications. But even the fanzine is changing in that respect; for the most recent three Irish titles that were published (*Hatred of Music*, *We Play Here*, *Hope*), I purchased them all online. Discovering these titles came through social network sites and bulletin boards as opposed to word-of-mouth. Our ways of sourcing news about music are changing, and that means that there has been some transferal of communities around music to online spaces. What

remains questionable is whether or not these virtual media spaces have the required collective activity that Durkheim speaks of in his 'organic societies'.

The community that exists today around independent music in Ireland takes place in both online and offline settings, similar to how Calhoun (1998) suggested. The difference to Calhoun's hypothesis here is that the virtual community can help to create relationships and networks, but these are perhaps only truly realised through face-to-face contact. The strongest scenes are maintained when participants are interconnected in a multitude of ways, and this can be developed most in the live environment in which members meet and discuss the music, norms and boundaries of the community.

7.7 Conclusion

The fanzine played a role in discussing those community boundaries but the likelihood is that the self-publishing of small-scale physical publications will remain a very niche format, as is the cassette format at present. Unquestionably there has been a paradigmatic shift, as the interlinking usage, content, and distribution of fan media has changed. This leaves an uncertain future for the fanzine as a fixture in independent music scenes. The decline in the availability of fanzines, coupled with a growing move towards online interaction, indicates that there will be a time when the fanzine is not a part of music scenes. This chapter looked at whether other technologies could help fill a (perhaps not so large) void that will be left if fanzine production ceases to exist. It looked at different online platforms to see if they offered a solution – a proper alternative mode for communications in a DIY music community – and there were concerns over the impact of most. Even blogging, the medium most closely aligned, in theory, to the fanzine, has had a drop-off in publishing since 2010. The biggest issue with the blog for many participants in this research was that it did not quite match the perceived 'authenticity' of the physical fanzine. This was divided in terms of labour and content, with the style of music featured in the blogs not bearing similarities to the punk and hardcore dominated fanzines. In essence, the blog was seen as a less 'DIY' form of media.

It is difficult to imagine that blogs will now experience the same longevity as fanzines, due to the incredible rate of changing technologies. Actor Network Theory demonstrates how the boundaries of measuring authenticity change between generations of producers. Music bloggers in Ireland, who are seen as less authentic by the fanzine producers, now see SNS as a threat to their own publishing profiles. Social network sites are now offering fans and musicians alike more agency, and more chance for virtual communicating, but there is perhaps a cost here – the inability to form a truly independent community. The inbuilt and automated 'community' aspects of SNS effectively dislocates taste communities from real places whilst it builds them, thus undermining the agency of the individual and putting a market value on the connectivity of the group. However, new technologies also challenge the power and profits of the music industry, through websites such as Napster and The Pirate Bay, and this poses dilemmas for DIY artists and communities. This, maybe, is a spur behind recent returns to hard copies.

While Baym (2010) claims that new media offers greater opportunities for one-to-one connections, I would argue that virtual communities around music in Ireland are less personable than those experienced in real life; those experienced in real life are primarily through the live shows. And it is at those live shows that historically the fanzine had a significant role to play.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the role that music fanzines played in alternative music cultures in Ireland over a near forty-year period. In this concluding chapter, I will draw together and discuss the main findings of this work, and do so in a manner that reflects on elements of the three key research questions that were asked at the outset of this study. I will also discuss other significant findings that emerged during the research. Following on from that, I will signpost potential areas for further investigation, before providing my opinion on the future of this medium amidst a wave of technological advances.

<u>Impact of Fanzines</u>

This is a study that not just examines the physical artefact that is the music fanzine, but also investigates all of the actors that surround it – the makers, users, collectors, bands, fans, and networks that form part of local scenes (Cohen, 1991; Straw, 1991; Shank, 1994). While music fanzines have received some scholarly attention (Atton, 2001a, 2002, 2010; Triggs, 2006, 2010; Duncombe, 2008), there generally has been a lack of discussion around how they play a role in developing communities of shared taste. Studies of popular music have frequently ignored fanzines, while media studies has struggled to adequately look at the intersection of fan-created media and specialist or underground genres of popular music. In an Irish context, it has received minimal consideration to date. This work differs from previous research in that it positions the production and consumption of fanzines in a 'paradigm' framework to help describe their main characteristics (in terms of aesthetics, ethics, economics, etc.) and how these change when technology evolves. Secondly, by positioning the medium as a practice of fandom, it demonstrates that the local and DIY music fan exists, and that the fanzine plays a significant role in developing relationships between fans and musicians. These relationships are a contributor to the capital that is amassed in these local scenes.

For the fanzine producers themselves, interview data collated clearly demonstrates the importance that fanzine making has played in their lives. Furthermore, an analysis of fanzine texts proves that writers gain something from the process of

production. As the author in *Rhubarb* states: "If you are contemplating 'doing a zine' then contemplate no further…just DO IT [writer's emphasis]. The benefits of seeing the 'vegetable of your labour' certainly overshadow[s] any slight problems you may have" (Issue 1, 1993). For scene members like Robert who wrote *Rhubarb*, the format has provided them with a platform to articulate their own opinions on music, learn new communicative and technological skills, as well as help develop their own social networks. Essentially, the fanzine was an 'in' into the community they wanted to be part of, and allowed them to develop a position of some esteem in the scene. It also made them part of a more translocal fanzine culture, enabling them to exchange articles, letters, and publications with producers around the world. In a pre-internet era, they were building social networks with people that they would never see or meet in person. Apart from the other writers they are connecting with, writers can interact directly with the bands that they admire and are fans of, without requiring the training and skills that professional journalists may have. Also, as the model for fanzines comes from the US and UK, participating in their production and circulation constituted a cosmopolitan act of independence from Irish media culture.

For some makers of fanzines, producing these publications is a form of escapism from the rigours of school, college, work, or home life. As was also demonstrated in this work, this is a significantly gendered practice, and an analysis of fanzine texts displays a somewhat idealised masculine adolescence in the design and content of Irish fanzines. Those who have permanently exited fanzine culture and/or the fan community may occasionally look back at these productions with a degree of embarrassment, akin perhaps to discovering an old diary from one's adolescence. Nevertheless, there still seemed to be a great sense of pride when they discussed their connections with this culture. Their willingness to share these experiences illustrates that, for the most part, the impact fanzines had on their lives was a positive one.

The users of fanzines are provided with useful information about new music and events within the scene, particularly important in an era prior to the Internet. It was a conversation starter at gigs, record stores, and in other social spaces. Fanzines crucially provided an alternative to the mainstream press; disenfranchised youth felt that the traditional media frequently ignored their interests. While often a one-way mode of communication (sender to receiver), as portrayed by the lack of letters that

many fanzine producers received, the fanzine in theory allowed for an interaction between reader and writer. This interaction happened particularly with the more popular fanzines, with titles like *Nosebleed* receiving fifteen to twenty letters a week on average, revealing a discursive exchange within the community.

Despite critics such as Hesmondhalgh (2005) not viewing scene as an acceptable framework for expressing how "musical collectivities" (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 22) form, it is the primary way that I have framed such bonding in an Irish context. This is because it best explains how groups of (primarily young) people, mainly in localised contexts, have come together through shared activities and social interaction. It offers more fluid boundaries than other concepts (for example, 'subculture') and also presents opportunities for explaining how DIY scenes engage with each other in a translocal context. Furthermore, those who are participating in the live gigs and fanzines that have been discussed in this research are doing so as fans, instead of necessarily indulging in spectacular style or oppositional politics. Taste is what unifies them.

The spread of punk in Dublin and Belfast was fast-tracked by fanzine producers like Steve Rapid who were importing titles from London and New York. Even in the mid-1970s, there was scope for translocal punk scenes to emerge through the shared information featured in international fanzines. The regular news digests that appeared in the first wave of ripped and torn Irish publications like *Heat*, *Raw Power*, and *Alternative Ulster*, helped maintain the scene, and spread the gospel of punk. While this information was also being disseminated in the mainstream weekly music papers from the UK such as the *NME* and *Melody Maker*, the fanzines were operating at a more grassroots level, using the language of the scene (Savage, 1991). Crucially, they were also giving the local perspective. Likewise, the Hope scene and its influence on spreading DIY ethics in the late 1980s/ early 1990s was boosted by fanzines such as *React*, *Fudge* and *Gearhead Nation* that frequently wrote about gigs that were happening and praising the scene, while also having a role in maintaining and enforcing the boundaries and norms of a community. As Dave Kennedy, a former record store proprietor in Dublin noted, it is not overstating it to suggest that the fanzine played an important role in sustaining scenes: "they're pretty integral to keeping the scene alive…it was definitely something that was able to help a scene to

grow" (Interview, Dublin, 23 March 2012). Additionally, fanzines fostered inter-scene rivalries and inter-band tensions to demonstrate that music scenes could be discordant too, with the fanzine offering a channel for debate about local musical practices and other issues (e.g. political, gendered, debates around veganism) related to the activities and participants within the community.

The distribution model of the fanzine - which frequently relied on the live performance environment to sell or give away copies - was a catalyst for interactivity between writer and user. The writer often had the first-hand experience of meeting and interviewing the bands, and this provided a more direct line to the artists for fans than a journalist in a UK music magazine. The fan could ask the writer to detail the experience of interviewing the band, especially if they were a touring band from the UK, Europe or the United States, and gain some valued insider information in the process. When the bands were local, the likelihood was that the readers had knowledge of their music at the very least, and perhaps knew the music makers personally. In other instances, the reader may have been privy to the actual interview taking part in a corner of a bar, such was the lack of backstage facilities at many of the more underground venues; this closeness to the process of production allowed for a shared media experience.

For the musicians featured in fanzines, there was also a significant benefit. They had a place where their music could be featured that was outside the music 'industry' and therefore was considered to be more egalitarian. This sat particularly well with bands that espoused an anti-capitalist ideology, but still wanted to enhance awareness of their music amongst members of DIY networks. A sense of authenticity is accrued by bands that feature in these publications; their associations with fanzines can be seen as an act of resistance and a manifestation of shared ideals. Moreover, many of these bands did not have the opportunity to be featured in the orthodox music press, such was the relatively low level of their popularity, so fanzines provided the only outlet where audiences could potentially discover them. There were publications that would feature just about any new Irish release submitted; regardless of the quality of production or content, they were treated with respect and support. The somewhat incestuous nature of these scenes meant that it was frequently friends that were writing about friends, or even writing about their own bands. Despite fanzine writers

considering themselves an antidote to journalists operating for mainstream music magazines (who had allegiances with the music industry), writers' claims for complete objectivity conflict with evidence of self-promotion in fanzine texts. While some producers saw it as a conflict of interest to talk about their own musical activities, others did not really see any problem in discussing such musical practices.

Despite this, there is significant scope to suggest that the fanzine writer can be considered an authentic fan within the music community they inhabit. Their work was not going to be analysed and edited by the formal structures that control large media organisations, and thus they were able to write in their own style and about what they wanted. They were writing from the perspective of a fan, as opposed to that of a professional; as they were generally not seeking profit for their labour, this authenticity was demonstrated by their participation in the scene. As I have noted already at length, authenticity is a fairly ambiguous term in academia, and is something that cannot exactly be measured. In studies of music (Adorno, 1948; Middleton, 1990; Turino, 2008) it has been applied to methods of composition, styles of performance, specialist knowledge, and devotion to the genre and/or scene. In this thesis, authenticity has been considered an essential component of cultural capital. Despite their apparent ephemerality, fanzines are not as throwaway a production as perhaps even their creators want them to be seen. Also, as these items become collectable they gain quite different values for completists and nostalgists.

A semiotic analysis of design and content demonstrates that a deliberate mode of production emerged in the making of the archetypal fanzine; Ireland follows international conventions in this respect with predominantly Xeroxed, black and white publications. Furthermore, by adopting a design structure influenced by movements such as Dadaism, these are carefully planned representations of scenes that strive to be somewhat subversive. A paradigm is formed, inclusive of aesthetics and a social and economic context, in which there is general consensus as to what the fanzine should look like and represent – thus, they are often abrasive, controversial, and 'in your face' as epitomised by the cartoon representations of punks in numerous fanzines from this period. Despite the freedom that fanzine producers have, away from the constraints of editorial control of those who publish for media conglomerates, there are still some guidelines as to what constitutes an authentic

fanzine in DIY cultures for some of the members of this community. This is evident in the criticism that some publications received when they moved to a more professional layout or printing. Making something glossy and closer to the conventions of mainstream media offers a different outlook on how the fanzine should look in opposition to the disposability of the ripped and torn assemblages. Of course, as I have discovered, there is a paradox in how some of these 'disposable' artefacts become fetishized and collectible.

This thesis has demonstrated the importance of capital in music cultures, regardless of the explicit voluntary or communitarian ethos of DIY. It would be overly simplistic to suggest that Bourdieu's (1984) different forms of capital have no place in cultures developed with such an ethic (Gordon, 2005). To do so would construct a somewhat idealised and harmonious depiction of these scenes. Fanzine producers may not explicitly seek 'social' or 'cultural' capital – those interviewed claimed that getting the work out into the community was in itself reward enough – but receiving positive feedback and respect from their peers in the music scene was something that was generally appreciated, and likewise, criticism was heartfelt. As aforementioned, they managed to accumulate a sense of 'social capital' through their publications by making new friends and developing local and translocal networks. Of more significance was the level of 'cultural capital' that they amass through their participation in the scene, even though this cultural capital is rarely transferable outside the taste community. Some fanzine producers become tastemakers within local scenes; their knowledge and expertise, as well as their objectivity, are all signifiers of this 'cultural capital', making them vital components of networks operating outside the 'culture industries'. For clarification, not every fanzine producer became a tastemaker in the scene, as there were simply too many fanzine makers who produced one-off publications or had such a minute impact on their local scenes. As attested to by some of the key Irish fanzine producers who featured in this study, those who did not have the tolerance or interest in maintaining a long-term publication were quickly identified within the taste community. However, many of these individuals went on to find other roles within the music scene, booking small independent concerts or playing in bands. The fanzine provided that gateway and gave them some level of cultural capital amongst their peers.

A sense of hierarchy emerges – again, despite the collectivism that DIY cultures espouse – where certain fanzine writers take on a more significant role in the local scene, or in a local hierarchy of fanhood. Previous studies on music fanzines have not considered them in depth as an aspect of fan communities, and thus, have ignored theoretical positions offered by research in fandom, whereas this study offers a conceptualisation of the multi-faceted fandom that exists in DIY communities. Fandom in popular music is a growing area, as evident by recently edited books (Duffett, 2014) and popular music journals dedicating entire issues to the topic (Duffett, 2013a, 2015). Nonetheless, it is only in recent years that studies of popular music fandom have slowly started to move away from single-object fandoms to discussing a range of fan practices. Within this movement, I establish here that there is a great deal of currency in dissecting the complex nature of local fandom, something which is frequently overlooked in the field of fan studies. It may not seem as obvious as studying fans of distant, international pop stars, but exploring how fans interact with musicians in relatively small cities (and even smaller music scenes) provides a fascinating snapshot of how local music networks function. Within these scenes, the fanzine writer needs to be considered as a fan of both the music and the scene itself, and to be seen as a facilitator of information that helps establish relationships between musicians and fans. The writing style of fanzines often gives a unique and insider's portal into meeting a band - for instance, the reader might find out if the band is drinking a beer, or sitting on the stairs behind the venue, or whatnot – as well as giving a 'warts and all' account of the interview verbatim.

The nature of scenes and communities of taste have changed, as have how local bands interact with their audiences. This obviously is not solely down to the fact that the fanzine is a declining format; sociality comes in different forms now, with fans finding new ways of interacting with bands through online sources. Therefore, the 'middle (wo)man' who was the fanzine writer is frequently less needed as a channel. Research such as Kibby's (2000) examines how fans have hubs where they communicate directly with their favourite artist via a 'chatpage' (in the case of Kibby's study on the folk singer-songwriter **John Prine**); fans were able to establish a 'virtual community' (Rheingold, 2000), one that could not exist in real-life. This particular study also shows the limited life span of such technology as this page was subsequently shut down, partly as a consequence of conversations that were not on

the topic of the artist or were critical of him. The limitations of this direct line to the 'star' artist can be seen in Beer's (2008) work on **Jarvis Cocker's** Myspace followers. For other fans (for example, the **Melanie C** fangroup that Sandvoss (2005) refers to) the community comes from an interaction with fellow fans as opposed to with the performer. Other outlets such as bulletin boards allowed for a multitude of exchanges to take place; the most pertinent Irish example is Thumped.com where musicians talk to fans, fans talk to fans, and even 'anti-fans' (Gray, 2003) lurk. It is not a community that exists solely online, like Kibby's research subject; instead, it is an environment where people also know a lot of the other members offline, and it exists simply as an extension of various local scenes. As Calhoun (1998) suggests, these hubs supplement activities 'in real life'. Social Network Sites (SNS) offer a new dimension where the connection to the artist is not mediated, as such, but is similarly not an equal flow of communication – the artist responds when and to whom they want.

Despite the arrival of these different ways of communicating online, there has not been a natural successor to the fanzine in terms of how they mediate communication in local scenes. While all the other aspects in the paradigm have changed – social, cultural, economic and political, the music itself (punk/hardcore) has stylistically stayed the same. The new media formats that have emerged seem to be supportive of different genres of music to the fanzine, and are produced at a different level. Additionally, the 'aura' that is somewhat attached to the unique fanzine cannot be found as easily in other media; while a blog can be customised, the likelihood is that someone can still replicate the content and information with relative ease, regardless of where they are in the world. Scenes are supported by blogs and various SNS but it is questionable whether they will have the same impact that the fanzine once had. As selection of music becomes more algorithmic, with non-human actors becoming more influential in determining how audiences find out about and listen to new music, it leaves an uncertain future for how and where shared discourses of music will be facilitated among fans.

Revisiting The Research Questions in Light of the Findings
This concluding chapter has discussed a number of different concepts, all of which are connected to the three research questions set out in Chapter One (and referred to

at the beginning of this chapter). The use of the paradigmatic approach demonstrates that Irish fanzine production has followed a set of defining characteristics for almost forty years. There are somewhat fixed ways in how fanzines are made, distributed, and in how the content is read by insiders within specific taste communities. These processes did not change significantly since the explosion of punk in the mid-1970s until recent times. Throughout the decades, authenticity has been a constant motif in how fanzines are seen by their producers, and in terms of how members participate in DIY music scenes. Developing a fanzine that looks and feels 'authentic' in the eyes of community members is an integral part of the "dominant representational paradigm" (Hamilton, 1997).

Furthermore, the usage of 'scenes' as a framework has been valuable in terms of determining what kind of community impact these publications have had. Through this research, it is evident that fanzines have had an impact on individuals and larger cohorts of music fans. The fanzine is clearly useful for the writers (who accrued social capital and cultural capital), the musicians who are promoted outside of the culture industries, and fans within DIY cultures. The writers, who are fans themselves, get an opportunity to communicate not just with the objects of their fandom but also with a wider community of readers and DIY participants that is both localised and translocal.

Finally, this thesis has looked at how the nature of these scenes' interaction with each other has changed in the last decade. This suggests a significant paradigmatic shift whereby the fanzine is no longer as important a medium in DIY scenes in Ireland, and where fanzine culture has become a more niche activity than it has ever been. With changes in technology, and even social and economic circumstances in Celtic Tiger (and post-Celtic Tiger) Ireland, members of scenes are finding different ways to communicate with bands and other fans.

Potential Areas for Further Study

As with any significant body of work, there is some scope for further research that arises from this work. I have identified some areas that could and should be investigated in more detail.

This work has thrown up some interesting questions about how music fans discover new music, particularly in a contemporary context. The relationships between media, regardless of whether it is fan-generated or professional, and the consumption of music through digital and/or analogue technologies is worthy of investigation.

Secondly, it is important to note that there is some current work on various local scenes in Ireland (Hogan, 2014b; Jones, 2014). It is hoped that research work such as this can complement these analyses to help generate some understanding, in an Irish context, as to why certain music practices are more participatory and play a greater role in bonding people together.

Finally, there is a raft of other fanzines and zines that were and are being produced in Ireland that have yet to receive any significant academic treatment. Football fanzines in particular have been an integral part of League of Ireland football, itself a sporting form that exists outside of mainstream sports in the Irish psyche. League of Ireland is on the periphery, a localised response to the globalisation of the sport, and this rich fanzine heritage coincided with the rise of music fanzines. Indeed, many of the same writers worked on both football and music titles, despite the fact that they were catering for different audiences. Case studies of specific football teams and their fan literature and their interconnections with music fanzine culture would provide for interesting avenues of sociological research.

Epilogue: The Future of the Fanzine

What is clear is that the influence of the fanzine started to wane in the early years of the 21st Century, and despite a somewhat positive viewpoint from interview recipients that the fanzine will always remain as an outlet for self-expression, this is founded more on hope than fact. While Chapter Seven of this thesis posited that the fanzine can continue to exist almost as a symbol of 'anti-Internet' resistance, that resistance is limited. For instance, in the first quarter of 2015, no issues of Irish music fanzines have been produced. One needs to go back almost twelve months from this point (mid-2015) to find the most recent publication. There is uncertainty over the existing titles (as there always is with fanzines) as to when, and if, they will appear again.

I agree with Hesmondhalgh (2005) that studies of audiences in popular music studies should not exclude older fans, and Bennett has done fine work in this regard recently (2006, 2013). However, it is the younger participants in scenes who have traditionally been the torchbearers. Their fandom is generally more active, simply because younger fans tend to have the time to commit. Those who made fanzines in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s were predominantly males in their teens and twenties. Seasoned fanzine writers in Ireland have started to slow down their output as their priorities in life change, and they are less actively engaged with music scenes. For instance, issues of *Loserdom* have become less frequent in recent years, while Niall McGuirk of *React* and *Hope* fanzines admits that it is difficult to find the time to work on fanzines now that he has a family.

With the exception of a handful of young music writers that have emerged and utilised the fanzine format, there has been little uptake from a possible new generation of fanzine writers. The format of the 'zine' is not dead, but those who are appearing nowadays at 'zine fairs' are producing more crafted pieces that are sometimes designed almost as portfolios to showcase art or literary work, as opposed to manifestations of 'fandom' or 'community'. Young music fans are finding other ways of generating cultural capital and keeping others informed. What has been quite noticeable in the matter of just a decade is that the fanzine does not occupy the live space as it used to. Even in the first five years of this century, fanzine makers with their bags containing photocopied publications for sale were still a regular fixture in independent scenes. Nowadays, it is an oddity to find a fanzine at a gig, and when it does appear, it is more of an appropriation of the term 'fanzine' with bands essentially using it as an additional piece of merchandise. The fanzine is becoming less a facet of an 'interactive community' (Bury, 2005); however, just a decade ago, nobody could have foreseen the resurgence that vinyl records, and even cassette tapes to a lesser extent, have made. As the space to communicate online becomes more cluttered, perhaps the same could happen for the printed fanzine. For the moment, the conversation, it seems, has moved elsewhere.

Figure 8.1: *Against The Rest* (Issue 1, 2000)

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Appendices

Appendix One: ATP Survey 2011

Part 1: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/D9ZKDC6

1. Which category below includes your age?

○ 20-29
○ 30-39
○ 40-49

Other (please specify)

[   ]

2. What gender are you?

☐ Male

☐ Female

3. Which of the following print publications do you read to find out about music?

☐ Hot Press   ☐ Fader

☐ AU   ☐ Under The Radar

☐ Wire   ☐ Rolling Stone

☐ Uncut   ☐ The Ticket (Irish Times)

☐ Mojo   ☐ Day & Night (Irish Independent)

☐ Kerrang   ☐ Culture (Sunday Times)

☐ Metal Hammer   ☐ Arena (Sunday Business Post)

☐ NME   ☐ Fanzines (Please List in "Other")

☐ Q   ☐ None

Other (please specify)

[   ]

4. How often do you buy music magazines?

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Every 2-3 Months

☐ Every 4-6 months

☐ Annually

☐ Never

5. Which music blogs or websites do you access regularly?

- [ ] Pitchfork
- [ ] Stereogum
- [ ] The Quietus
- [ ] Nialler 9
- [ ] Harmless Noise
- [ ] On The Record (Jim Carroll)
- [ ] Drop-d.ie
- [ ] The Hype Machine
- [ ] Gorilla Vs Bear

- [ ] Daytrotter
- [ ] Guardian Music
- [ ] Hotpress.com
- [ ] IHeartAu.Com
- [ ] Le Cool Dublin
- [ ] Cluas.com
- [ ] Goldenplec.ie
- [ ] Ragged Words

Other (please specify)

[   ]

6. How regularly do you access music blogs/websites?

- [ ] Daily
- [ ] 3-4 times per Week
- [ ] Weekly
- [ ] Monthly
- [ ] Never

7. How much music programming on FM Radio do you listen to per week on average?

- [ ] 1-3 hours
- [ ] 4-6 hours
- [ ] 7-9 hours
- [ ] 10+ hours
- [ ] I don't listen to FM Radio

8. How many hours music programming on digital radio/ internet radio/ podcasts do you listen to per week on average?

- [ ] 1-3 hours
- [ ] 4-6 hours
- [ ] 7-9 hours
- [ ] 10+ hours

☐ I don't listen to digital radio, internet radio or podcasts

9. Which of the following radio stations do you listen to at least once a week for music programming?

☐ RTÉ Radio 1   ☐ WFMU

☐ RTÉ 2FM   ☐ KCRW

☐ RTÉ Lyric FM   ☐ BBC Radio 6

☐ RTÉ Pulse   ☐ Local/Regional Irish Radio

☐ RTÉ 2XM   ☐ Community Irish Radio

☐ Phantom FM   ☐ College Radio

☐ Today FM

Other (please specify)

[   ]

10. Which of the following devices do you use to listen to music programming?

☐ FM Radio Set

☐ Digital (DAB) Radio

☐ Internet Radio Set

☐ Online Streaming

☐ Android Phone

☐ iPhone

☐ Other Phone

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Part 2: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/D96JCWC

1. How often do you purchase music in a physical format (CDs, records, cassettes, etc.)?

- ○ Weekly
- ○ Monthly
- ○ Every 2-3 months
- ○ Every 6 months
- ○ Annually
- ○ Never

2. In an average month, how many physical releases would you buy?

- ☐ 1-3 items
- ☐ 4-6 items
- ☐ 7-9 items
- ☐ 10+
- ☐ 0

3. How often do you download music from file-sharing websites?

- ○ Extremely often
- ○ Very often
- ○ Moderately often
- ○ Slightly often
- ○ Never

4. How often do you pay to download music from Itunes/Emusic/Etc?

- ☐ 1-3 times per month
- ☐ 4-6 times per month
- ☐ 7-9 times per month
- ☐ 10+ times per month
- ☐ Never

5. How often do you stream music online?

○ Extremely often
○ Very often
○ Moderately often
○ Slightly often
○ Not at all often

6. Which of the below is your favourite format for listening to music?

○ Vinyl
○ CD
○ Cassette
○ WAV
○ MP3
○ Stream
○ Other

7. How many gigs would you tend to go to per month?

○ 0
○ 1-3
○ 4-6
○ 6-9
○ 10+

8. If you buy music (physical/digital), where of the following places do you buy it from?

☐ HMV
☐ Local independent record stores
☐ Independent stores on travels
☐ Itunes
☐ Amazon (Physical)
☐ Amazon (Digital)
☐ Insound.com
☐ Emusic
☐ Ebay
☐ Discogs
☐ Play.Com

☐ Play.Com

☐ Other

Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. Are you a musician?

○ Yes

○ No

10. Any other comments that you would like to make:

[   ]

[Done]

Appendix Two: Questions from Plugd Records Sample Interviews (22 August 2014)

Information on participant – name/approximate age/where they are from.

Do you play in a band?

Do you go to gigs often?

Do you shop in Plugd Regularly, and if so, how regularly?

Would the majority of the gigs you go to be in Cork?

Would they mainly be Cork bands or national/international bands that you go to see?

Do you feel part of a scene? If so, what is the scene?

Would you consider yourself a music fan? In what ways are you a fan?

Does being a fan of a band from Cork differ from being a fan of a band from another town and country?

How do you find out about gigs and new releases?

Would you consider yourself to be a collector or music? Why do you collect? Why do you buy physical music?

Appendix Three: List of Irish Music Fanzines, 1977-2014

FANZINE TITLE	Location	Writer(s)	Years Active (Approx)
10 Pence Worth	Dublin	Members of **Of Xerox** (female band)	1980
9 to 5	Belfast	Unknown	1979
A Life of Buggery	Dublin	Eunan and Molly	1990
A New Clear Threat	Dublin	PA/Deko	1980-85
A Trip To Oi Town	Dublin	Traycee Oi Town	2006
Against The Rest	Wicklow	Karol Daly/ Shay Murphy	2000
Ailleacht Na Dorcha	Cork	Paddy	1998
Almost Art	Dublin	Tommy McCann	1978
Almost Grown	Unknown	Unknown	1979
Alternative Ulster	Belfast	Dave McCullough, Gavin Martin & Rodger Pearson	1977-78
Analogue Bubblebath	Dublin	Paul English	1998-2000
Ancient Wisdom	Cork	Darragh O'Leary	1992
Anorak	Dublin	Mixed (all male)	2002-05
Aunty Hero	Dublin	Keith	1996-97
Back2Front	Down	Danny	2008-09
Bite My Lip	Galway	Kollin Sometimes	2001-03
Bite The Hand That Feeds the Poisoned Food	Dublin	Cormac Sheahan	2003-05
Black & White	Dublin	Jude Carr/Pete Price	1979-80
Blag Juice	Dublin	James Block	1993
Blueprint	Westmeath	Ivan Cahill	1994
Buddy	Unknown	Unknown	1977
Bumcheek	Dublin	Brian	1991
Cabaret	Antrim	Ben Allen	1979
Carobics	Dublin	Unknown	1997
Catharsis	Dublin	Alan	1994
Cavity Search	Limerick	Mark O'Connor	2000-02
Choc-A-Bloc Cork)	Cork	Jim Comic (Morrish)	1990-95
Complete Control	Belfast	Ivan Kelly	late 1970s
Cosmetic Plague	Kilkenny	Feargal McEvoy	1982-83
Cotton Fist	Dublin	Eric	1997-2005
Craw Thumping	Dublin	Unknown	1982
CS Control	Belfast	Mr Puke	late 1970s
D-Beat Beater	Sligo	Alex	2009
Dark Skies Ahead	Kildare/Laois	Adrian Butler and Darren Moore	1994/95

Deafecation	Offaly	Padraic	1996
Def Trash	Laois	Graham Ryan	1989
Deprived	Wicklow	Brian Taube	1993-94
Devoid Media	Dublin	Caroline Kelly	1982
Direct Action Against Apathy	Belfast	Group of writers	1997-99
Direct Hit	Armagh	Mel Hughes	2002
Down In The Hole	Dublin	Dave/Michael	1988-89
Downtime	Antrim	Justin	1995
Endless Blockades	Cork	Nick	Unknown
Eternal Black Embrace	Offaly	Cathal Rodgers	1992-93
Ethos	Dublin	Biggley	1994-96
Europe at a glance	Unknown	Unknown	1980
Everything Went Black	Belfast	Unknown	1990-91
Fake	Dublin	Richie Egan	1994-96
Felt Good To Burn	Longford	David Colohan	1995
Fishing	Cork	Unknown	1990
Fitted Kitchens of the Living Damned	Belfast	A. Orr	1998-2000
Follow The Crowd	Tyrone	Ernie Badness	1980s
Frenzy	Dublin	Stan	1995
Fudge	Dublin	Leagues O'Toole	1992
Gazette	Dublin	Damo	2003
Gearhead Nation	Dublin	Derek Byrne and Finbar	1990-97
Global Negation	Dublin	Dave Negation	Unknown
Go Freaks	Dublin	Unknown	1997
Good For Nothing	Kerry	Ivan Pawle	1998
Gutter	Limerick	Joe Clarke	1993-94
Hangover Times	Galway	Kollin Sometimes	2006
Hatred Of Music	Dublin	Ian Maleney	2013-14
Heat	Dublin	Jude Carr/Pete Price	1977-79
Hel	Dublin	Maria	early 1990s
Helden	Belfast	Unknown	1980s
Helium Bong	Dublin	Olly	1997-98
High Speed Death	Offaly	Cathal Rodgers	1990-94
Hope	Dublin	Niall McGuirk	2014
Hurling Abuse	Wicklow	Anthony Monahan	1999
I Love Ecstasy, it Kills Ravers	Armagh	Phil	1998-99
Ideas Is Matches	Dublin	Clodagh Murphy	1999-2002
If and When	Derry	Jimmy Walker	1980s
Imprint	Dublin	Barbara Fitzgerald & Misc	1979-81
In Diablo	Dublin	Tommy Trouses	1996
In Search of Space	Kerry	Ivan Pawle	c.2004
Indeed U R	Dublin	Orly	1996-97

Industrial Weed	Dublin	Liam	1995
Insane Society	Unknown	Unknown	1978
Invictus	Dublin	Darragh O'Leary	1998-2000
It's Your World	Derry	Unknown	1977
Jake's Wrath	Cork	Liadain O'Driscoll	2000-03
Junkmail	Dublin	Maria	1993
Kickstart	Dublin	Unknown	1992
Kids	Dublin	Kids Gig Collective	2000
King of the Sad People	Wexford	Conor King	1995-97; 2003
Komakino	Kilkenny	James Cody	1993
Laughing Gravy	Down	Robert Scott	1978
Liggin'	Unknown	Unknown	1978
Lingua Franca	Wicklow	Turlough	2004
Looking Back	Unknown	Lally (Laura) & Iano	2008
Loony Tunes	Unknown	Unknown	1995-97
Loserdom	Dublin	Anto & Eugene Dillon	1996-2014
Lú Ceanghaill Fuil	Cork	Darragh O'Leary	1996
Lucidity	Kildare	Ed Hannon	2003-04
Mental Energy	Unknown	Unknown	1980
Metal Orgasm	Offaly	Unknown	1991
Mind Riot	Dublin	Etain	1995-97
Moonstruck	Dublin	Greg McDaid	1986
Morphosis Death Machine	Galway	Unknown	1995
Ms Marvel	Unknown	Unknown	1980
Muse	Dublin	John O'Donovan	1996
Nag Nag Nag	Dublin	Michael Owens (Owensie)	1998
Nay Nay and Thrice Nay	Cork	Troll and Sandy	1991
Neu Carnage	Dublin	Gerry Molyneaux	1978-79
New Clear Life	Dublin	Phil	1995
Night of the Locust	Galway	Kollin Sometimes	2007
No Barcodes Necessary	Fermanagh	Mel Hughes	1993-99
No Class	Dublin	Colin	2004
No Ego	Longford	Dave McGlynn	2002-03
No Fun	Belfast	Stevie Boyd	1977
Noiseletter	Galway	Kollin Sometimes	2003-04
Non Plastique	Dublin	Willie Stewart	1995-2002; 2013-14
Nonesuch	Dublin	Lee	1991
Northern Blaze	Belfast	Matthew Moore	2007-09
Nosebleed	Dublin	Boz Mugabe (Stephen)	1990-2002
Notes From The End Of The Underground	Galway	Keith Wallace	2002
Nothing To Declare	Down	Unknown	1995-96

Nova Wreck	Armagh	James McDonald	1999-2000
Obscene	Antrim	Bertie	1994
OneOff	Dublin	Tony Feeney	1997-98
Orange Vomit	Unknown	Unknown	1978
Pacer	Galway	Brian	early 2000s
Paranoid Visions	Dublin	Colin	1984
Pinhead	Dublin	Níall Lowth	early 1990s
Planet Fish	Dublin	Unknown	1995-97
Plastazine	Antrim	Chris	1994-95
Plastic World	Tyrone	Ernie Badness	1977
Play The Song I Like	Dublin	Gareth	2006-07
Poptones	Dublin	Unknown	1982
Positive Reaction	Tyrone	Ernie Badness	1980s
Pressed To Death	Dublin	Unknown	1995
Private World	Belfast	Alwyn Greer	1977
Promise Me Skies	Dublin	Anto Dillon	1999-2001
Protest Zine	Cork	Sean	1989-97; 2005-09
Prototype	Dublin	Ed	1992-94
Puppet Patrol	Dublin	Brendan	1991
PVC (Paranoid Vision Continued)	Dublin	Colin	Unknown
Rare N' Rude	Louth	Paddy	1989-90s
Raw Power	Dublin	Steve Averill (Steve Rapid)	1977
React	Dublin	Niall McGuirk	1990-97
Readioactive	Dublin	Ronnie	1992
Rejected	Dublin	Mero	1992-97
Rhubarb	Dublin	Robert	1993
Rigid Eruption	Dublin	John	1997
Riot 77	Dublin	Cian Hynes	2000-14
Riot On Your Own	Belfast	Bill	1999-2001
Ruby Fix	Unknown	Sadhb	2002
Scene Suicide	Dublin	Unknown	2008
Scold	Louth	George Curran	1998
Scrawl	Belfast	Glyn Smith	2000-02
Scream	Carlow	Ciaran Walsh	1996-97
Scruffy Nerfherder	Dublin	Anto Dillon	1999
Scumbag	Wexford	Unknown	1997
Severance	Wicklow	Ian Lawless	1993
Shock Treatment	Unknown	Unknown	1977
Silent Ireland	Cork	Darragh O'Leary	1994
Ska Patrol	Dublin	Unknown	2000
Skanar	Unknown	Unknown	1980
Skazine	Unknown	Unknown	1992
Sketch	Dublin	Niall McGuirk	1989
Sl@nted @nd Ench@nted	Dublin	Clodagh Murphy & Misc	1996-99
SLTA Zine	Dublin	Barry Lennon	2000

Smegma	Dublin	Angus	1986-99
Smile	Belfast	Mark Smile	1994-95
Something Else	Unknown	Unknown	1980
Sonic Birth	Dublin	Andrew Bushe	1996
Sorrow	Louth	Jason McNeice	Unknown
Souled	Dublin	Daniel and Peter	1992
Splatter	Dublin	Paul	Unknown
Sprawl	Westmeath	Unknown	1991
Squashed Apple	Cork	Conor	early 1990s
Sunny Days	Cork	Morty	1989-91
Sweet Sensations	Unknown	Unknown	1980s
The Damage Is Done	Meath/ Kildare	Various Writers (All Male)	1996
The Devil On 45	Kildare	Ed Hannon	2005-08
The End	Dublin	Philip Cummins	1992
The Grip Ethic	Cork	Noel	2002
The Kid	Limerick	Joe Clarke	1993
The Oath	Dublin	Alan Averill	1993
The Sitar Catastrophe	Dublin	Unknown	1998/99
The Sun, The Moon, The Starz	Louth	George Curran and Paul	1986-87
The Swedish Nurse	Belfast	Martin	1989
This Frigging Thing	Wicklow	Brook	2004
Through Ireland's Eye	Dublin	Paul Kearns	1994
To Hell With It	Wexford	Barry Walsh	2000s
Too Late	Unknown	Unknown	1978
Total Darkness	Cork	Marc Ryan	1994-95
Two Headed Dog	Dublin	Unknown	2007-08
Under Their Radar	Kildare	Ed Hannon	2002
Unfit For Consumption	Limerick	Trevor Meehan	1999-2006
Up Against It	Unknown	Unknown	1980s
Up Boys and Atom	Derry	Unknown	late 1970s
Up Yours!	Unknown	Unknown	1978
Vacant Sound	Belfast	Ciarán	2005
Vox	Dublin	Dave Clifford	1980-83
War on all Fronts	Belfast	Matthew Moore	2011-13
Warzine	Belfast	Misc Writers	1989
Waste of Space	Dublin	Paddy Lynch	1996-97
We Play Here	Cork	Eoghan O'Sullivan (Editor)	2013-14
We're In The Soup	Dublin	Unknown	early 1990s
Whose Life Is It Anyway?	Dublin	Niall McGuirk	1984
Why Me?	Dublin	Paul	1994
Wild Hog Ride	Belfast	Phil	2003
Wimp Wonder Comic	Dublin	Unknown	1978
With Harmful Intent	Roscommon	Cormac Sheehan	2000
Youth Anthem	Belfast	Martin Smith	1983-86
Zeitgeist	Cork	Jim Comic	1996

Appendix Four: Examples of Follow-On Questions in Interviews

In the below exchange with fanzine writer Willie Stewart (WS), he discusses how early fanzines that he encountered "looked punk"; I (CR) subsequently ask him for a clarification of that look.

> WS: I didn't realise there was a network of underground Irish bands, and I certainly didn't know that there were publications to go along with that, and that's how people networked. Maybe because it came with a 7" and it kind of looked punk or something, definitely an aesthetic to it.
>
> CR: Can you describe that look?
>
> WS: Hand-drawn, A5, A4 folded over, looked kind of…just looked hand-made and like I said, the punk thing as well (Interview, Leitrim, 27 June 2012).

In an interview with another fanzine writer, Trevor Meehan (TM), an explanation is sought as to why he considers one particular fanzine to be more of a magazine:

> TM: I think that's more of a magazine than a zine, as such. Obviously the quality of paper and everything – I'd say he puts a fair few bob into that one.
>
> CR: So when you say you think it's more of a magazine than a fanzine, is that down to how it looks and feels as opposed to the content?
>
> TM: Yeah, I think it's a bit of both. It feels like a magazine obviously because it is glossy and whatnot, but I think what I always thought what there wasn't enough of in it was Irish news or Irish reviews (Interview, Limerick, 9 March 2013).

Appendix Five: Sample Research Field Notes

There is not a great deal of music fanzines here. In fact, with the exception of *Riot 77* and *Loserdom*, I have not seen any Irish music fanzines. I had hoped to see some new Irish titles. There are some from other countries that I have picked up, including the UK, US, and further afield such as Malaysia. There seems to be a shift toward Irish-produced 'zines' that focus on art, literature, or comics. There seems to be a bit of a 'community' feeling to the day – most people seem to know each other, it's predominantly vegan and organic food, and there are lots of families here (Research Diary, Independent's Day, Dublin, 23 June 2013).

It's 3pm now. I have been here since set-up this morning at 10am and it is interesting to see the people coming and going. There's a far bigger turnout than I expected and there must be over twenty stalls of fanzine producers. The only music-related fanzine I have located is part of a stall that is selling a multitude of different titles, and this particular title is just of photographs from various gigs around Dublin. They're good quality shots though, and were taken by Graeme who's originally from Limerick. I've just taken part in a 'make-your-own' zine workshop, which was interesting. It was very much 'DIY' in feel, with paper, glue, markers, pens, etc. passed out to participants. I feel that a lot more of the focus here is on the aesthetics and design of contemporary fanzines than actual content (Research Diary, Dublin Zine Fair, 16 August 2014).

Appendix Six: Further Reading – Publications and Conference Papers

Ryan, C. (forthcoming) 'Music Fanzine Collecting As Capital Accumulation', *Participations* (Journal). *www.participations.org*

Ryan, C. (forthcoming) 'Resistance Through Text: A place for fanzines in 21st Century Irish DIY Music Scenes?'. In: Guerra, P. & Quintela, P. (Eds) *Fast, Furious and Xerox: Independent DIY Publications and Underground Urban Cultures*. Porto: KISMIF.

Ryan, C. (2015) 'Transforming Personal Music Fanzine Collections into Public Displays of Fandom', *Popular Music Fandom and The Public Sphere Symposium*. University of Chester. 10 April.

Ryan, C. (2014) 'Music Fanzine Collecting As Capital Accumulation', *Fan Studies Network Conference*. London: Regent's University. 28 September.

Ryan, C. (2014) '*Fandom in a DIY Community – Cork, Ireland*', *International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM UK & Ireland): 'Worlds of Popular Music' Conference.* University College Cork. 12 September.

Ryan, C. (2014) 'Against The Rest: The Role of Fanzines in Developing Music Communities in Ireland' (Poster Presentation), *Mary Immaculate College Research Seminar.* Limerick: Mary Immaculate College. 2 September.

Ryan, C. (2014) 'Resistance Through Text: A Place for Fanzines in a 21st Century Irish DIY Community?', *Keep it Simple! Make it Fast: Underground Music Scenes and DIY Cultures*. University of Porto. 11 July.

Ryan, C. (2014) 'Fanzines in 21st Century DIY Music Communities', *Limerick Postgraduate Research Conference*. Limerick Institute of Technology. 29 May.

Ryan, C. (2013) 'Against The Rest: The Role of Fanzines in Developing Music Communities in Ireland', *Ethnomusicology in the Digital Age: Joint Annual Meeting*

of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology and ICTM Ireland. Belfast: Queen's University. 5 April.