THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO POPULAR MUSIC HISTORY AND HERITAGE

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DIY INSTITUTIONS AND AMATEUR HERITAGE MAKING

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Introduction

The late twentieth and early twenty–first centuries have witnessed a proliferation of informal heritage activities focused on the collection, documentation and archiving of popular music. Communities of listeners, aggregated through their affective attachment to the music of a particular place, genre or cultural identity (Born 2011, Baker 2015a), and partially enabled by the affordances of the emergent digital context, have instigated a range of projects that expand and diversify popular music's archival record. Such activities have contributed to the wider project of ascribing value to the artefacts, ephemera and expressions of popular music making in the twenty–first century, a realm of culture normatively dismissed as 'rubbish' (Baker and Huber 2015). These independent, do–it–yourself/do–it–together initiatives – which range from self–fashioned fan museums in garages to digital archives powered by Web 2.0 and everything else in–between – have been theorised, predominantly by Sarah Baker and Alison Huber (2013), as 'DIY institutions'.

This chapter presents an overview of how the cultural practices of DIY institutions have been conceptualised within scholarly literature, and will focus on the socioeconomic and technological conditions that enable and constrain the actions of these community-driven projects. I discuss how DIY institutions or, more specifically, the varied practices of amateur–led independent 'archival–activism' (Reitsamer 2015, p. 94), have helped construct new social forums within which the cultural value of (un)popular music is re–negotiated, re–imagined and contested. Although this chapter is 'about' DIY institutions, I remain sceptical whether DIY *institutions* can capture the diverse, often informal and contingent character of memory–making practices that have burgeoned in the past 20 years, an era that has witnessed substantive change in how 'the (digital) archive' – as social category and practice – and do–it–yourself, entrepreneurial activity have become deeply embedded within everyday life (Chidgey 2014). In the text I therefore use the term 'DIY institutions' interchangeably alongside 'DIY heritage projects', 'amateur heritage making' and 'DIY heritage makers' to disturb the conceptual formality implied by the term 'institution', while still locating such activity within more or less organised, community–driven actions.

Self-authorisation

Perhaps the one thing that consistently unites DIY popular music heritage practices is they are self-authorised and self-activated community endeavours. No one has sought permission from authority figures or professionals to begin a collection; the decision to organise memory assets emerges due to vindication that valuable cultural artefacts will be lost unless action is taken – now – to save them. While I do not wish to instate a rigid binary between authorised and unauthorised heritage practice, the activities of DIY heritage makers are, almost exclusively, grassroots exercises, led by volunteers, often with limited or no budget (Baker 2015a). Their concern is to document the 'local' expressions of popular music culture, capturing the mundane but extraordinary ways popular music has, and continues to, mediate lived experience in particular places (see, for example, the Manchester District Music Archive and the Birmingham Music Archive). DIY heritage projects also document the music-making activities of specific political or aesthetic communities (for example the Women's Liberation Music Archive, Her Noise archive and ubuweb) whose cultural presence as 'an archive' creates new forms of visibility, cultural intelligibility and dissemination for marginal musical identities and traditions.

While those engaged in DIY heritage projects might have a range of political affiliations, including dis-ease toward the autonomous ideals of do-it-yourself culture and punk, there is 'a degree of activism inherent in the work of all independent heritage practitioners' (Baker 2015a, p. 8). Their activity is sustained by a range of emotions: from fear of cultural erasure to love for a particular artist or genre. DIY heritage practices are therefore animated by the political passions of amateurs who work together – and sometimes alone – to preserve the social and cultural memories connected to music-making and consumption. Because they are established and sustained by amateurs, DIY institutions and heritage projects are therefore compelling sites to understand the significance of music in everyday life. They offer practical examples of how people use music to construct their identities and forge communities, vis-à-vis the public organisation and circulation of musical-inspired memory artefacts. Community heritage projects, rooted in the archive, engender new forms of socio-aesthetic agency (DeNora 1999) that are articulated through contact with memories of other historical times and places. Although collections are often seeded from individual fans or collectors (Baker 2015b), when (re)combined within the context of an archive or museum, fandom is transformed into an action with a social purpose which serves 'the community'. Future studies of DIY heritage projects may consider how music, aesthetics, cultural memory and (collective) identities converge in archival projects, thus helping enhance understanding of the social significance of popular music.

After all, DIY heritage projects engage with popular music within a cultural field – heritage – that offers qualitatively different possibilities for affective attachment to the one constructed by the twentieth century commercial music industry, a time when popular music did not yet have a heritage, but whose recorded (and mass-disseminated) form constructed the possibility of such a relation. Framing engagement *through* heritage enables a shift in emphasis, attitude and perception, within which people can meaningfully express *and* circulate *care for* artefacts through acts of interpretation, organisation and preservation. DIY heritage projects can also be a catalyst for re-membering of events which may have no or limited material traces, and such acts of memory – from oral histories to comment threads – can (in theory) be documented by the 'institution' for posterity. The grassroots activities of DIY heritage makers construct externalised social circuits through which ephemeral and previously *individualised* cultural memory is organised and (re)opened as a potential *collective* circuit. These activities create the possibility

for the circulation of new forms of social participation and knowledge. Through constructing specific sites of memory (archives, museums, exhibitions) that relate to a particular genre, local scene, spatial location (such as a record shop) or music-making community, DIY heritage projects devise their own '*aesthetic apparatus of socialization*' (Stiegler 2014, p. 15, original emphasis) within which wider community and social relationships can be constructed, confirmed and (re)mediated. In this sense, DIY heritage projects amount to a 'democratisation' (Flinn 2010, p. 40) of heritage practice. They are evidence of people seizing cultural authority to act and preserve the (im)material cultures that matter to them. In doing so, such activities express the social desire to be rooted in some form of tradition; even if (especially if) that tradition is self-made, selected and authorised.

Self-authorising contexts: digitisation

DIY heritage projects exude the potential of networked digital cultures to facilitate new expressions of care vis-à-vis the 'digital archive', whose infrastructural affordances intrinsically encourage the organisation, categorisation and sharing of data artefacts on an unprecedented scale, at a rapid pace and across spatial boundaries. This is the everyday context that has conditioned the emergence of many digitally driven DIY heritage projects, whose privileged vector of dissemination has been informal web platforms such as WordPress, SoundCloud and Blogspot. Many scholars have noted how the function and social meaning of the archive undergoes substantial transformation through its encounter with, and re-constitution by, the digital (Grubbs 2014). Simultaneously, archival practices and metaphors, as well as broader memory-making activities, have become deeply embedded within everyday life in the twenty-first century (Parikka 2012). If the archive has moved from the elite periphery to the normative centre of cultural life in the twenty-first century, so too has the meaning of 'DIY' substantively changed. DIY, once a placeholder for a range of oppositional, non-commercial and anti-establishment practices has, within neoliberalism, become 'activated within widely different trajectories and contexts' (Chidgey 2014, p. 108), from self-entrepreneurial activity to ideological justifications for austerity. Taken together, we might view DIY heritage projects – and the forms of collectivity they sometimes engender – as ordinary extensions of how human culture became embedded within its socio-technical and economic environment, constrained and enabled by the possibilities of digital connectivity, everyday data production and evolving notions of DIY citizenship and participation.

Saying this is not, of course, to dismiss DIY heritage makers as brainless automatons. The 'activist archivist' is certainly engaged with the heritage practices they often instigate, whether that is through encouraging dialogue and engagement from other users, or providing contextual metadata for the materials they upload (Collins and Carter 2015, p. 131). As such, their actions are distinguished from everyday memory activities solicited from corporate platforms designed to extract data from users for economic gain. Nevertheless, DIY projects are embedded within and enabled by the 'conditioning context' (Ross 2013, p. 253) of the socioeconomic and technical environment, and networked digitisation has profoundly transformed how information is organised, mediated and transmitted. DIY heritage projects – especially in their more political iterations – do however generate friction and disturb seemingly stable conceptions of distribution, ownership and value. A key point of contention is copyright. For Collins and Long (2015, p. 92), the political potential of DIY 'archival-activism' is 'manifest in vernacular practices, informality or simple disregard for the conventions of intellectual property rights or a wider culture in which popular music has an uncertain place'. As is well known, networked digitisation freed 'content from both technical and legal monopoly control' (David 2017, p. 53) and disrupted the commercial organisation of the music industry in the early twenty-first century.

Within a heritage context, networked digitisation enabled commercialised and 'forgotten'/ marginal culture to escape – temporarily – and be deployed through alternative circuits of care and valuation. The rapidity and intensity of connective memory production/circulation was articulated as shock and novelty, as amateur digital archivists embraced a media environment that supported their 'free' exchange of information and knowledge. The fan-driven 'completist' impulse of activist archivism (Collins and Carter 2015), propelled by an 'indiscriminate desire to retain a material record of popular music's historical past' (Baker and Huber 2013, p. 515), often sought to widen access to monetised, unpublished or 'vaulted' material, regardless of permissions. This sometimes places DIY heritage projects in an antagonistic relationship with capitalism's copyright laws, even if copyright contravention may arise from lack of legal knowledge (Long 2015) rather than a desire to liberate the information commons. It cannot be assumed, either, that all archivist activist projects will not recognise the legal integrity of copyright holders. Some may be even more self-conscious about copyright, especially if their collections represent marginalised cultural producers (persons of colour, women, LGBTQI) who have been excluded from normative claims to 'authorship' (Women's Liberation Music Archive 2017).

Copyright remains a site of political contention and control, where the 'struggle over the ownership of memory and the archive is signalled by every "cease-and-desist" notice and website or social-media page closed by order' (Long 2015, p. 74). The social relevance of copyright becomes laden with contradictions when viewed through the activity of DIY heritage makers who preserve and manage archival content within networked digital infrastructures. Should artefacts circulate freely and who should own culture? What does it mean to care for a heritage object? Does it mean enabling access for as many people as possible, or acting as gatekeepers for copyright holders? The re-territorialisation of Digital Rights Management within the digital economy, especially within the music industry (Marshall 2015), has re-affirmed copyright as a constraining force on everyday acts of circulation. The sociohistorical evolution of DIY heritage projects, as they interact with emergent forms of economic and legal regulation, could then be a fruitful avenue for future research that can take into account evolving notions of care, value, ownership, legality and belonging vis-à-vis the heritage artefact.

Within digital culture's fast-changing sociotechnical and legal contexts, questions of power, autonomy, sustainability and political economy have, not surprisingly, become pressing concerns for the scholarly analysis of digitally mediated DIY heritage projects. As Long (2015, p. 73) notes, 'however potentially transgressive affective DIY online activities might be in appropriating intellectual property, they are built in spaces belonging to vested interests and from an incredible amount of voluntary labour' (see also Terranova 2000). Furthermore, when DIY archive projects become reliant on third-party publishing platforms, such as WordPress, SoundCloud and Facebook, their status may be as ephemeral as the communities they seek to document. While it may be convenient and immediate to publish digitised artefacts through these platforms, questions of copyright, monopolisation and even moral ownership must be considered, as well as wider issues of organisational autonomy – beyond concerns of 'precariousness' and 'impermanence' (Baker and Collins 2016, p. 3). While the initial, affective charge of Web 2.0 technologies led to various celebratory narratives about the digital's capacity to democratise cultural production in itself, the implication of data production in sustaining surveillance capitalism (Zuboff 2015) and the hyper-monopolisation of data generation and storage by companies such as Facebook and Google place such claims into sharp relief. How can DIY institutions be independent or in any sense autonomous, in other words, when their content is owned and regulated by massive corporations? Does autonomy and the need to establish alternative networks and economies matter anymore, and what is DIY and what can it be in a digital networked context? What technical and archival skills do DIY heritage makers need

to acquire, especially those working in a digital environment, to ensure their collections are independently preserved in the long term? These are fraught, emergent, political questions that must be entertained by heritage makers operating within the memory-making regimes of data-driven capitalism, where issues of control as much as erasure threaten the integrity of archives in the long term.

Practices

DIY heritage projects, in a way that seems fully commensurate with other expressions of DIY culture, often disregard the necessity of knowing *how* to do something in order to do it. Rather, it is *through doing* that knowledge, cultural authority and new forms of social, cultural and community value are discovered. Or, as Lisa Busby (2015, p. 227) writes, 'not knowing the right stuff or doing things the right way does not mean your work is not valuable'. Again, the technological context is pertinent here, because digitisation as a cultural–infrastructural process has made everyone an amateur, accentuated by rapid cycles of obsolescence and innovation (Stiegler 2010, Withers 2015). DIY heritage making is therefore situated within the disruptive dynamics of digital culture that enable(d) people who do not 'know' how to archive to engage with archival activities. This does not mean that archival, heritage or museum practices were irrelevant to such endeavours: far from it. The archive, which so often acts as the starting point rather than destination for knowledge, especially for marginalised cultural memories (Eichhorn 2013), anchors the organisation of disparate, ephemeral and distributed artefacts. Furthermore, when DIY heritage practices do become more institutional, in the sense that they mimic or explicitly adopt institutional forms, this shouldn't always be 'conceived of as undesirable or detrimental, or as something that will constrain the DIY spirit. Rather, the framework of the institution becomes, in many instances, enabling for the archive DIY archive or museum' (Baker 2015a, p. 11–12). Archival practices and techniques, in the hands of DIY heritage makers, are then appropriated and occupied in order to construct new sites of value that re-signify and re-circulate popular music through the framework of the archive.

Value

As cultural agents which help to organise and (re)distribute musical memories that are marginal, localised in a particular place/music-making community or otherwise excluded from the constructed canons of pop music history (Bennett 2009, Regev 2002), DIY heritage makers have been key participants in the grassroots reformulation of popular music value. As many scholars have noted, the integration of commercial popular music into the authorised heritage discourse (Smith 2006) is a relatively recent phenomenon that has produced new curatorial questions and dilemmas regarding representation (Leonard 2007). Even so, larger institutions are limited in the material they collect, curate and interpret and 'lean towards the pursuit of selective narratives of particular national significance' (Baker 2015a, p. 1). Such practices are intensified when heritage intersects with tourism, as cities capitalise on their mnemonic assets to drive the local creative and cultural industries (Roberts and Cohen 2014). In these examples, popular music heritage is constructed through familiar figures that achieved commercial success, or convenient images that confirm well-trodden, romanticised stories about pop music's rebelliousness.

Such a tendency is explicitly addressed by the collecting practices of DIY heritage projects, which are often established in order to challenge partial historical narratives and 'fill gaps' in existing heritage holdings. How the collection is defined – what is included, and what is excluded – is importantly mandated by the communities themselves (Baker 2015a, p. 11).

Communities animated by musical practice, or aggregated through affective attachment to music sounds or places, declare ownership over their own stories and ascribe them with a wider sense of social relevance and reverence. Indeed, the very act of organising a body of artefacts and ephemera into a collection – itself a form of care and curation – is to publicly re-negotiate the terms through which people can engage with those facets of (im)material culture. For those 'DIY institutions' or projects that claim the title of 'archive' or 'museum', they are making a tacit intervention into regimes of distinction that structure social relationships in accordance with cultural value. They do so by inhabiting and re-signifying an institutional imaginary in order to mobilise cultural authority that would otherwise not be available to them as consumers, fans or amateur music-makers. In this sense, DIY heritage practices *re-contextualise the archive itself* through the practices and actions of impassioned amateurs whose primary desire is to rescue the forgotten inscriptions of (un)popular music's past.

Indeed, the formation of DIY heritage projects, whose privileged vector of organisation and publication is so often 'the archive', has created a new site through which music's 'complex social mediation' (Born 2011, p. 378) is enacted. The complexity of these social forms arises because the archives and museums of DIY heritage makers enable new claims to cultural and social distinction for musical practices, communities, sounds and recorded forms that were simply illegible within the context of previous taste regimes; implicitly constructed upon an archival imaginary – the canon – but located in a limited range of musical forms ('the great album'), selected by elite and homogenous social actors (Regev 2002). The archives collected, published and elevated by DIY heritage makers are usually more diverse in terms of both form and content than the orchestrated actions of canonisation, whose driving aim is to fuel commercial engagement with 'great' music. They are 'tasteless' (Baker 2015a, p. 11) for a start, but also sites through which the everyday practices of music-making and consumption can be circulated and re-membered by fans and custodians, whether as scans of ticket stubs or fliers, images of master tapes or mp3s of the recordings stored on them. These agents, in turn, gain satisfaction, pride and sometimes joy through facilitating this engagement for others (Baker 2015b, Withers 2015), whose understanding of musical culture becomes mediated by a new kind of social relation conditioned by the archive, a circuit of care which opens up a possibility for 'trash' to be re-constituted as 'treasure'.

DIY archival projects, established by people who care for the music and musical cultures they select and organise, circulate an alternative conception of value: heritage value. Unlike national heritage institutions and tourist initiatives whose activities are underpinned by the authorised heritage discourse, this form of heritage value refers largely to itself – to the forms of attachment and care communities of self-authorised heritage makers attribute to it. It matters little if anyone else cares what DIY heritage makers collect; what matters is that *they* care. As such, the projects they establish exist as microcosms that open up a wider possibility for the valuation of musical cultures beyond capital and authorised heritage – they 'flash up' (Benjamin 1977, p. 257) a form of value yet to come or, even, a memory of value that has been (and may arise again). The projects of DIY institutions, mediated by the archive as form and mode of distinction, nurture the 'social faculty that *allows us* to take care of' (Stiegler 2013, p. 81–82, original emphasis) the mnemonic objects through which human culture – in compositional relation with technics – is organised, transmitted and constituted (Stiegler 1998). 'Far from representing the public at large or the consumer in the "sharing economy", the amateur [archivist and heritage maker] is an active participant in social circles, a producer of new practices, new discourses and artifacts' (Dillet 2017, p. 103), and, also, new sites of value. This is not to say that the ventures instigated by DIY institutions are 'authentic', untainted by capital's incursions, or that the materials collected have no role to play in 'official' narratives, either now or in the future. It is

to assert, instead, that their ethos and actions betray that another value is possible, and this value may indeed be old, rather than new: the idea that cultural forms have intrinsic value, that they can build communities and identities, rather than be bought and sold *ad infinitum*. This value is sustained by the active engagement of people who take care of music's (im)material cultures, and whose desire is ignited and sustained by that longing, as community and identity emerges through encounters with the heritage object (Withers 2015).

Archival mediation – and the unique forms of valuation it incubates – has also helped refashion the legibility of the recorded musical artefact. Archival sites encourage a wider collecting remit beyond the 'finished' representation (Grubbs 2014). This means that rough, unfinished and 'previously unreleased' material can be published or made available alongside 'the final work' (if such a 'final' recording exists). For it may well be that the poorly recorded live performance or the demo tape are the only available recordings of a particular music scene or community in existence, with rarity itself an emergent index of value. The lack and partial documentation of some music scenes can also generate new forms of social knowledge. They reveal how some marginalised social groups – and in terms of my own research, the anti-commercial music-making communities of the UK Women's Liberation Movement (1970–1990) – lack access to the cultural, technical and economic resources to 'fully' document their histories. In this sense the archive, as a site of music's complex social mediation, invites 'the reader' to consider questions of power and representation *through* its material remains.

At the same time, the archival trace enables listeners to enter into the *processes* of music-making – the preparatory stages before the final recording, or the unruly 'liveness' of a performance (Withers 2015). Such recordings demonstrate that music-making is an ordinary thing done by people, much as DIY heritage projects indicate that 'music heritage is managed by ordinary people in extraordinary ways' (Baker 2015a, p. 2). Similarly, fan archives of successful commercial artists can feature demo recordings which can provide insight into how their favourite artists worked together in the studio, as well as circulate sonic terrains of what might have been (Withers 2016). Archival sites erode the mysteriousness of music commodity fetishism and open up new sites of interpretation vis-à-vis the recorded artefact.

Whilst nonetheless, archival sites – as a mode of publishing, circulation and cultural (re)valuation – have also helped stimulate new markets and genres of music consumption. Archival websites in the early twenty-first century, including the meta-'archives' of YouTube within which so much material has been embedded, became key arenas where the relation with recorded sound was re-socialised. As rough sounds became massaged through consciousness in a movement of rubbish to novelty, emergent authenticities became legible in processual, unfinished 'archive' recordings. New markets become possible, therefore, through the consumer's newfound ability to listen to, interpret – and enjoy – a wider array of recorded traces. Market-based archival projects, such as re-issue labels, tend to temporally and spatially de-contextualise the musical objects they release, and cannot be seen as forms of preservation in any straightforward sense (Roy 2015). Nevertheless, the intensification of re-issue culture, underpinned by the vinyl revival (Bartinski and Woodward 2015), points to an increasingly symbiotic relationship between the informal archive of DIY projects and the commercial marketplace. Perhaps this signals an erosion of the kinds of autonomous heritage value nurtured by DIY institutions: a value that revives the memory that another value is possible, in a world that has forgotten such a value exists.

Conclusion

In this chapter, 'DIY institutions' has been used as an umbrella term for a range of different heritage practices that are often unauthorised, self-activating and community-based, whose

actors mobilise emergent forms of care and circulate alternative forms of value. Such activities are conceptually shaped by institutionalised imaginaries and practices (such as the archive and the museum, and the claims of cultural distinction therein), and may sometimes enter into relation with bureaucratic processes, but are hardly reducible to them. I have suggested that conjoining 'institutions' with do-it-yourself/do-it-together activities is somewhat ironic, given that organisational structures can be as ephemeral as the (im)material culture they aim to preserve. Furthermore, archival practices – especially within a digital context – are largely reliant on corporate publishing platforms that threaten the autonomy and integrity of the heritage they seek to preserve (Baker and Collins 2016). Ultimately, archival practices of DIY heritage makers are thoroughly embedded in the social, economic and technological contexts they arise within. To understand their significance it is necessary to *historicise* the specificities of their actions within socioeconomic and technical contexts which are rapidly mutating within a data-driven capitalism. As such, this chapter has viewed DIY heritage projects within the particular configuration of the newly digitised networks structuring neoliberalism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, amid a provisionally situated culture captivated by the new social relationships made possible by archival mediations.

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