

Culture, Media and Everyday Life

I Lecture outline:

Definition of fandom

Fandom & Academia

Theories of fandom

- (i) romantic attachment
- (ii) identification
- (iii) fantasy

Fans as Tastemakers

Fandom and music

II Fandom is:

Collective support and/or admiration for -

A film/TV personality

A musician/singer/band

A sports personality/team

A collective celebration of mutual taste/preference in –

Film/TV genre

Music

Sports activities/team

A ritual gathering (physical or virtual)

III (i) Fandom as romantic attachment

Ehrenreich et al. (1992) study of Beatles' fans:

- I. Beatles' were an object of adolescent fantasy
- II. A safe object to idolise
- III. Beatles could be admired at a distance
- IV. A focus for the practice and learning of sexuality

According to Ehrenreich et al.:

Part of the appeal of the male star – whether it James Dean or Elvis Presley or Paul McCartney – was that you would never marry him; the romance would never end in the tedium of marriage (Ehrenreich et al., in Lewis (ed.) 1992, p.96).

IV Fan identification with 'idol' – example, Elvis.

Elvis was: I visibly lower class/II symbolically black

III represented an unassimilated underclass

Elvis stood for:

'a dangerous principle of masculinity'

'a hood who had no place in the calculus of dating, going steady and getting married'

A strong image – and resource for teenage rebellion against the parent culture.

(Ehrenreich et al, in Lewis (ed.) 1992, pp.100-101)

V: (iii) Fandom as fantasy. According to Hinterman, fandom is a collective release for 'repressed desire'. 'Star fantasies are now a matter of cultural course, from childhood on' (Hinterman, in Lewis (ed.) 1992, p.117).

Practice of fandom –

- a. Serves to legitimate such fantasies

b. Gives them a collective voice/basis of expression
Links fantasies to other forms of cultural practice in everyday life

VII Brower – fans as *tastemakers*. Tastemakers are

... groups that historically have attempted to promote and deploy their taste in art, architecture and fashion throughout society

(Bower, in Lewis (ed.) 1992, p.164)

VII Study of group called Viewers for Quality Television (VQT)

Group engaged in aesthetic criticism of TV content

Group seek to:

define 'quality television'

advocate continuance of 'quality television'

(Bower, in Lewis (ed.) 1992, pp.163-164)

VIII During mid-1970s, notion of quality became an aspect of audience discourse.

Audiences began to refer to and evaluate programmes in terms of:

I artistic content/II subject matter/III commercial effectiveness

(Bower, in Lewis (ed.) 1992, p.165)

IX 'VQT [has] rationalized its brand of fandom as a democratic form of criticism and social activism' (Bower, in Lewis (ed.) 1992, p.171)

VQT's polling of members has evolved into a complex system of defining and updating the criteria for 'quality' (Bower, in Lewis (ed.) 1992, p.171)

VQT's newsletter:

Contains interviews with creators and stars – results in

direct communication between producer and consumer.

exclusion of networks

(Bower, in Lewis (ed.) 1992, p.172).