
Blunting the Cutting Edge? Analogue Memorabilia and Digitised Memory

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Abstract: What happens to disintermediated, flattened, plural and resistive popular culture when classic rock is corporatized and the audience is middle aged white men? This article is provoked by Bob Dylan's *The Cutting Edge*, the expensive reissuing of his albums from 1965 and 1966 in 2015, to offer a theorization of digital recording and sharing of analogue unboxing cultures. My interest particularly focuses on the audience of this affluent product and the odd cultural responses from the male audience. How do scholars of popular culture understand this shared enthusiasm for unpackaging consumerist items? The solution posed in this article is the deployment of Jean Baudrillard's theories to understand and manage the cascading simulacrum.

Keywords: Bob Dylan, Jean Baudrillard, The Cutting Edge, disintermediation, reintermediation, popular culture, popular memory

„The greatest gig of all time. Stop Music.”
Fan responding to the Stone Roses gig in Warrington, UK (Meadows 2013)

Introduction

When the Stone Roses reformed in 2012, the ageing facades of Mani, Reni, Ian and Jon could not mask or marginalise the enthusiasm from their similarly ageing fans. Before the Heaton Park gigs in Manchester, a free show was organised in Warrington Parr Hall, located – appropriately – between Manchester and Liverpool. At the conclusion of the concert, fan reactions were recorded for the documentary *Made of Stone* (Stone Roses 2012). One fan's response commences this article.

The problem, challenge and gift of popular culture and popular memory is that they cannot be stopped. Analogue events begin and end, returning and looping oddly and unexpectedly through digital recordings. In response to these textualised memories, fan clocks slow, rewind, jump and repeat because the memories scratched from popular music are delicate, intricate and iterative. When fashion and fame subside, analogue pop objects bubble in the present, but are often tossed into Greil Marcus's *Dustbin of History* (1995). If this analogue debris survives obsolescence, then these products are fetishised, rebranded, repackaged and resold. The Beatles' albums and singles have been reshaped repetitively, with every possible

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repackaged, corporatised drop squeezed from the (still living) fab two. Bob Dylan – as always – has been resolutely engaged in his disengagement with commercialised culture, with the Bootleg series now highly polished and sold in elite, expensive and exclusive limited collections.

The question is how popular music scholars reshape and study the unsteady and unsettling dance between analogue and digital, public culture and private experiences, popular culture and popular memory. The digitisation of analogue memory, whether through CD reissues, YouTube uploads, Instagram photographs or Facebook posts, offers the archetype of what Lawrence Grossberg (1988, p. 5) described as ‘authentic inauthenticity’. My article takes Grossberg’s phrase as a starting point to explore the passage of analogue memorabilia into digitisation and social media. These memories are not real, truthful or authentic. They reconfigure, reimagine and re-place. The transformation of collectors and collecting - from high-priced reissues through to the free Facebook sharing of images and Twitter ‘following’ by fans - is the key focus of my research.

Particularly, I explore how popular memory is punctuated by corporate products. Are there spaces for political resistance and social change in the use of these repackaged inauthentically authentic goods? To answer this question, one resonant example is summoned: *The Cutting Edge*, Dylan’s 2015 reissue of a complete edition of his recordings from 1965 and 1966. *The Collector’s Edition*, with (only) 5,000 products distributed worldwide, generated odd (re)actions from fans. There was a masculine, digitised, shared response. The (overwhelmingly) white, male collectors switched on their cameras to capture themselves opening the boxed set. They then uploaded these videos to YouTube, where they nested with other fan uploads around the world, who also shared their individual responses and excitement relating to this highly priced product. Further, the irony of this collection is clear: 45 RPM vinyl singles were part of this digitised package.

How are popular music scholars to understand and interpret the relish with which this authentically inauthentic past is digitised and reborn in the present? Further, and to recycle one of my monograph titles, is this *Thinking Popular Culture* or merely relishing the re-issues? To answer these questions, my research in this article probes the excesses of corporate rock in a time of deeply disintermediated critique of the industry, to understand the power of pop memory. This is a distinct project from Jez Collins’s analysis of online sites of popular music heritage (2012). My work intentionally problematizes the binaries of on and offline, analogue and digital. Further, I do not render popular music memorabilia distinctive or special. Instead, it is situated into the wider movements and theorizations of popular cultural studies.

High popular culture

Thinking Popular Culture (Brabazon 2008) as a phrase, refers to the pop text that reflects on the process and practice of its creation. Often wilfully incomplete, disruptive and difficult, these popular cultural texts, sites and sources demand that they are completed, discussed, explored and probed by fans (and scholars).

Perhaps a more accurate description for this mode of textual and contextual organisation is high popular culture (Redhead and Brabazon 2015a). Through the determination of ‘cultural value’ that defines popular culture, layers, levels and textures reveal themselves. Within the binary opposition of high and low culture – and following on from Homi Bhabha’s third space (1990) – new divisions, fissures and separations are created. Difficult popular cultures – like Bob Dylan, *Doctor Who* and *Breaking Bad* – require intellectual, social and emotional resources from fans. Such texts summon popular experts, probing, theorising and extemporising textual material into diverse socio-economic-cultural realities. They render

incomplete, textured and undulating popular culture into a finished product by virtue of their additions, corrections and contextualisation. Nearly thirty years ago, this was described as textual poaching by Henry Jenkins (1992). Yet this model of textual and contextual movement does not capture the radical shifts in both popular culture and the theorising of it. This is not a question of bricolage (Hebdige 1979). This is not a question of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984). This is not a question of spreadable media (Jenkins *et al.* 2013). While Penley's (1992) outstanding research on slash fiction provided the benchmark for edgy, exploratory and complex research into fandom, the subsequent fandom studies are celebratory, simple, undertheorised and overgeneralised. The gap between the quality of textualised fandom and the research into these formations is stark. The online environment has enabled a range of innovative collections of videos on YouTube, photographs on Instagram and fan fiction on burgeoning community sites like Archive of Our Own (2018).

Theories of fandom have snaked through the changes in media platforms. As interfaces have transformed, a proliferation of opportunities for scholarship and fandom have emerged. Digitisation has provided new metaphors and tropes that are – summoning Ang – *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (1991). As Mark Duffett (2014, p. 147) realised:

Previous vocabularies of fan theory have used words that painted research subjects, variously, as intoxicated children, social isolates, pathological out-patients, dreamers, creative rebels, textual poachers, neo-religious cultists and psychological ideal types. Each new wave of deductive vocabulary ascribed a very different motive and degree of agency to fans.

This article takes on this next challenge. What happens when old white men – the phantom enemy of the patriarchy, postcolonialism and youth cultures – are the dominant sociological grouping in a fan community? They capture and perform the hyper-consumerism of post-crash neoliberalism. Masking the collapse of the financial system, they not only continue their extravagant purchases, but then (over)share their excess with a social media-satiated audience.

It does not have to be this way. As shown by Archive of Our Own, the fan and scholarly digital archive for user generated content, researchers find that digitisation, disintermediation and deterritorialisation have radically transformed the accelerated movement of popular culture (Brabazon 2014). Fan enthusiasms and textualizations of their commitments are paired with a refereed academic journal also housed in the site. Communities can share, create, comment and engage. They bounce and agitated between categories of knowledge, writing and community. The movement of popular culture through space – beyond national and regional borders – creates a post-geographical pop. In close to real time, American, Malaysian and New Zealand *Doctor Who* fans can watch a programme. Not sharing a time zone does not mean they cannot share a text, albeit with the caveat #spoileralert.

This horizontal movement of popular culture through space is also matched by a cascading, vertical movement of texts and retextualisation through time. This is Baudrillard on acid, a cascading simulacrum. In other words, reality is re-presented and then re-re-presented in the simulacrum (Baudrillard 1995). But the simulacrum is rapidly repurposed for a new, textualised reality. So a reality television star like Donald Trump then cascades to become president of the United States. But this re-re-presentation continues, with Alec Baldwin's simulacrum Trump on *Saturday Night Live* being confused for the 'real' president of the United States. Trump and Baldwin's Trump slosh into other textual sites to create an undulating, radically unstable popular culture, such as *The President's Show* (2017). This cascading simulacrum is post-poststructuralism. The flattened, post-value cultural landscape develops leaks, ruptures, fissures and instabilities. The textures of popular culture heighten, undulate and thicken. Even Bob Dylan gained a Nobel Prize for literature (Miller 2017). Through the

cascading simulacra – where re-representations not only mask a reality but are a reality – new modes, categories and labels of popular culture emerge (Brabazon and Redhead 2013). This thinking pop or high popular culture, agitates the categories of cultural value while also sanitising the excesses of capitalism.

Middle-aged, white, heterosexual men as a popular cultural audience

In such a popular cultural context – where *Breaking Bad*'s Walter White moves from hero to villain and *Fifty Shades of Grey* presents troubling conceptualisations of violence and consent – what do middle-aged white men do with their fandom? Post-feminism and post-postcolonialism, what spaces remain for old white men? Surprisingly, or perhaps not, digitisation provides plenty of spaces and opportunities to express their views, their cultures and their purchases. As Deborah Withers (2010, p. 4) realised, 'Much of the writing and media about [Kate] Bush, certainly within popular culture, is produced or written by (now middle aged) heterosexual white men'. Their subjectivity - and their voice, avenue and channels to express it - is enhanced through the read write web.

The long tail of popular music was meant to encourage a wide diversity of musical tastes and audiences. That has not been the case. The reintermediation of popular music by Amazon and Apple in particular has ensured a marketised focus on already popular names, brands and the 'greatest hits'. Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, the Beatles, Elvis Presley and the Rolling Stones still dominate sales. When Led Zeppelin released their albums onto iTunes for the first time, *Led Zeppelin 4* rocketed up the charts and 'Stairway to Heaven' rose to the top of the singles, seemingly out of time and place. Digitised music is not outside of capitalism. It is part of capitalism. The assumption that digitisation would reduce the power of white men – particularly emergent through Howard Rheingold's school of internet empowerment (2000) – was a ruse.

Digitisation has enabled the proliferation of new music. This has been described by Chris Anderson as *The Long Tail* (2007). However, while there has never been more publically-available music than in the present, Oscar Celma (2010, p. vii) has realised that 'some of the traditional ways of finding music have diminished'. Particularly, the capacity to find 'new music' is constricted by iTunes banners and recycled covers of reality television programming. With the cancellation of the *X Factor*, these avenues for new artists – if not new material – are also retracting. Therefore, as Celma (2010, p. 4) has confirmed, 'music consumption based on sales is biased towards a few popular artists'. Balancing familiarity, novelty and relevance through increasingly corporatised digital music means that old artists repackage old music in new ways. The relationship between sound and vision, listening to music and the visual performance of that auditory culture (Hallam and Creech 2010), has changed through many social media sites, such as Twitter and Pinterest. However, it is YouTube that has been the most transformative. It is capturing and sharing the social practices encircling music.

Financial capitalism intensified the power held by the powerful. The Global Financial Crisis, the greatest failure of neoliberalism as an ideology, resulted in increasing power and profits for the banks as the state (re)funded and subsidised their excesses. The music industry was impacted through disintermediation. Digital files could move freely between non-paying 'customers' with ease. This is still the case. However, the models of payment that have been created through streaming and downloading services have returned profit to the music industries. But a key analogue strategy in this digital time was to create excessive, expensive packaging to be purchased by a popular music consumer. They may be able to download songs, but what about photographs, handwritten lyrics, film cells, specialist vinyl pressings and glossy booklets? That segment of the market is analogue and affluent. While compact discs and digital

downloads may be part of the package, the extravagant presentation is tactile, visible, large and hyper-personal. Digital downloads are shared. Analogue box sets are owned.

The desire for sharing, however, does not disappear. Indeed, the sharing becomes a way to show (off) the analogue purchases. The sharing is not of files, but of experiences, fandom, knowledge and the money required to purchase these items. Digitisation, particularly when accompanied by deterritorialisation and disintermediation, has flattened the access to information and the creation of new materials. This means that fans become producers of content, either creating original material through discussions of their fandom, or bricolaged combinations of re-used and re-configured media such as re-edited YouTube videos. Consumers become producers, but most importantly fan communities are built and created through customising, commodifying and sharing these textual creations through communities.

Roy Shuker (2010) remains the key scholar in understanding 'vinyl treasures'. He probed the relationship between 'capitalism and consumerism' (Shuker 2010, p. 3). He recognised that while most collectors are women, the public attention is placed on the men (Shuker 2010, p. 5). The reason music collections matter for men is that this is 'one of the few socially sanctioned opportunities for men to be expressive, while at the same time being aggressive and competitive' (Shuker 2010, p. 5). With the *High Fidelity* record shops closing, the available analogue sites for the performance of knowledge, collection and credibility has also been reduced. As Lewis Tennant (2016, p. 1) confirmed, 'the internet has altered notions of space and place'. New renderings of musical communities and the (over)sharing of fan-based expertise are emerging. Particular performers are worthy of attention in this digitised, post-*High Fidelity* landscape.

Unboxing Cultures

If *High Fidelity* was written for the post-iPod age – and indeed the post-record shop age – then the elite, elitist music snobs / connoisseurs would be filmed unboxing extravagant relics from the golden age of rock (that never actually existed). The spaces for male fans to espouse and perform their knowledge for less committed followers have only increased through digitization. Social media are disintermediated media. Fans can record their interests on their terms and upload it to portal to be viewed (or not) by a deterritorialized audience. YouTube is the archive, home and gated community for this proliferation of fan content. What made this *Cutting Edge* collection and the response to it so distinct was the desire of purchasers/fans to confirm their purchase by filming the 'unboxing' of the product for sharing on YouTube.

The unboxing of products is a small but visible genre of YouTube videos. They include women opening packages, including elite goods such as Hermes bags, the excited arrival of new Apple products, and children opening toys and games. These unboxing videos have a trace of a Proppian folk tale about them. They have a shape, trajectory and predictable content. But significantly, they perform authenticity (Smith 2017), and inauthentic authenticity, through fandom and consumerism. As James Grimmelman has confirmed, on Facebook and YouTube, "the line between advocacy and parody is undefined" (2018). Commodities are the engine for this unpacking culture, accompanied by the commodification of the self (Raun 2018). Part of this is a DIY, participatory media fandom (Hayashi 2018). Part of this culture is also a Veblen-style conspicuous consumption, particularly fetishizing Internet of Things Devices.

However the sub-genre of unpacking cultures most relevant to Bob Dylan's *The Cutting Edge* summons authentic inauthenticity and what Margree, MacFarlane, Price and Robinson describe as "serious leisure" (2014). This is not carnivalesque performance. This is earnest, performative record collecting and the (over)sharing of information. It is a peer-to-peer sharing

of experiences and knowledge. But class, power, expertise and money remain integral to this very specific modality of unboxing. Authenticity and inauthenticity, authority and sharing, duel for ascendancy, and an audience.

Bob Dylan's *The Cutting Edge*.

We live in bizarrely nostalgic times when recordings made over fifty years ago are labelled 'cutting edge'. November 2015 signalled the release of volume twelve of Dylan's Bootleg Series: *The Cutting Edge, 1965–1966*. Released by Legacy Records, it captured all the unreleased material from three of Dylan's albums: *Bringing it all back home* (1965), *Highway 61 revisited* (1965) and *Blonde on blonde* (1966). What made this bootleg collection unusual is that the product was differentiated. Three different releases were created: a two-disc *Best of* selection, a deluxe six-disc box set and a collector's edition. The latter was only available through ordering via Dylan's website and included 18 compact discs and every note Dylan recorded during that year. Many fan characteristics are noted in response to this collection: completism, elitism, nostalgia for the 1960s and the use of digitisation to confirm analogue expertise.¹ This collection continues the 'long shadow' of the decade (Heilbrunner 2016).

As with all of Dylan's work, it is difficult to ascertain whether the irony was intentional. *The Cutting Edge* may have been – well – cutting edge in 1966. Its capacity to make that claim, generations after its release is more difficult to prove. However, what could not be delivered through content could be conveyed through form. Each of these purchases and fandoms encircling the three different products were performed differently and disseminated through social media. Bob Dylan's *The Cutting Edge Collector's Edition* is the example of how a commodified, deterritorialised, disintermediated community can be formed that enhances the credibility of fans.

When searching for 'Unboxing Bob Dylan Cutting Edge YouTube' (2017) 17,300 videos were returned. These digitised community outputs were split into three, shadowing the three modes of release: two CDs, six CDs and 18 CDs. To provide examples, Paul Sinclair (2015) reviewed the two CD – and three LP – editions, discussing the artwork and presentation. The connoisseur collection unboxing is the elite and rarest of these videos because the product was a limited release. However, they are also the longest videos.

There are distinctive characteristics of all the videos. The key – and odd – driver is the pedestrian nature of opening of the product. It is a literal unboxing, slow and ritualistic. That means that the fans follow the instructions and series of products as supplied by Legacy Records. The second characteristic is that the artwork – particularly the photography – is discussed. Thirdly, a meta-commentary about the value of the music – the cultural value – is affirmed. Their personal views are meshed into corporate structures. This is not textual poaching or resistive readership. This is a presentation of a musical package that could be an advertorial.

This movement to and through box sets, which commenced with the re-issue of all the Beatles CDs in the Deluxe Box Set of 15 albums on 16 CDs in 1988, confirmed that the past is a digital database for contemporary commodification. Other extravagant boxed sets include performers such as The Byrds, David Crosby and Richard Thompson. These performers from

¹ For a discussion of 'completism' in fan behaviour, please refer to Geraghty's *Cult Collectors*, (2014), Hills' *Fan Cultures* (2002), Klinger's *Beyond the multiplex: cinema, new technologies, and the home* (2006), and Shuker's *Wax trash and vinyl treasures: record collecting as a social practice* (2013).

the 1960s had male and female fans, yet the female fans were ridiculed as the screamers of Beatlemania. The serious fans were – and still are – male.

As this fandom has aged, the popular music texts have digitised and the commercialisation has increased. This movement is not about disempowered communities resisting the reality of their lives through popular culture. This movement is about affluent white men from North America and Europe, alongside a few earnest fans prepared to pay postage to the Antipodes, sharing their purchases with another group of affluent white men. The question is: why should anyone care?

For Bob Dylan fandom – completist and obsessive – the Bootleg series has been the focus of fandom. This fixation on the past, particularly while Dylan moves through his less-than-successful Sinatra trilogy of albums, has proved incredibly popular. Keith Swanwick (1999) stated that, ‘all music arises in a social context’. Such a statement is easy to make, but much more complex to understand and apply in popular cultural research. Baby boomers are a very particular audience of and for popular music. Why this generation still matters is they were the first youth culture to be tethered to and framed by a style of music. An age was linked with a musical genre. As they have aged, they have taken their music with them, so that the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, the Who and Bob Dylan have remained talisman and shaman. Joseph Kotarba (2013 p. 2) makes the point that:

Many professionals and lay observers have noted in recent years the way that the baby boomers’ generation uses relationships, occupations, investments, religion, hobbies – and medicine – to accomplish one task: to forestall, master, and/or enhance the aging process.

Authenticity is an ideology. It is useful to build and enable credibility, exclusivity, literacy and power. Music, because it is the marinade of ageing, offers a specific role in summoning authenticity. The mediations of popular culture create multiple mechanisms for inauthentic authenticity.

Authenticity as a concept and trope has many long-term disciplinary resonances, particularly in tourism (Franklin and Urry 2001) and education (Taylor 1994). Taylor confirms that authenticity with regard to origins of the text is less relevant or important than how the text is used in distinct contexts. To affirm inauthentic authenticity is to offer a bright, inverted, quirky and affirmative (denial) of singular readings, interpretations and definitive origins and endpoints for learning and meaning. Authenticity – like inauthentic authenticity – remains as Nematullah Shomoossi and Saeed Ketabi define it: “a situational construct” (2007, 150). This is a powerful moment of conceptual transformation. Authenticity is only authentic in particular situations. Therefore, some environments, such as the playful spaces of social media, are available for inauthentic authentic re-presentations.

The question is how relationships are formed and meaning created through such spaces and products. Music fandom shares both similarities and distinctions from other modes of popular cultural fandom. Daniel Cavicchi (1998), in his study of Bruce Springsteen fandom, explored the nature of participation and how fandom is changing through the platform migration and transformations of the music industry. While he did not discuss interface management, there is no doubt that ‘the reorganization of public performance by capitalism and technology’ (Cavicchi 1998, p. 6) has had a role.

The Banality of Fandom

Cultural studies remains the interdisciplinary paradigm that has the most impact on the changing status and understanding of fandom. The Birmingham Centre’s work – in its many

foundational studies and engagements with structuralism in particular – offered a considered dialogue between semiotics and sociology. This was best captured in the heavily cited piece by Stuart Hall (1999) – ‘Encoding and decoding’. This study then developed into Fiske’s model of dominant, subordinate and resistive readers, and Henry Jenkins’ textual poachers. These models were in place and being applied in both textual and contextual studies by the early 1990s. However, this model of readership became both simplistic and glib through the latter stages of the 1990s, as digitisation increased in its influence. Through the read write web’s impact – best shown through the arrival of blogs in 1999 – it became clear that fans were writing back, re-configuring, being active, being stropic, being controversial and radically engaging with textual materials.

The problem was that the theorising did not match the revelatory mechanism through which the media was transforming. The media’s iterative changes moved ahead of cultural and media studies’ theorising of it. Fandom studies became the refuge of blokes talking through their *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who* or Beatles collection. The complex ways in which fan fiction has transformed, being captured through such websites as Archive of our Own (2018) and remarkable re-imagining of popular culture through both YouTube and Twitter, made it clear that very complex, intricate and delicate reconfigurations of capitalism and commodification were taking place. Significantly, the domestic nature of fandom was often invisible. It was generally women reading romance fiction, dancing around the house, obsessively watching and re-watching particular episodes or scenes of television or film programmes. Yet through YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in particular, ‘invisible’ fandoms are rendered visible and textualised.

Fred Vermorel has always managed the uncomfortable, difficult and deviant nature of fandom with relish. He recognised that, ‘I took my role as a Kate Bush fan seriously. I therefore stalked her’ (Vermorel 2014, p. 89). There is an honesty – a gritty disturbance – in such realisations. The obsessive, embarrassing, difficult nature of fandom that transgresses heteronormative, procreative sexualities, is rarely revealed in acceptable public discourse. Fandom is an often unpopular connection with popular culture.

Through this morass of banality, certain outstanding scholars like Philip Tagg remain pivotal to the next iteration of fan theory. He argues that while certain types of music are visible or invisible, some music is rendered visible through academic attention (Tagg 2011). Often termed artist fandoms, these studies focus on the audience for a particular performer or band. The white, male academic is a particular guide to move this movement from trivial pop to scholarly credibility. When the focus is women, youth, black and indigenous communities and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender fans, issues of quality and importance are subsumed in favour of fetishising the different. Joli Jensen (2014, p. 208), in probing the relationship between an academic and a fan, believes that this division is sustained by ‘two academically suspect areas: popular culture and emotional response’. The way that these ‘suspect areas’ are managed is by segmenting and differentially valuing popular culture – creating high and low pop – and by cooling the emotions through hyper-capitalism.

Older white men are the unmarked sign. That means the power, authority, knowledge and credibility that they hold is maintained without question or critique. They avoid scrutiny. They maintain power because they always have. The agencies and institutions of power – such as politics, education and the law – perpetuate their authority by framing and limiting the capacity for hegemonic negotiations. Therefore, the Bob Dylan *The Cutting Edge* release – and the textualisation of that fandom via YouTube – remains fascinating in its presence, behaviour, confidence and depth.

What happens when we look at older white men as fans – the dominant and empowered group in the culture – and how they render themselves complex and different? Bob Dylan’s relationship with commercialisation has always been diffident. Throughout his career, he has

been signed to a major record label. He never sold out, but he did buy in. Similarly, his fans remain both loyal and affluent, ageing with him. Scholars such as Roy Shuker have presented histories of record collecting, emerging through record fairs, independent record shops, specialist reissue labels and reconfigurations of the back catalogue. The key question is, when collectors acquire music – particularly music that they already own in multiple forms – what are they actually buying? (Shuker 2014) Are they purchasing a commodification of their personal experiences? Certainly, in an accelerated, digital age, a fetishisation of the analogue and the physical object renders memory corporeal (Baker 2015). The digital file is ephemeral and may, as David Hajdu (2016, p. 71) confirmed, ‘diminish the value of digitized music in the public consciousness’. These expensive boxed collections return size, importance and visibility to popular music fandom. Such authentic inauthenticity reconfigures and reimagines a past that never existed for a deterritorialised community of fans that wish to perform expertise in a post-expertise age.

Analogue endings

A final digital moment concludes this article, a re-re-presentation of *The Cutting Edge* unboxing. This digital moment also lashes an analogue tail. I was married to a Bob Dylan fan, who also happened to be a popular cultural researcher. Steve Redhead was the first – and may remain the only – professor of law and popular culture in the world. Redhead built and contributed to an array of interdisciplinary fields, including socio-legal studies, popular cultural studies, leisure studies and football studies. Perhaps his most influential book remains *Unpopular cultures* (1995) that – like much of this article – works the seam between past and present, popular and unpopular, art and trash. He was also a fan of Bob Dylan, crossing the borders between academic and fan through journalism (2006) and theorizing ‘late style’ and ‘modernist’ Bob Dylan for his book *We have never been postmodern* (2011).

When we noticed the scale and scope of the ‘unboxing’ videos, the author of this article and her Dylan fan husband recorded their own video (Redhead and Brabazon 2015b). I was the off-camera voice and film maker, who intervened with both feminist commentary about the banality and excesses of the collection. This final example of textualised fandom demonstrates both the authentic inauthenticity and inauthentic authenticity that tracks digitised, capitalist music. It may be a meta-commentary, but like Baudrillard’s cascading simulacrum, this video became one more real - and imagined - Dylan fan expressing love, expertise and purchasing power.

Steve Redhead died on March 8, 2018. He died a Professor of Cultural Studies at Flinders University, and a Bob Dylan fan. Yet the YouTube video of his unboxing of *The Cutting Edge* has outlived his analogue body and analogue fandom. Such authentic inauthenticity – such zombie fandom – demonstrates that digitization has transformed fan studies and the way in which it is studied. Scholars now have many more sources of affect, commitment, love and devotion to popular culture. New strategies are required through unobtrusive research methods to study this un/popular fandom and un/popular culture.

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