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## **“It’s a man’s man’s man’s world”: Music groupies and the othering of women in the world of rock**

### **Introduction**

The figure of the groupie looms large in the discourses and social imaginary surrounding rock music; playing an integral role in the mythology of ‘sex, drugs and rock n’ roll’. Groupies can be found across a range of culture, leisure and sports activities (Forsyth and Thompson, 2007; Gauthier and Forsyth, 2000; Gmelch and San Antonio, 1998), but it is with rock music that they are most closely associated. The phenomenon of the groupie gained recognition and took shape as a social identity within the counter-culture of 1960s’ rock music, and continues to hold significant cultural currency and power. For example, films such as “Almost Famous” (2000) and “The Banger Sisters” (2002) employ and as such, reinforce the media representation of the groupie, and Hill (2013) shows how women feel the need to negotiate that same representation when expressing their fandom of metal music. There is no agreed definition as to who or what a groupie is, but a dominant representation exists in popular media/culture and academic literature of a more extreme type of female fan who seeks intimate emotional and/or sexual relations with musicians (e.g. Cline,

1992; des Barres, 1987; Fonarow, 2006; Forrest, 2010). The consolidation of the groupie identity can be found in a cover article in Rolling Stone magazine in 1969 entitled “Groupies and Other Girls”, by John Burks, Jerry Hopkins, and Paul Nelson. However, as Rhodes (2005) explains, this wasn’t the first mention or use of the term ‘groupie’. As the groupie subculture emerged, several articles about women who could be categorized as groupies were published, such as Tom Wolfe’s (1965) “The Girl of the Year” essay on Baby Jane Holzer. But in the wake of the Rolling Stone article, “alternate visions of what a groupie was (or could be) were discarded in favor of that offered by Rolling Stone and its highly sexualized and misogynistic approach to the groupie and rock culture” (Rhodes, 2005: 137). As Rhodes (2005) then carefully evidences, the Rolling Stone article, which it is important to note is written entirely by males, carried such power that any further negotiation of the groupie identity ceased. Consequently, it has provided what has been for a long time, the definitive statement of what groupies are. Warwick (2007: 170) summarizes this view of the groupie as “a kind of female fan assumed to be more interested in sex with rock stars than in their music. Groupies are understood to be ‘easy’ [i.e. sexually promiscuous], with low self-esteem, and too stupid about music to be proper fans, but also – paradoxically – predatory and exploitative of the hapless musicians whose artistry they cruelly ignore in their lust for celebrity sex”, which

she argues is an unmistakably derisive and pejorative description focusing almost entirely on the sexual motivations of groupies. One of the greatest concerns, is that the label 'groupie' is almost exclusively applied to females and has become a term used to describe all female fans, wives and girlfriends, and even those females who work in rock music (Davies 2001). This labelling reduces the experiences of all women in rock to a singular one driven by sex, and effectively excludes them from productive participation. It is to this crucial issue that the paper turns, as it examines how the labelling of certain people as 'groupies' works as an othering practice that serves to support and maintain the gendered norms of rock and thus exclude women from creative production.

Beyond a surface level recognition, we know little about groupies other than that they are reduced to some kind of caricature used in a derogatory manner both by the popular media (Davies, 2001) and fans (Hill, 2013), and are "treated like a punch line to a never ending joke that only the boys are in on" (Forrest 2010: 135). However, as we prise beneath the surface we begin to see that the groupie identity sits at the intersection between the social identities of gender and marketplace role. Gender has functioned as a primary site for the analysis and interpretation of diversity in the creative industries (e.g. Dean, 2008; Nixon and Crewe, 2004; Proctor-Thomson, 2013; Sang, Dainty and Ison, 2014). This

is in large part because creativity, creative work and creative identities are constructed in such a way that women are marginalized or even excluded. In the music industry women are underrepresented at all levels and in all roles (Leonard, 2015); discounted in the music press and media (Davies, 2001), and even where they have been acknowledged, their participation is represented in gendered and often highly objectified ways (Hatton and Trautner, 2011). While, as Schippers (2000) notes, rock music is a setting in which gender norms have sometimes been challenged, particularly those related to appearance such as hair length and the use of make-up, this genre of music has long been synonymous with hegemonic masculinity (e.g. Hill 2014), heteronormativity (e.g. Frith and McRobbie 1978) and homosociality (e.g. Davies 2001) which act as pillars upholding the patriarchy of rock. In the immortal words of James Brown and (his lesser known female co-writer and one-time girlfriend) Betty Jean Newsom, "it's a man's, man's, man's world".

In working to exclude women from creative production, the 'groupie' identity draws not only on gender identity, but also on the dichotomy between work and non-work. The key, relevant social identity is what is called here 'marketplace role', which categorizes people according to the producer/consumer dualism. In the creative industries marketplace roles manifest in such dualisms as

artist/audience, and musician/fan (e.g. Beauregard 2012). Like any other social identity, these categories imply subjectivities which define positions in relationships between socio-political actors, and carry with them various assumptions and statuses that serve to structure and shape experience and engagement with the creative (e.g. Bradshaw 2010; Bradshaw, McDonagh, Marshall, and Bradshaw 2005). An important assumption is that because a market requires both production and consumption in order to work, producers and consumers are co-dependent and therefore hold equal status. This assumption is underpinned by notions of consumer sovereignty (Rothenberg 1962), consumer subjectivity (Firat and Dholakia 2016) and the logic of co-creation (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Venkatesh and Meamber 2006). However, not only have producers and consumers largely been approached in academia as separate, independent, and somewhat unrelated entities, consumers have been historically viewed, particularly in the cultural and creative sectors, as secondary, subordinate figures (e.g. Beauregard 2012; Huyssen 1986). As noted in the Call for Papers for this Special Issue, much remains to be understood about how gender intersects with other identities in constructing experiences of creativity and creative work. There has been little exploration of how gender and marketplace roles intersect to frame who, and what type of work is considered to be 'creative' or productive and what the practices of

inclusion and exclusion are. This paper puts forth the argument that groupies are othered in both categories – as women and as consumers, and that in fact it is the intertwining of the two identities that has underpinned and reinforced the groupie identity, and thus helped construct and maintain the patriarchy of rock music.

Following a deeper examination of the social identities of gender and marketplace roles in the context of rock music, this article draws on a rhetorical analysis of five published biographical accounts of groupies and rock wives in order to examine how the labelling of certain people as ‘groupies’ works as an othering practice that maintains the gendered norms of rock. Examining the cultural phenomenon of the groupie retrospectively allows the processes behind the construction and maintenance of the identity and its consequences to be explored. Three important discursive processes emerge. First, popular and music media played a significant role in stereotyping groupies right from the emergence of the term. Second, the notions of ‘credibility’ and ‘authenticity’, which are central to serious music journalism, are constructed in such a way as to stigmatize and therefore exclude, discredit and invalidate the role of women in rock, primarily by reframing ‘groupies’ as inauthentic consumers rather than proper fans. Third, the intertwining of femininity with fandom, as occurs in in the

construction of the 'groupie', serves to magnify cultural assumptions about women as sex objects and as passive consumers of mass culture and thus reinforces the groupie identity and their exclusion from creative work in the world of rock.

This paper contributes in important ways to a growing body of literature that considers how intersectional social identities are constructed and articulated in rock music (Elafros, 2010) and the creative industries. It provides a historically and culturally embedded account of how the labelling of women as 'groupies' works as an othering practice to exclude women from creative work. It resonates with and builds upon other accounts in both the music and creative industries (e.g. on processes of forgetting identified by Strong (2011)), that have written women out of the history of popular culture. It expands our understanding of the role of gender in diversifying the creative by locating the groupie identity as the nexus of gender and marketplace role. Through the processes identified, and contrary to the transgressive and liberatory perspective taken by many of the original groupies, the groupie identity effectively reproduces and reinforces gendered hierarchies within the creative industries. Finally, in elucidating both the gender and marketplace politics at play in the 'groupie' label and the discursive processes involved in othering



women, space is opened up through which alternative possibilities for understanding and enacting the role of women in rock can be imagined.

### **Gender and Rock Music**

The idea that notions of creativity and creative work are gendered is one that is well established in the literature (see for example, Dean, 2008; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Huyssen, 1986; Leonard, 2015; Sang, Dainty and Ison, 2014). Sustained academic interest in gender and diversity in the creative industries is relatively recent, but the complex and thorny relationship between gender and the creative has long underscored important debates surrounding culture and art. For example, Huyssen (1986) elucidates and then interrogates the modernist notion of mass culture as woman, and real, authentic culture as man. He ultimately argues that while this particular claim has lost its persuasive power as a result of a combination of feminist activism increasing the presence of women in art, and the postmodern project of the blurring of boundaries between high art and mass culture; gendering of the creative is still pervasive: “certain forms of mass culture, with their obsession with gendered violence are more of a threat to women than to men. After all, it has always been men rather than women who have had real control over the production of mass culture” (Huyssen 1986: 62). This is echoed in more recent research which shows how

women remain marginalized and excluded from work and identities in such diverse sectors of the creative industries as film and television (e.g. Bielby and Bielby, 1996; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012), acting and performance (e.g. Dean, 2008; Dean and Jones, 2003), and music (e.g. Davies, 2001; Leonard, 2015; Maus 2011). Even the creative and cultural products that are produced and/or consumed by females are valued less, and placed further down the cultural hierarchy than those of their male counterparts, such as in the case of the 'inferior' romance novels preferred by Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (Huysen, 1986); the immensely successful *Twilight* series (Strong, 2009); and 'girl groups', 'boy bands' and other types of pop music (Railton, 2001). Strong (2009: p.1) argues that the construction and naturalization of females as occupants of the lower levels of the cultural hierarchy, is a form of "symbolic violence that helps reproduce power relations between men and women". The key issue here is the struggle over the control of cultural production, or who has the power to define what creative work is, who gets to do it, and under what conditions.

The rock industry has long been acknowledged, and criticized for being gendered male in many facets and norms. First, the style and form of rock music is commonly understood to be both masculine and an expression of male

sexuality (Frith and McRobbie 1978). For example, in rock performances, musicians are aggressive, dominating, boastful and in control; the music is loud and rhythmically insistent; and the lyrics are assertive and arrogant. August (2009) elaborates that much, although not all, of the lyrical content of the songs written by the rock band, the Rolling Stones, is misogynistic and promotes the subordination and objectification of women. “Musically, such rock takes off from the sexual frankness of rhythm and blues but adds a cruder male physicality (hardness, control, virtuosity)” (Frith and McRobbie, 1978: 374). Second, in terms of the nature and means of production, the rock music business is run predominantly by males. Musicians, writers, technicians, engineers, producers, and road crew are largely male (Frith and McRobbie, 1978). Women remain underrepresented (Leonard, 2015) with roles limited to those that fit with male notions of female ability e.g. singers and publicity agents. Cohen (1997) illustrates how the rock scene is actively produced as male through various institutions and social practices. For example, social interaction inside rock music venues is masculine - referring to each other by nicknames; using technical and in-house jargon; and sharing the jokes, myths, and hype that surround the bands on the scene. Third, mainstream rock music press is gendered male in associations, assumptions, and representations of the music and the musicians (Elafros 2010). The contributions of female musicians are

often excluded (Davies, 2001) or represented through the male gaze, as little more than a body. Davies (2001: 316) argues that the British music press uses its own very particular idiom, which is very similar to that found in more explicitly 'laddish' magazines such as *Loaded*: "this distinctive idiom is internalized by aspiring music journalists, who realise that they must write in the correct style to be successful. Such compliance and conservatism mean that the sexism of the music press is self-perpetuating". Finally, even practices of fandom in rock music are gendered male, particularly those that occur publically and are characterized by communal practices of engagement (O'Reilly, Larsen and Kubacki, 2013). Arguing for a new, more gender-inclusive framework for studying fans of hard rock and heavy metal as a group, Hill (2014: 174) explains that the "underlying gendered epistemology of fandom has resulted in a dismissal of women fans or, at best, a systematic reduction of their experiences as fans (such as private engagements with the music, the representation of women fans as groupies, and fannish activities such as reading magazines and participating in online fora)".

This patriarchy of rock music appears to be held in place by three distinct but interrelated forces and their attendant institutions and practices: hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and homosociality. Hegemonic masculinity, in its

original and most prevalent formulation refers to “the pattern of practice [...] that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832). As introduced by Connell (1995) hegemonic masculinity embodies the most honoured, culturally valued, and therefore ideal way of being a man. While only a minority of men might enact hegemonic masculinity, it is normative and at its most powerful when underpinned by complicit masculinities (embodied by men who do not conform to all characteristics of hegemonic masculinity but because they do not resist it still benefit from the patriarchy (Connell, 1995)) and compliance amongst heterosexual women. In effect, it ideologically legitimates the subordination of women and non-hegemonic masculinities, to men. Much of the existing literature on gender and rock music speaks to hegemonic masculinity, even if it does not explicitly use the term. Whiteley (1997) argues that whilst “the cultural ideas of masculinity as expressed in popular music do not necessarily conform to the actual personalities of the majority of men, it would appear that role models are significant, not least in providing a cultural expression of hegemonic masculinity” (p. xxi). These role models include ‘cock rock’ idols as Mick Jagger, Jimi Hendrix, Phil Lynott (Frith and McRobbie 1978: 374) whose image is “the rampant destructive male traveler, smashing hotels and groupies alike”. These

are also the men who occupy most powerful position in rock music; that of the lead musician.

Hegemonic masculinity underscores heteronormativity which acts as a second pillar upholding rock patriarchy. As explained by Chamber's (2003: 26) heteronormativity means "quite simply, that heterosexuality is the norm— in culture, in society, in politics". As a norm, heteronormativity acts as a measure against which every person is judged and evaluated. Sexuality, specifically heterosexuality, has been a central theme in rock music and related scholarship. The premise upon which Frith and McRobbie's (1978: 373) seminal article 'Rock and Sexuality' is based is that "the most important ideological work done by rock is the construction of sexuality". They distinguish two kinds of masculine images of sexuality in rock music: 'cock rock' which presents an image of macho masculine sexuality and is for consumption by men, and 'teenybop' which presents a romantic masculine sexuality, and is consumed mostly by young women. It is interesting to note the resonance here with Huysen's (1986) distinction between authentic culture as male and mass/pop culture as woman, as 'cock rock' is held in higher regard as a more authentic form of music than 'teenybop'. While Frith and MccRobbie's (1978) article is now several decades old, more recent research suggests that with the

exception of a few instances such as in punk (Berkers 2012) and local music scenes (Groce and Cooper 1990), heteronormativity remains the default. Thus when women do engage, whether as producers or consumers, they must still negotiate a heteronormative position “that ensures that the high-status role of musician is reserved for men and that provides those men with women to cater for their heterosexual wants” (Hill 2013: 1).

The third pillar upholding rock patriarchy, is homosociality which describes the social, non-sexual, bonds that exist between persons of the same sex. Often conceptualized as a social dynamic that supports hegemonic masculinity, it is frequently used to explain how men maintain and defend patriarchy through their friendships and collaborations with one another (Hammeren and Johansson 2014). As described earlier, the social practices of the rock scene are masculine (Cohen, 1997). Davies (2001) claims that all aspects of rock and roll are homosocial, and that women are systematically excluded by the music press from any serious discussions either as musicians or fans. She offers a detailed analysis of the discourses and tactics used by the music press to exclude women, which range from simply ignoring them completely, to foregrounding their femininity and sexuality over and above their musical

capabilities, and constructing musical credibility as a male trait that women will not be able to live up to.

As this discussion of patriarchy in rock music suggests, there is little or no place for women in rock music – either in positions of power, in the constructions of sexualities, or through friendships and collaborations. Despite numerous examples of female involvement in the production of rock music, the only real role for women that is presented is that of the consumer/fan. Thus, as noted in the Introduction, women are marginalised and excluded from the production of rock music. In making sense of how women are kept in their gendered role, Leonard (2015: 181) identifies a significant body of literature that “explores the way in which gender and sexuality are manifested, performed, inscribed and played out within music texts, genres, instrumentation, cultures, locations, environments, practices and institutions”. However, much of this literature focuses only on the social role of gender. With the exception of a few important studies, such as Elafros’ (2010) examination of how the feminist magazine *Rockrgirl* challenged tropes of mainstream rock criticism regarding both gender and race and Whiteley’s (2005) work on the impact of age and youthfulness upon the careers of popular musicians, there is still much to be learnt about how gender intersects with other social identities in constructing and shaping



musical experience. Given that the key underlying issue in diversifying the creative is the struggle over the control of cultural production and the patriarchal exclusion of women from creative work, then understanding how gender and marketplace roles intersect to frame those who are excluded seems of critical importance.

### **Marketplace Roles and Rock Music**

Because all societies produce some form of goods and services that are exchanged and consumed, “production and consumption are often seen as fundamentals of social life” (Featherstone 2001: 2669). As such, production and consumption form the dualism upon which the social identity, called here ‘marketplace role’, is based. Because both production and consumption are required in order for exchange to work, the assumption is that both roles hold equal status. However, the dynamics of this dualism are much more complex. On one hand, in recent decades there has been an increasing emphasis in academic, political, market, and everyday discourses on the importance of the consumer (Gabriel and Lang, 2006), to the extent that contemporary society has been called (and critiqued as being) a ‘consumer society’ (Kellner 1983) driven by a ‘consumer ethic’ (Bauman 1988). For example, the growth of neoliberal capitalism and its attendant processes of commodification and

marketization, which mean that anything that has use-value in everyday life is transformed into a marketable commodity with exchange value, has prescribed a shift in human subjectivity to that of the consumer (Firat and Dholakia 2016). To fulfill the desires which fuel consumer demand and, in turn, the economic growth sought by advanced capitalism, people have been encouraged to assume the role of independent, free-willed, choice-makers who select from among a variety of market offerings, or even help co-create their own (Vargo and Lusch 2004), as sovereign consumers (Gabriel and Lang 2006; Rothenberg 1962).

In contrast, but contemporaneous to this position, consumers have also been viewed as secondary figures who are subordinate to producers (e.g. Huysen 1986; Poster 2004); a view which endures particularly in the cultural and creative sectors (Beauregard 2012). One way in which this hierarchy is held in place is through gender norms. Based on the capitalistic ideology of the sexual division of labor, shopping and consumption have long been assigned to the feminine domain, creating a dichotomy that positions women as consumers and men as producers (Slater 1997, Bocoock 1993), thus subordinating feminine consumption to masculine production. Given the ubiquity of consumer subjectivity in contemporary society, we might expect to see the breaking down,

or at least blurring, of the consumer-as-woman/producer-as-man dichotomy. However, Sandlin and Maudlin's (2012: 189) critical analysis of popular culture representations clearly shows that women are still constructed as consumers, and that "racist, classist and sexist perspectives [...] continue to characterize contemporary popular discourse". The lower status of the consumer is also apparent in critiques of the notions of consumer subjectivity and consumer society, much of which is particularly relevant in relation to creative and artistic endeavors. For example, both Adorno (1991) and Attali (1977/1985) argue that musical marketplace offerings are commodities, which, because they are controlled, ordered and shaped by capitalism, exert power and structure our consumption patterns in ways that transform us into slaves to capital. Under these conditions, despite the rhetoric of sovereignty and individual autonomous choice, the representation of the music consumer takes the form of the masses. O'Reilly, Larsen and Kubacki (2013) argue that it is only under these conditions, where 'popular' music is reproduced in a commodity-like form and is therefore 'mass culture' (Huysen 1986), that framing music engagement as 'consumption' appears to be acceptable. However, even in popular music, consumption is often reframed in other ways, such as fandom, in an effort to deemphasize exchange and commodity value, and instead highlight the

aesthetic and cultural value of the music. 'Consumer' is thus seen as a lower status identity, than 'fan', 'collector', 'producer' or 'musician'.

The 'fan' is an interesting, and somewhat problematic category of marketplace role identity, primarily because it challenges the producer/consumer dualism. Beauregard (2012: 131) notes that fans are at once, both producers and consumers: "on the one hand, fans are often described as the most salient example of the pathologies of the cultural industries, as they are exacerbating the consumerist experience of culture – and popular culture in particular. On the other hand, fans are also furthering the life of cultural materials beyond the commercial sphere, through different craft practices". A fan can be understood simply as someone who has developed a special type of relation with the object of their admiration (e.g. music artist(s), genre), which is characterized by a focused, highly involved interest and strong emotional reactions (O'Reilly et. al., 2013, Hill 2014). Duffett (2013: 18) elaborates further, describing a fan as "a person with a relatively deep, positive emotional conviction about someone or something famous, usually expressed through a recognition of style or creativity. He/she is also a person driven to explore and participate in fannish practices. Fans find their identities wrapped up with the pleasure connected to popular culture. They inhabit social roles marked out as fandom". Thus, a 'fan'

is a social identity, and a discursive construct, which is employed to “position people, rather than [being a] real social position” (Williams, 2001: 225).

Inherent in this is a view taken in fan studies (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 2007), that fans and fandom are embedded within the existing economic, social and cultural status quo, and therefore fan cultures replicate broader social and cultural hierarchies. There are hierarchies of fans, at the bottom of which sit the most excluded, improper or deviant fan. One such example is Thorne’s (2011) dysfunctional fan, who is so involved with the subject of interest that they perform antisocial activities, distance themselves from family and friends, and might enact behaviors such as violence, hysteria and sometimes even stalking. Very often these are the same terms used to describe female fandom (e.g. Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs 1992) and they are also often associated with ‘groupies’. A key difference between a groupie and a fan, is that the groupie has access to the musician when not on stage (Forrest, 2010). As Fonarow (2006: 211) observes “the groupie, unlike other audience members, successfully crosses the boundary between audience and performer and concretely enacts the desire on the part of the audience for obliterating the membrane between stage and life”. Thus, where fans are problematic in that they challenge the producer/consumer dualism, groupies obscure and have the potential to

obliterate the boundaries between producers and consumers. As a threat to the producer/consumer dualism and patriarchy it upholds, the groupie identity has been subjected to the process of othering.

Othering is the process by which a group of people are cast into the role of the 'other' and the subsequent establishment of one's own identity through opposition to the other (Gabriel 2008). The idea of 'otherness' is central to sociological, post-colonial, and feminist (amongst other) analyses of how social identities are constructed by those who have greater political power. It draws on the assumption that 'subordinate' groups are offered, and at the same time relegated to, subject positions as others, which are frequently stereotypical and dehumanizing (Riggins 1997). Consequently, othering denies the other the characteristics that define the same, which in the case of the groupie, includes access to, and inclusion in creative production. Thus, Jensen (2011: 65) defines othering as the "discursive processes by which powerful groups, who may or may not make up a numerical majority, define subordinate groups into existence in a reductionist way which ascribe problematic and/or inferior characteristics to these subordinate groups. Such discursive processes affirm the legitimacy and superiority of the powerful and condition identity formation among the subordinate". Othering processes include erecting boundaries,

establishing and policing social institutions, and constructing informal practices that keep the other in place. For example, Spivak (1985) outlines three dimensions of othering evident in the archival material of British colonial power in India: (1) making the subordinate aware of who holds the power; (2) constructing the other as pathological and morally inferior; and (3) constructing resources such as knowledge and technology as being the property only of those in power. Similar processes can be observed in many contemporary situations. Othering is at its most potent when those who are othered are complicit in their own subordination. For example, Patterson, O'Malley and Story (2009) argue that gendered identities only work if they recruit subjects, and that this only happens if subjects recognize themselves, and invest in the representation.

### **Methodology**

Taking the social identities of gender and marketplace role as a starting point, this paper examines how the labelling of certain people as 'groupies' works as an othering practice to maintain the gendered norms of rock by excluding women from creative production. Social identities are often perpetuated, and even resisted, negotiated, and expanded (Hall 2000) through popular culture texts (Sandlin and Maudlin 2012). Thus, in order to understand how the

'groupie' identity works to exclude those who invest in it from the very thing they want to be part of, this study employs a rhetorical analysis of popular culture texts (Leach 2000, Sellnow 2010), specifically biographies, in order to identify the particular discursive processes of othering that are used. Haynes (2006) argues that the use of biographical accounts and methods is growing in social science because researchers wish to explore different dimensions of the lived reality of everyday life. They convey rich accounts of lived experience, and as popular culture texts, simultaneously "argue rhetorically by confirming or disconfirming an ideology of a cultural group" (Sellnow 2010: 4). Biographies are particularly useful in examining how the social identity of the groupie is perpetuated and contested, because while they purport to communicate the voices of those who identify as groupies, at one and the same time, they are also printed collections of stories, packaged for marketing to prospective customers, and are therefore subject to the same forces that shape the rock music industry. A rhetorical analysis enables an examination of these biographical texts as sites of struggle that offer preferred (reinforcing) and/or oppositional (challenging) readings (Sellnow 2010) of the groupie identity as produced by rock patriarchy.



The five biographical texts upon which this study is based, have been purposefully selected from amongst the most popular books on groupies, according to Amazon.com, to offer a range of different voices, identities and places. The texts in chronological order of publication are:

- Fabien, J and Byrne, J (1969/2005) *Groupie*. London: Omnibus Press. A “fictionalized first person anecdote of life and times in the world of late-Sixties London” (p.iii) largely considered to be a biographical account of Jenny Fabien’s experiences.
- Balfour, V (1986) *Rock Wives: The Hard Lives and Good Times of the Wives, Girlfriends and Groupies of Rock and Roll*. New York: Beech Tree Books. Edited interviews with seventeen women and one man about their relationships with rock stars.
- des Barres, P (1987/2005) *I’m With the Band: Confessions of a Groupie*. London: Helter Skelter. An autobiographical memoir by perhaps the most well-known ‘super-groupie’ from the late 1960s Los Angeles.
- des Barres, P (2007) *Let’s Spend the Night Together: Backstage Secrets of Rock Muses and Supergroupies*. Edited interviews with twenty-three women and one man who identify, or have been identified as groupies from the 1960s to the early 2000s

- Welch, M (2007) *Hollywood Diaries*. Xlibris Corporation. Excerpts from the diaries of a lesser known groupie in 1970s Los Angeles.

In this analysis, each text has been examined specifically with regards to how groupies are portrayed; how these portrayals compare to the groupie identity; what is being conveyed as appropriate/inappropriate and desirable/undesirable roles and rules for women in rock; and what specific practices constitute the process of othering groupies. The first stage of the analysis involved the manual coding of the five texts. Coding proceeded by identifying key identities, roles, and related subject positions represented in the texts, as well as defining experiences in the groupies narratives. During the second stage of analysis, the coded data were compared across the texts in order to identify similarities and differences. This was followed by an iterative process of theoretically categorizing and revisiting coded data, characterized by an interplay of deductive and inductive reasoning, which was undertaken in order to illuminate the processes of othering. Three key discursive processes have been identified, and the discussion of the results is organized around these: (1) stereotyping as female; (2) stigmatizing as inauthentic consumers; and (3) reinforcing and entrenching stereotypes.

### **Stereotyping groupies as female**

The Rolling Stone article entitled “Groupies and Other Girls”, by John Burks, Jerry Hopkins, and Paul Nelson, which lies at the root of the identity defines a groupie as a ‘chick that hangs out with bands’, and opened with the following characterization:

“She got her man. He was the cat they were *all* after and *she* got him! In the groupies place in the culture of rock and roll that makes her *something*. She *was* already something: She had already balled 17 (or 36 or 117) musicians - four (or 12 or 25) of them real stars, names *everybody* in the U.S. and England would know - but now her status was elevated again. She had scored with this cat the first night he was in town. She *might* get him for a whole weekend. He *seemed* to dig her, you know; you can’t always tell, but he did seem to. *Wow!*” (Burks, Hopkins and Nelson 1969, italics in original).

This is then followed by several definitions of a groupie by the women featured in the article, such as a ‘non-profit call girl’, who is ‘a friend and a housekeeper and pretty much whatever the musician needs’. Groupies were represented in the article as more or less interchangeable with any other mundane form of relaxation and are depicted as objects of pity and derision. But at the same time, they are accused of objectifying, if not commodifying rock musicians by

aggressively seeking and having sex with them – which as Coates (2003) notes, was a clear reversal of the gender norms of that time. The Rolling Stone article “leaves the impression that groupies are pathetic creatures to be pitied, but at the same time a crucial part of rock culture, without which male musicians could not relieve tension or receive their deserved amount of adulation” (Coates 2003: 86).

Various other pieces of popular media were published around this time, which reinforced the Rolling Stone magazines narrow representation of groupies. For example, Alan Lorber produced an LP in 1969 entitled ‘The Groupies’ on which a number of women spoke of their exploits. It presented a “one-dimensional view of groupies as merely sexual beings, or beings that spoke about sex, whose only goal in life was to sleep with as many musicians as possible” (Forrest, 2010: 137). Reducing the relationship between female fans and male musicians to a singular representation focused on sex is at odds with the passion for music that is expressed in many groupies’ own accounts (e.g. des Barres 2007), but it becomes even more problematic when we consider that groupies are often portrayed as young girls who are under the age of consent. This is obviously an important and emotive moral issue, which should not, and has not been ignored as we have increasingly seen in reflections on the legacy

of such cultural rock icons as David Bowie (e.g. Chapin 2016). But the emotive power of this issue should not be allowed to further entrench the dominant and limited representation of groupies in the media. There were and may still be 'baby groupies', such as the well documented case of Lori Maddox (e.g. Chapin 2016, des Barres 2007), but many groupies were and are consenting adults who have varied and rich experiences of the world of rock music.

What is seen upon analyzing the biographies is that this identity does not fit with all of the stories told by groupies, and therefore it fails to function either as a usefully comprehensive definition or as a meaningful identity for those who are connected with it. There are a number of ways in which this is evident. Firstly, there is a lack of clarity as to who exactly can be considered a groupie. There is much discussion in the texts around issues such as what a groupie is; what the difference between a groupie and a wife/girlfriend is; and what a groupie is not. There are many different kinds of groupies with different levels of status, as illustrated by the protagonist "Katie" in Fabian and Byrne (1969/2005: 2):

"I could feel the stage-door groupies' envy, and I found I liked to be envied. I was different to them, because I was with the group and they weren't and they wanted to be"

Katie later muses that while their experiences might be quite different, they are connected by the identity of 'groupie':

"I wondered whether I was like them, I mean, we were all groupies together, me in my different way, and they in theirs. Did they care that it was only for tonight, with a vague future maybe, because they would probably be replaced in twenty-four hours, if not sooner. It wouldn't matter that much, because for these chicks, once was a kind of forever" (Fabian and Byrne 1969/2005: 211).

Groupies are also not the same as wives/girlfriends and sometimes the difference is palpable and antagonistic, as observed by Morgana Welch (2007: 68)

"Backstage, Liz Derringer was on a chair doing an impression of her husband Rick Derringer. I thought she was pretty obnoxious as I watched her play air guitar and sing awfully. It was pretty weird, but who am I to say – maybe it is the rift between groupies and wives. Sometimes it is a claw-screeching feeling when the two sides of the camp are in proximity".

But, on the other hand, some groupies became wives and have little issue in reconciling these seemingly opposing aspects in their sense of self. For example, prior to marrying Frank Zappa, Gail Zappa was "by her own admission, an experienced groupie" (Balfour 1986: 127). She simply sees that

“being a groupie is a state of mind” (des Barres 2007: 37), providing weight to the argument that it is a social identity, rather than a real social position (Williams 2001).

As an ill-defined social identity, many groupies find themselves having to negotiate around a portrayal that is unfit for purpose. In des Barres (1987/2005: 184) first autobiography, she often appears ill-at-ease with the label and seeks a reaffirming justification for being identified in this way:

“I dig musicians. There are girls who dig sailors, you could call them ‘sailories’, chicks who dig doctors, ‘doctories’. So go ahead, call me a groupie”.

But, in her later book (2007), she purposefully seeks to “redeem and uplift the horribly misunderstood word groupie” (des Barres 1987/2005: 331) and therefore asks many of the groupies whom she interviews, how they feel about the ‘G word’. Bebe Buell offers an insightful reflection:

“As far as the groupie tag, I don’t believe the word means now what it did in the ‘60’s and ‘70’s. Much like other misused terms, such as punk and grunge, the term groupie is used to describe almost anyone associated with musicians today. Because of that, I have disassociated myself with the label. The innocence that once surrounded the word has been

replaced by an almost 'anything goes' mentality. I'm sure it's an insult to girls like Pamela des Barres, Cynthia Plaster Caster and the GTO's – who coined it – to be lumped in the same category as women who sleep with anyone associated with a band or crew. That is not what a groupie is, in the old-fashioned sense .... The music was, and is, the most important thing to a true groupie of days gone past. The modern sense of the term, I find degrading and false. It gets my back up" (des Barres 2007: 249-250)

Secondly, at the same time as being too broad to specify exactly who and what a groupie is, the groupie identity outright excludes whole categories of people on the bases of gender and heteronormativity. Davies (2001: 315) argues disparagingly, men are effectively written out of the descriptions of groupies: "a groupie can only be a woman. A man is never called a groupie, even if he admits to liking a female artist because he finds her attractive". There are however, documented cases of male groupies, although they do remain elusive in the detail: "Hyatt House and the denizen rock-and-roll stars that dwell within has now turned into a popular pastime or sport for would-be male and female groupies. Yes, male groupies!" (Welch 2007: 33). des Barres (2007: 281)



interviews Pleather, who is conscious of his unique and largely unacknowledged presence in the realm of the public perception of a groupie:

“I saw an old TV show where Dick Cavett was interviewing Janis Joplin, and he asked if she had male groupies. She said, ‘Not nearly enough’, and I felt strangely validated”.

What is particularly interesting is the feminized and feminine account he gives of his heterosexual liaison’s:

“She [Carla Bozulich] was a tortured genius, totally screwed up, just the way I like ‘em. She needed lots of help, and I like helping. [...] I just wanted to facilitate, so she didn’t have to deal with the world” (des Barres 2007: 289)

“I’ve subconsciously set up my entire life to take the traditionally feminine role in relationships. When I say feminine, I mean the person who is seen as weaker to the outside world, but is really the one making things happen. Women make the world go ‘round, but men take the credit” (des Barres 2007: 292)

In Pleather’s experience, the woman takes on masculine traits and he adopts the feminine role. Thus, even where an exception to the rule of groupie-as-female are provided, the potential to challenge to the groupie identity and the

patriarchy it supports is diminished by framing his experiences in heteronormative and heterosexual terms.

The key point to recognize in all of this is the conflation of the terms 'groupie' and 'female' and the consequent othering of women from the world of rock music: "because of the [Rolling Stone] articles language and its construction of groupie sexuality, labelling a woman or girl a groupie became a way to reduce her options, and perhaps, even her power" (Rhodes, 2005: 159). Even more problematic was the notion that all female fans, and even the wives and girlfriends of male rock musicians, are defined as groupies in the music press. Patricia Kennealy, a writer and editor for Jazz and Pop in 1967, and a girlfriend of Jim Morrison says:

"the women writers a lot of times got tarred with the groupie brush when they would go and talk to people. The musicians were used to being pursued on the road, with groupies throwing themselves at them from all directions. So they figured you were a total s\*\*t" (Balfour 1986: p.143)

This reduces any kind of relationship between females and male musicians to one based on heteronormative gender roles and focused on sexuality.

### **Stigmatizing as inauthentic consumers**

Closing down the representation of groupies and gendering it as female, sets the scene for the stigmatization and exclusion of groupies from any meaningful discussion of their role in rock. Central to this are the notions of 'credibility' and 'authenticity', which Davies (2001) argues are important in serious discussions in music journalism, but which are constructed in such ways that they are almost completely unattainable for women, both as musicians and as fans. The specific mechanism at work here is the reframing of groupies as 'inauthentic' fans (i.e. consumers) rather than 'proper' fans. Groupies have been characterized as grown up, hyper-sexualized, teenyboppers (Coates 2007). The term 'teenybopper' has been naturalized to refer to types of music and fans that are in direct opposition to a more authentic rock and roll, and gendered female (e.g. Frith and McRobbie 1978). Teenyboppers are seen as young, passive, female consumers who follow fashion and who lack any real taste for 'serious' or 'intelligent' music, preferring popular and mainstream music, which is defined precisely as music associated with girls and women (Huysen, 1986; Thornton, 1995). Thus, the linking of groupies to teenyboppers, discursively constructs them simultaneously as female, 'duped consumers' of mass culture, and functions to both discredit and invalidate their experiences as music fans.

A closer reading of groupies' own stories unmasks the centrality of the music in their experiences, thus problematizing the notion that groupies are "too stupid about music to be proper fans" (Warwick, 2007: 170). It is apparent in the biographies that in fact many groupies had a passionate interest in music, very often accompanied by sophisticated and discerning musical tastes. As members of the girl-group, the GTO's, and part of Frank Zappa's inner circle, Mercy Fontenot and Pamela des Barres were early fans (and friends) of the now renowned Gram Parsons. Good musical taste was often a way by which groupies identified and connected with each other:

"I spotted a reel-to-reel tape recorder gleaming underneath one of the tacky tables from across the dance floor. Someone as fanatical as myself had carted the massive thing into the Galaxy just to capture these ecstatic, unforgettable moments for all time, and I had to find out who it was so I could congratulate them on having such immaculate taste" (des Barres 1987/2005: p. 75)

Bebe Buell speaks of how not only her musical tastes were appreciated by the musicians with whom she spent time, but also her musical knowledge.

"I remember turning up backstage at a Cheap Trick show and watching Rick Nielsen's face light up. It's a beautiful thing. They look at you and go, "Oh my God, you're here! We're gonna play so fucking great tonight!"

They want to know that their girls are there. And we're going to tell them the truth when they get off stage: "You suck" or "You were brilliant" or "The bass player's overplaying" or "It was mixed horribly". We know our shit! There was only a handful of It Girls who got treated like rock stars and maintained that status" (des Barres 2007 p.255)

Many of the original super-groupies were actually artists themselves or had artistic talents that become a central part of their experience as a groupie. Cynthia Rennie, who is better known as Cynthia Plaster Caster developed a unique form of art; she is infamous for making plaster casts of rock stars erect penises. She has explained in des Barres (2007) that at the same time as she was looking for a way to get closer to the rock stars whose music she loved, her art teacher gave the class a homework assignment to make a plaster cast of a solid object. She had a flash of artistic inspiration that she could do something creative, that was also fun and absurd and which gave her a special edge over all the other groupies. It took her quite some time to figure out how to actually make a cast, but once she did, she amassed an impressive collection. The important point to note here is that her work is actually considered to be a legitimate art form; she was an art student and had serious training and a recognizable professionalism in her approach. Frank Zappa brought her into his

inner circle on the basis of her innovative and groundbreaking work. And finally, her collection of art has been exhibited at an art gallery in SoHo, New York. These are all recognized institutions in the legitimation of art and the creation of its value (e.g. Rodner and Thomson, 2013).

Although their creativity and artistic abilities take many different forms including fine art, dancing, singing, hairdressing and journalism, it is apparent that many groupies were greatly inspired by the music they were hearing and passionately wanted to play and create music and art themselves. In the homosocial world of rock music, there were however few routes into the inner-circle of creativity and little opportunity for women to be anything other than fans. But through their artistic abilities, these groupies were able to negotiate their way to the inner circle. Concurrently, this immediately makes groupies a threat to the patriarchy of rock. Some groupies were not artists and were not creative, but nonetheless undertook work that was important in facilitating the production of rock music, such as managing the venue offices (e.g. Dee Dee Keel), acting as a gatekeeper for access to the musician (e.g. Gail Zappa), making clothes (e.g. Pamela des Barres) and cooking meals for them (e.g. Catherine James). Because it was domestic and administrative work which supports the patriarchy, such work remains largely unacknowledged. However, Gail Zappa has been

quite reflexive about the importance of the role she played in Frank Zappa's artistry:

“He was an artist: he did what he had to do and I did whatever I could to make it easier for him. I made a conscious effort to keep everything mundane out of his way and out of his path so he didn't have to deal with that crap.” (des Barres 2008 p.47)

“A part of Gail's job, however, is making sure that everything runs smoothly for Frank, from day to day. 'It's the boring stuff, like following up on the details, like set up an interview at a certain time or make their travel arrangements in a certain way. Mostly you just block for Frank so that all he has to do is do what he does with not too many distractions'” (Balfour 1986 p.136)

Where the music has been written out of the representation of groupies, we see instead an insistent focus on the sexual motivations of groupies, over and above any other potential reason for engaging with the object of their interest, thus reinforcing the framing of the groupie as a (duped) consumer rather than a 'proper' authentic fan. While it is undeniable that sex is an important part of groupies experiences and is a key theme throughout all of their stories, it is

trivialized and over-simplified in the groupie identity. For example, a common understanding of the motivation for groupies' sexual actions is that they are seeking glory from association with rock stars. But many groupies speak of a much more complex sexual experience which is tied up in an embodied response to the music. Thus, the music is still the central feature.

“The twang of an electric guitar and the sexy thump of the deep dark bass opened me up and wreaked sensual havoc with my teenage hormones. I wanted to be close with the men who made me feel so damn good, and nothing was going to stop me” (des Barres 1987/2005: 12)

The sexual freedom demonstrated by groupies at the emergence of the phenomenon transgresses the sexual norms of the time, in a way that was often experienced as empowering (e.g. des Barres, 1987). Michelle Overman explains:

“We were the first generation of women openly expressing our love for music; and the music, obviously, was extremely sexual. But more than that, it was magical, and the magic was actually larger than the groups that played it” (des Barres 2007 p.156)

Of course, acknowledging this would have threatened the emerging discourses of rock as a site of masculinity by imagining groupiedom as an empowered position for women in rock culture, thus these transgressions have been framed



as deviant and dysfunctional. The writing out of the more empowered and productive stories of groupiedom can be explained as an example of 'displaced abjection', whereby a 'low' social group (i.e. rock music in opposition to highbrow culture) turns its power and disdain against a group that is even lower (i.e. women, in a patriarchal society), in order to legitimate its own position and power (Coates 2003). However, the figure of the groupie cannot be written out completely as it plays an important role in the construction and myth of the rock God, as groupies "directly participated in and even instigated wild backstage parties, outrageous hotel antics, and drug use that have been the basis for the construction of the persona of the male metal rock musician as wild, sexually potent, powerful, and poignant" (Forrest 2010). Instead, the discrediting and invalidation of groupies as inauthentic consumers we see at work in the groupie identity masks the more empowering aspects of transgression regarding women in rock, and has enabled their stigmatization as the other.

### **Reinforcing and entrenching stereotypes**

If being female discredits and invalidates a groupie, then it follows that the magnification of femininity will serve to deepen and strengthen their marginalisation and exclusion. This can be understood through the lens of Connell's (1987) concept of 'emphasized femininity', where by adhering to

normative portrayals of femininity defined by the interests and desires of men under the conditions of hegemonic masculinity, women comply with their own subordination. In her work on the complex meanings surrounding the bodies of tattooed women, Braunberger (2000) explains that tattoos are a magnifier of cultural assumptions about femininity. So where “a women’s body is understood to be a sex object, then a tattooed woman’s body is a lascivious sex object; when a women’s body is nature, a tattooed woman’s body is primitive; when a woman’s body is a spectacle, a tattooed woman’s body is a show” (Braunberger, 2000: 1-2). A similar process can be argued for in the case of groupies, where even the stories that challenge the identity, emphasise groupies’ femininity and thus magnify cultural assumptions about women as sex objects and as passive consumers of mass culture. This ultimately serves to reinforce and entrench the groupie stereotype.

The analysis of groupies’ stories provides support for the argument that when femininity becomes intertwined with fandom, femininity is emphasized.

Resonating throughout many of the stories is the classical feminine archetype of the muse - the goddesses of inspiration. Pamela des Barres (2007: x) says:

“I believe [muse] describes the role of the groupie. A brilliant, creative man is often brought to the height of his genius by the muse. Throughout the ages, such women have helped revolutionize the arts”

In the Introduction to her book, des Barres (2007) very carefully locates her view of groupies within the mythology of muses by explaining that the ancient Greeks brought us nine Muses and that since then, “attention and blessings from a muse are certain to stimulate any mere mortal’s creative juices” (p.x). The groupie-as-muse can be a source of great inspiration and creativity for the musician. John Lennon (in Sheff, 1981) said of his muse Yoko Ono:

“With us it’s a teacher-pupil relationship. That’s what people don’t understand. She’s the teacher and I’m the pupil. I’m the famous one. I’m supposed to know everything. But she taught me everything I f\*\*king know”.

Of course, John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s relationship also demonstrates that the groupie-as-muse is not entirely unproblematic, as Yoko was blamed by many for the breakup of the Beatles, due to her powerful influence on John. Scodari (2007) argues that there are many conflicting gender issues tied up in Yoko Ono’s controversial status in Beatles subculture, and that these are manifest in what is called the ‘Yoko Factor’. This is the “inevitable moment when you are dating a guy in a band and he lectures you about Yoko Ono, the

message being that women are a suck on male creativity” (Marcotte, 2005: n.p.).

The data also tells of groupies taking on a caregiving, nurturing, almost ‘mother-like’ role that is in stark contrast to the predatory tones of the groupie identity. This is captured by the character of Penny Lane in the film *Almost Famous* (2000) who describes herself as a not a groupie, but a “Band-Aid”. Director Cameron Crowe explains in *des Barres* (2007: 373) that the Penny Lane character “was the person who hosted the arrival of the great indefinable it, asking, ‘Do you have everything you need?’”. In this role, groupies supported, facilitated, cared about, and nurtured rock musicians, in a manner that Gail Zappa (earlier) and Pamela *des Barres* (1987/2005: 135) describe:

“I mooned around my new house, twinkly-eyed and trembling. My heart was doing a new dance, skipping beats, in the throes of something scary. I wanted to DO things for him, I wanted to sew and cook fried chicken and vacuum his rug”

Even Pleather, a male groupie, is drawn to this feminine archetype:

”All the women I’ve known just want to be talked to. They want someone to listen. I’ve always been empathetic. I like to listen and I like to help”  
(*des Barres* 2007: 291)

These re-tellings of groupies stories are necessary in order to problematise the narrow, reductive and dominant groupie identity and to give voice to the variety of experiences. The groupie-as-muse representation contrasts with the dominant portrayal, by framing groupies as important, special, inspirational, strong and productive; but in doing so, draws heavily on cultural assumptions about women as artistic inspiration. This is where the key issue lies. While muses are important, and arguably even essential to artistic genius, the genius artist/muse binary is inherently gendered male/female, and thus marginalises women to a supporting role in creative work. Drawing inspiration from feminist art historian Cecilia Rentmeister, Huyssen (1986: 50) states: “Women as providers of inspiration for the artist, yes, but otherwise *Berufsverbot* [professional ban] for the muses”. So while these alternative stories empower by challenging the groupie identity, they simultaneously reinforce the gendering of the groupie as woman by magnifying cultural assumptions about femininity, and thus entrench their othering.

## **Conclusions**

This account of how the labelling of women as ‘groupies’ works as an othering practice contributes to an important, but still evolving body of knowledge on how

gender is constructed and articulated in both music and the creative industries (e.g. Davies 2001; Hatton and Trautner 2011; Leonard 2015; Strong 2011) by illustrating how gender intersects with the social identity of marketplace role to obscure and denigrate the contribution of women in rock and to consequently exclude them from creative production. Three unique discursive processes (Jensen 2011) of othering are at work through the groupie identity. Firstly, the popular and music media played a significant role in reducing the groupie identity to a stereotypical character (Riggins 1997) right from the emergence of the label. The emergent identity of the 'groupie' was conflated with 'female' which in turn engulfed all women associated with music, including other female fans, wives and girlfriends of male rock musicians, and even those actually working in the industry (Davies 2001). The powerfully dominant identity of groupies as women interested only in having sex with male rock musicians was constructed, which foreclosed any other possibilities for framing the relationship between females and rock music. The gendering of groupies as female, the subordinate gender role in the patriarchal world of rock, thus provides the foundation for their exclusion from meaningful involvement in music. Secondly, the notions of 'credibility' and 'authenticity', which are central to serious music journalism (Davies 2001), have been constructed in a way to exclude, discredit and invalidate the role of women in rock. Key to this is the conflation of the

terms 'groupie', 'teenybopper' and 'consumer', which serves to stigmatize the status of groupies as inauthentic consumers. The groupie identity effectively reproduces and reinforces age-old gendered hierarchies within the creative industries (Beauregard 2012) which position the male as producer and the female as consumer. So while women are not completely excluded from the world of rock, the one identity that is made available to them as participants limits them to the role of a passive consumer. Finally, cultural assumptions about femininity are magnified by the groupie identity, even in alternative representations of groupies. Thus, even though groupies might be somewhat empowered by the opportunities these alternative identities offer to challenge the dominant and repressive view of their identity, in the end, the stories they tell simply magnify their female-ness and thus render groupies complicit in their own othering by entrenching the stereotype further.

While a nuanced reading of the accounts of groupies clearly shows that the actual identities, stories and experiences of groupies are rich and varied, the singular, dominant and hegemonic groupie identity persists in media, practice and popular culture. The resoluteness with which this identity has been maintained by musicians, fans and even academics is striking and speaks of the power it holds. For example, even in the contemporary indie scene where

Fonarow (2006) explains the term 'groupie' is more ambiguous, the pejorative dominant image of the female groupie is held up as an 'other' against which indie musicians and fans position themselves.

It is clear that the modernist notion of the inferiority of women's artistic and aesthetic abilities, and the "persistent gendering as feminine of that which is devalued" (Huysen 1986: 53) is far from resolved in contemporary creative industries. Rather, the gendering of women in rock is entrenched in such identities as the groupie, and somewhat masked behind the marketplace roles of fan and consumer. As appears to be more socially acceptable to stigmatize people for being fans (e.g. Cusack, Jack and Kavanagh, 2003; Hills, 2005) than being women, the framing of groupies as inauthentic fans and passive consumers, renders gender less visible but at the same time, all the more powerful. Thus, a critical and nuanced reading of the role of gender in othering and marginalizing women in music as it intersects with the marketplace role of the consumer, has problematized the accepted, singular and dominant identity of 'groupies' and thrown open the door for alternative discourses and further research on groupies identity, role and experiences. In elucidating both the gender and marketplace politics at play in the groupie identity and the mechanisms involved in othering women, space is opened up through which



alternative possibilities for understanding and enacting the role of women in rock can be imagined.

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