

Music fanzine collecting as capital accumulation

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Summary:

This essay explores a relatively overlooked aspect of music fandom that is the act of collecting music fanzines. Specifically locating this work in an Irish context, this form of collecting fan production presents a multi-dimensional approach to capital accumulation, and questions the motivations for retaining amateur and seemingly disposable publications. Drawing on interviews with fanzine collectors and writers, as well as an analysis of Irish and international fan texts, this work deals with how subversive artefacts gain 'aura' with their increasing scarcity, and how collections help form an important nostalgic value for individuals.

Keywords: fanzines, collecting, DIY, (sub)cultural capital.

Introduction

While conducting research on music fanzines produced in Ireland since the mid-1970s, it became increasingly apparent that there were individuals who maintained fanzine collections that spanned decades. Collecting in fan cultures is not exactly a new phenomenon but the retention of fan-produced physical media does seem surprising in an increasingly digital culture. Fans of the medium itself are drawn to maintaining these collections for various reasons, but based on collectors encountered during this study, their motives are rarely fiscal. This mirrors other fandoms where for the majority of fans, there are non-monetary attractions to collecting¹, whether their collections are of toys, records, comic books, or other memorabilia.

Other studies of fans have demonstrated the significance of collecting, but more with a focus on film (Staiger, 2005), comic books (Tankel & Murphy, 1998; Woo, 2012), and toy collecting (Geraghty, 2006). While there may be a more specific leaning towards 'Convention' culture (Kozinets, 2001; Geraghty, 2014) in such fan studies on collecting, there have been significant contributions from popular music scholars in exploring how music is

collected (Straw, 1997; Hayes, 2006; Kibby, 2009; Shuker, 2004, 2010, 2014). These works have examined the process of collecting the music itself, but the music fanzine – a staple of DIY music cultures – has received little attention in discourses on object collection. Elsewhere, fanzine studies (see Duncombe, 2008; Atton 2001, 2010; Triggs, 2010) have placed production and consumption at the centre of inquiry. Pinney argues that ‘any discussion of materiality that starts and ends with the object is doomed to fail’ (2005: 257); hence, this study considers not just the collections, but also the collectors themselves. Individuals collect in different ways – Pearce (1995) suggests three different modes (fetishistic, systematic, and souvenir) – and this essay argues that the nature and value attached to collecting within Irish DIY cultures changes with age. At its centre, this study focuses on how these fanzine collectors gain cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), or perhaps more specifically given the underground nature of their activities, ‘subcultural capital’ (Thornton, 1995).

Production and Dissemination of Music Fanzines in Ireland

This quest to determine the level of subcultural capital associated with fanzine culture in Ireland comes from a larger piece of empirical research that examines the role of cheaply assembled and produced fanzines in alternative music cultures in Ireland from 1977 to 2014. It was compiled through twenty-five semi-structured interviews (as well as three focus groups and random surveying) conducted with fanzine producers, readers, collectors, musicians (past and present) and fans within these scenes. Additionally, of the 203 different titles that were identified from this period, issues from 126 of those publications formed part of the textual analysis. The sample for this research was often determined by what was accessible, and the availability of these texts was through haphazardly institutionalized archives and individual private collections. Through the latter source and interviews with writers, it became clear there was a crossover between fanzine makers and collectors. This was evident even with the earliest Irish fanzine writers who were fostering trans-local links, accumulating alternative literature, and acquiring subcultural capital by producing these objects.

Moreover, this first wave of Irish punk fanzines adhered to international trends, which is noteworthy considering the rather conservative media and societal (predominantly Catholic) landscape of the country in the 1970s². *Raw Power* was the first fanzine to emerge from the burgeoning Dublin punk scene in 1977, and while it lasted just two issues, it mirrored similar publications from New York and London in terms of style and content. *Raw Power* writer Steve Rapid was a keen collector of fanzines at the time, being amongst the first to import punk publications from the UK and USA. Rapid’s own band The Radiators From Space was formed due to what they were hearing in punk scenes in other countries, and was simultaneously influenced by the accounts of punk activities that they were reading about in titles such as *Punk* and *Sniffin’ Glue*. Once Rapid started working on his own fanzines, it was a gateway to accumulating more international texts. As will be outlined in

more detail later, a transnational and transcultural trade structure has been an integral aspect of fanzine production since the 1970s, and this was apparent when *Raw Power's* successor *Heat* received correspondence from USA, UK, and Japan. Since then, Irish fanzine makers have traded not just copies, but also stories and reports, with fanzine producers in various places around the world. In many cases, this exchange of material takes place with fanzine makers in countries that do not use English as their first language. For instance, *A Life of Buggery* (Issue 4/ c.1990) features a 'Dutch Scene Report', while an 'Irish Scene Report' features in an edition of the Portuguese metal fanzine *Dark Oath* (1993).

What have also remained consistent since the 1970s are the production values of music fanzines: they are generally homemade and distinguishable by a somewhat do-it-yourself and amateur approach to design and layout. Predominantly black and white (although not exclusively so) this media has been utilised by Irish fanzine makers to communicate with other fans and musicians within small, localised scenes, primarily covering music genres such as punk, metal, and hardcore. Loosely speaking, music scenes that classified themselves as DIY – or do-it-yourself – found an aesthetic correlation between their music, community ethos, and the design of these publications.

Placing the producers of these fanzines within fan cultures is potentially problematic as their fandom is scene rather than artist-centred. Many key works on music fandom have tended to centre their research on fans of one particular artist (for example Cavicchi, 1998; Vroomen, 2004; Click, Lee and Holladay, 2013). But here, the fandom of the fanzine maker is directed at a number of artists, many of them who are local and known personally to the writers and readers. The very process of writing and collecting these publications is a fan practice that relies on knowledge and place more than on economic wealth. With many of these printed fanzines available for free at independent record stores and gigs in cities around the country, particularly in the 1980s, 90s, and early part of this century, there would have been no great financial difficulty in amassing a large collection. Instead, having an awareness of where to find the printed publications, and being able to identify the important titles were the most important factors in developing a collection.

Even the methods of storage encountered within this research required a limited investment, with collectors using relatively cheap plastic containers or re-appropriated storage boxes to keep their collections. While some collectors of toys (see Geraghty, 2006) managed to retain portions of their collection in their original packaging and sealed, many of the fanzines used for this research have indicators of past use: a torn cover, doodles, and missing pages all illustrated that these fanzines were not initially procured to form part of a structured collection.

Collectors as Tastemakers: (Sub)Cultural Capital and Collecting

While these collections do not require the same level of economic capital of record or toy collecting, they do need a similar level of awareness of what is of value to the fan community. Fiske argues that accumulating knowledge is central to garnering cultural

capital in such communities, adding that ‘fans, like buffs, are often avid collectors, and the cultural collection is a point where cultural and economic capital come together’ (1992:43). Taking this as a starting point for this study of music fanzine collectors, it could be argued that the larger – or rarer – a collection is, the more cultural capital the collector has. However, just because one has a sizeable collection does not mean that he or she has absorbed all the content within it, or even read it in the first place; ‘ownership’ implies ‘knowledge’ of the field, but that is not always the case. Moreover, as Fiske notes, fans are not as concerned with official cultural capital, and collecting in fan culture is distinguished by ‘the extent of the collection rather than in their uniqueness or authenticity as cultural objects’ (44). Thornton (1995) also appropriates cultural capital to help explain the practices of fans, utilising ‘subcultural capital’ to illustrate hierarchies that exist within the ‘club cultures’ that she investigated. Hills (2002) has criticised both Thornton and Fiske for the prominence they have placed on ‘fan’ cultural capital, as he feels it neglects discussion around Bourdieu’s formulation of ‘social capital’ and the potential role that it can play in fan hierarchies. ‘Fan’ social capital does not have as much relevance to research on collectors in fan cultures, as ‘the network of fan friends and acquaintances’ (2002: 57) that Hills posits as a measure of ‘fan’ social capital are not of great relevance in the accumulation stage. This establishes another key difference between the Irish fanzine collector and fan collectors in different communities – whereas collectors in other cultural fields (Belk, 1995; Geraghty, 2014) strive to find the unattainable object in order to climb the social hierarchy, the participants in this study primarily collected contemporary pieces, with only rare exceptions of retrospective collecting.

Despite this, the act of collecting music fanzines still contributes to the subtle formation of a fan hierarchy. Thornton places an emphasis on the role of the media in developing one’s status within the music scene. For her, access to items such as the latest white-label³ vinyl help elevate one to the upper echelons of the clubbing hierarchy. This differs slightly from Fiske’s usage of fan cultural capital, in that individuals do not simply climb to the top of the hierarchy by merely having a large collection; they need to be able to identify what are the key components of that collection and how best to use it. There is an element of gatekeeping at play here, where fannish competition is manifested in the form of ‘super collectors’ (Geraghty, 2014: 130); in Geraghty’s work, these collectors attract attention from other collectors at conventions whereby they attain an almost celebrity status within the fan community. The Irish fanzine collector, armed with a less financially valuable collection and operating in a fandom not founded on notions of celebrity or stardom, still has control over their collection, and this ownership conveys a high status amongst the community. One of this research’s respondents, Thomas, is originally from the South-East of Ireland but now lives in Dublin, where his collection is also housed. An avid collector of fanzines, he does feel some responsibility to protect his collection, explaining that: ‘they are all in good condition [but] they are not really organized; maybe the Irish ones are piled together in a very haphazard way... I’m not sure anyone else would take good care of them.’ Thomas feels that he has developed the knowledge to adequately preserve this

collection, and does not trust that others would have that capacity or level of archival responsibility that Tankel and Murphy (1998), borrowing from McCracken (1988), view as ‘curatorial consumption’; that is, the cultural practice of selecting specific artefacts, due to their significance and meaning, and maintaining them. In this situation, the curator does not just collect arbitrarily, instead targeting exactly what they need to acquire and retain.

To momentarily leave the Irish context, a recent international example of such targeted fanzine collecting brought up some interesting responses. In August 2014, the renowned Californian punk fanzine *Maximumrocknroll* shared a photograph on its Facebook account showing how well maintained an individual collector has kept his compilation; the collector had every single copy of the fanzine since its inception and they were organised and stored neatly. From the evidence of the photograph they published, it would seem that this is someone who treasures their collection, and has invested both time and money in it. For some collectors, displaying their collection has as much significance as the process of accumulation as, according to Pearce, ‘its sheer impressiveness can convey legitimacy’ (1995: 105). Within the Irish DIY music scene, this is also applicable. While the display may not be as public as the *MRR* reader’s collection, the zenith for fanzine publishing in Ireland of the late 1990s and early 2000s meant that ‘it was nearly as important as having a good record collection – having a load of zines in your gaff [home]’, according to Dublin musician Michael. This legitimizing of one’s fanhood and contribution to the scene of course aided in the accrual of subcultural capital.

As *Maximumrocknroll* has been publishing monthly for over thirty years and has printed approximately 380 issues, and currently costs \$5 per issue, the reader has protected their capital through carefully catalogued methods. The photo attracted 440 Facebook ‘likes’ with commenters impressed or envious of his collection:

I’ve gotten a complete set of the first 100 issues, but incomplete between #101 until the actual issue. At least I got a subscription and it’s my monthly highlight to read a new issue of *MRR*, even after all those years. [Collector’s Name] complete *MRR* collection looks really good. (*MRR* Commenter A)

Been trying to collect a complete set for a while now. Too many people are trying to charge too much for them. (*MRR* Commenter B)

Wow, really wow. (*MRR* Commenter C)

The second commenter’s suggestion that back issues of *MRR* are prohibitively expensive demonstrates that collections such as these represent a Fiskean marriage of both economic and cultural capital. However, it does feel as if the prominence for the fanzine collector here is weighted more towards the latter form of capital. He – and indeed some of those who commented on the image – bears some similarities with Shuker’s (2004) participants into research on record collecting; completism, that need to own an entire collection of

something, is central to the mind-set of many collectors. It is at this juncture that the process of collecting, as Baudrillard puts it, 'offers us a paradigm of perfection, for this is where the passionate enterprise of possession can achieve its ambitions' (1994: 8).

The complete collection of *Maximumrocknroll* illustrates the collector's 'curatorial consumption' but also creates an intriguing reading of his fandom; not only was he a fan of the type of music covered within *Maximumrocknroll*, but he was also a fan of the publication itself. Thus, this not-for-profit fan production has itself become an object desired for by other fans. *Maximumrocknroll* may be one of the most famous music fanzines of all time, but there have been fanzines with a seemingly lesser imprint that have still attracted attention from collectors.

In comparison, the majority of Irish publications have not made it beyond a handful of editions. Nonetheless, the more significant fanzines do attract particular interest amongst a niche audience of collectors. While financial constraints can sometimes prohibit attempts for complete collections, there are other factors that interfere also; and this is where the issue of rarity comes into play. The example of the Dublin-based publication *React* illustrates this clearly. During the 1990s, *React* was one of the most respected publications in the Irish underground landscape. It was a four page A5 freesheet, essentially produced by folding one A4 sheet of paper over, with a front page declaring that it was 'always free and anti-copyright' and 'not for material gain'. Easily reproducible and of no real monetary value, one would imagine that aside from the writer of the fanzine not many would hold onto that edition beyond a few months. Not only is a publication like *React* made of cheap materials, but the content is immediate and its importance is relatively short lived. For instance, the 'Gig News' section in *React* #22 (1993) detailed events that were all occurring within a timeframe of a month and in the vicinity of the writer's base in Dublin. Crucially, the section also chronicled happenings that he specifically knew would be of interest to those who were offered the fanzine for free at independent gigs in the city. However, many of the readers that posted £2 to the writer to secure six issues mailed to them would have actually consumed that issue beyond the timeframe of those events. Furthermore, they would have been reading about a scene and a city that they were not familiar with; many enthusiasts accessed fanzines from other countries to help develop their collections and to compare the practices of other fan communities. It also was a form of symbolic exchange; the material might be irrelevant in terms of news content but it can still be viewed as an exotic artefact to the collector.

It was not just international collectors that took an interest in a title like *React*. As back editions of the publication became scarcer, individuals tried different methods to accumulate the titles they needed. In the fanzine *Industrial Weed* (Issue 1, 1995), which launched five years after the first *React*, the writer is keen to acquire the entire collection: 'if anyone has all 26 copies of *React* please get in touch with me at the address at the end of the intro so I can copy them or buy them or something like that'. Interestingly, my own access to copies of *React* came from a private collector, who has kept them for over twenty years after first picking them up on the counters of record stores.

Similarly to the fanzine enthusiast who allowed me to view his editions of *React* and other titles, there are collectors that feel that there is a need to share their collection with others in the community, such as Thomas who also expresses a desire to display his collection:

I'd say I have all the ones from the nineties anyway. I used to have them out in the sitting room where people could grab them and read them if they wanted to, but now they're kind of just stored away. I'd dig them out the odd time and have a look. They're kind of dear to me. I've probably read them all loads of times... There are people I know now that you just knew as penpals [through fanzines], like people who'd be "I'm the only punk in this village in [County] Tipperary" and then you'd get to know them for years.

Trade Culture

Collectors like Thomas demonstrate the participatory nature of Irish music scenes that utilised the fanzine as an information and media outlet. Given this ethos, it is unsurprising that many of those who sustained a large collecting habit were also producers themselves of fanzines at one point or another. This is partially due to a trade culture where producers of music fanzines swap fanzines locally, via independent gigs and distributors, and internationally with other writers, often through trade classifieds housed in the pages of various fanzines. For many of the participants in this research, setting up a fanzine was often just a way of being able to trade with other producers nationally and internationally, and there was an element of social reciprocity intertwined with this, with an expectant return copy to be sent. This hankering to accumulate as many fanzines as possible can perhaps also explain issues of longevity within the medium, as the majority of Irish music fanzines never made it to double figures in terms of editions published. Part of the reason for this may just be that writers start fanzines so that they can trade with other producers (indeed, many fanzine writers in interviews indicated that this was certainly a motivation), and once they realise the labour and time required to produce such a publication, they just cease production. There is no commitment to stakeholders of any description to produce another issue. Thomas briefly worked on a fanzine in the mid-1990s and outlines the main benefits of producing it:

There used to be a really big – not even so much punk – but underground fanzine culture and network. If you got one fanzine, they'd have reviews of other fanzines ... and if you *did* a fanzine ... that was the advantage of it, you could just trade yours for other ones. So you could just send your crap little fanzine to South Africa or America or anywhere. You'd send it to that zine and then they'd review your zine and send you a copy with the review in it.

In an edition of *No Barcodes Necessary* (Armagh, Northern Ireland) in 2002, the writer Mel (Issue 2, November 2002) says of *Embrace* (Issue 8) that 'I reckon it's about \$3 ppd [postage paid], it does come from far away' before noting that the writer was a long-time pen pal from Malaysia who he had exchanged copies with after some email correspondence. It was not just through the fanzine review section of these publications that you could find evidence of this exchange network. Visual components of fanzines tend to generate strong semiotic messages, and a drawing of the late Joey Ramone (of the punk band Ramones) in an issue of *Lucidity* (Issue 3, 2003) is a signifier of punk music and its ethics. The picture, presented in the form of an advertisement, is accompanied with a message from the writer of *Lucidity*: 'Spudmonkey's Zine Trade: Joey Ramone would think it's a funky idea so you should too!'

In some cases, the exchange was more presumed than formalised; for instance, a keen fanzine collector and writer Trevor had kept a letter that he received from another fanzine producer thanking him for buying his most recent issue. In the letter, the fanzine producer also informed Trevor that he had purchased Trevor's latest edition in a shop in Dublin. By doing this, the other fanzine writer was making Trevor aware that he was also participating in fanzine culture. From Limerick in the mid-west of Ireland, Trevor started collecting fanzines in the early 1990s, and would write his own fanzine *Unfit For Consumption* during the following decade. To this day he has retained a large section of his fanzine collection: while it is out of his view in his parents' attic, he has it neatly organized and retained within plastic containers to avoid any damage. Illustrative of the fact that he is a collector, he has also maintained a collection of all of the demo recordings he received for review from Irish bands during the period he ran his own fanzine. He admits that there is some element of curatorial responsibility to keeping this intact:

I think it's a piece of history really, that's why I've kept it. A friend is always laughing that I'll be a great archivist for the DIY music in that period of time, say from '99 to 2007 or whatever, because I have a lot of fanzines from that era... I just kind of made it a point of not throwing away or moving on or selling any Irish music; I just said it would be a good idea if somebody held onto some of this stuff. So I think people would be surprised if they saw some of the stuff that I had. People probably wouldn't have heard half the bands that I would have got demos and stuff; they might have just done a demo and then played a couple of gigs and then they were gone before other people even know. But someday somewhere someone will ask about them, and I'll be the one to have a response, "you know I still have that" ...

For Trevor, there is a feeling that there will be some kind of value attached to his collection one day; in a follow-up interview, I quizzed him further to see what he felt the nature of that value would be:

... [It] certainly has no economic value in my mind but you definitely can't put a price on the memories and laughter generated while reading back on those zines I have decided to keep ... I don't think anyone would want to buy it in all fairness! But I definitely would not sell the copies of my own zine.

Fanzines as Commodities?

There is a glaring contradiction here; many Irish fanzines intermingle discussion on music with monologues and other signifiers (such as the anarchy 'A' symbol – a regular fixture on the cover page) that were vehemently anti-capitalist. The music itself featured in fanzines, particularly those from the late 20th Century, was subversive, and bands interviewed immersed themselves in a discourse very much centred on being and staying 'independent'. Large corporate bodies such as McDonalds and EMI and the mainstream media were regularly lampooned or just explicitly criticised for their practices. For example, in *Scumbag* (1997), the logos of Burger King and McDonalds are manipulated to read 'Murder King' and 'McGarbage'. This critique of mainstream culture and its reliance on commodities is somewhat at odds with the process of physically collecting fanzines.

One participant in this study – Dave, a former record store proprietor – proudly explained after an interview that he still had every copy of the influential Dublin fanzine *Nosebleed* (which was printed for twelve years) in pristine condition. To use Marxist terminology, this amounts to a fetishisation of commodities, with fanzine collectors striving to have as large a collection as possible. While a collection of fanzines may not have the use-value that certain commodities in a traditional sense would have, the lust for and preservation of one's collection and eagerness for cultural accumulation is somewhat contradictory to those ethics espoused by some of those writing for music fanzines and also the artists featured in them. The ripped and torn aesthetic of punk and its early fanzines embraced cultural recycling, especially when the juxtaposition of materials was ironic. Some early zines literally cut out material from other publications to make their own somewhat unique artefact. Borrowing from the Dadaist tradition, this sense of 'bricolage' was fully embraced by the punks, according to Hebdige (1979). This is an aesthetic still adopted by fanzine makers, who to use Jenkins' (1992) celebrated term, participate in a form of 'textual poaching' with these fan productions. This approach, allied with grammatical imperfections, time-specific content and low production quality, contributes to the fanzine being considered a throwaway object, and that is undoubtedly what happened with the majority of them.

However, for those that were retained, the act of collection transforms the meaning of these publications – turning Walter Benjamin's (1936) discussion of mass-produced art on its head, whereby something that is original ephemeral gains 'aura' with its scarcity, particularly when it comes in the form of a unique collection; for example the writer of *Industrial Weed* trying to acquire the complete collection of *React* for posterity. This 'aura' is a signifier of authenticity, with the collector considered to be a credible voice in the DIY

music community, especially in a historic context: they were there, at the right time in the right place, and thus have the necessary degree of subcultural capital. Their taste ensured that they attended the most culturally valuable events within the community and that they had the nous to handpick the most significant fanzine titles.

Nostalgia and Changing Collecting Habits

Outside of events such as these local 'gigs', the independent record store is the main hub for accessing fanzine literature, and this is something that is not just unique to Ireland. Anto, the writer of perhaps Ireland's longest-running music fanzine *Loserdome* (1996–present), feels that they are very much dependent on each other:

Independent record stores – they were the lifeblood of fanzines. Fanzines were very much part of the culture of independent record stores and without independent record stores, you wouldn't really have music fanzines. That's where I discovered them, and where I always found them.

With a shift towards digital technologies, there has been a declining number of local independent record stores internationally and a corresponding drop-off in fanzine publications; nonetheless, I have found that there are still people actively collecting. With this in mind, why does one collect in the first place? Why have boxes and shelves filled with material that are only browsed or listened to occasionally? Collectors have a strong emotional connection to the physical artefact, and this is something that prohibits them from fully shedding their collection. Three Dublin musicians I spoke to – Barry, Richie, and Michael – who had all briefly worked on their own fanzines, noted that while they may not have their teenage collection of fanzines readily available, these were all still stored in attics, garden sheds, or childhood bedrooms in their parents' homes. They had survived the cull of various spring-cleans over the past fifteen to twenty years, thus retaining a symbolic value beyond their original purpose. McCourt, in his research on digital music collecting notes that 'digital sound files lack potential emotive contexts altogether. They are just data, metadata, and a thumbnail and therefore emotionally less valuable than a medium you can hold in your hands' (2005: 250). Likewise, bookmarks of blog posts and screenshots of Twitter exchanges are not considered to be collectible objects by the participants in this research who equate collecting with physical media.

That emotional context that McCourt speaks of can be applied to the fanzine collector who maintains their physical copies of fanzines years after they may seem relevant because the publications form part of their identity. Pearce (1995) suggests that there may not be a financial value to collecting, and this is what distinguishes the fetishistic and systematic collectors from the souvenir collector. The souvenir collector has a more intimate connection to their collection, which is a form of object autobiography. In some cases, that autobiographical collection can help timeline an identity that has altered over

the decades as personal and professional circumstances change. It can evoke nostalgia for youth, political engagement, and music, as can be seen in Conor, one of my research participants from Cork city. He was heavily involved in punk rock, fanzine publishing, and political agitation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the summer of 2014, he rediscovered a fanzine collection that had stayed in his father's attic for two decades that was far removed from a life he now led in the corporate world:

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

While Conor had to downscale that collection he found at his father's house to move it to his own home, it was clear from talking to him that there was a sense of emotional capital⁴ that came from reading back over older publications. Individuals such as Conor keep these collections because it is their way of recalling specific times, events, and places. While we tend to collect things from our past that are personally significant, we start to separate from what Daniel Miller (2010) simply terms 'stuff' as we get older; Miller's case studies showed individuals who shed possessions as they aged, keeping individual trinkets symbolic of different key life events. As Miller's participants grow older, the physical space they have shrinks so their collection of memorabilia becomes increasingly prioritised. Interestingly, a number of the fanzine producers encountered during this research were working on their publications while in post-primary school or in University.

As producers of fanzines are generally the biggest collectors of these texts, a common occurrence amongst older collectors of fanzines has been that their collecting habits tend to change as they have got older, moved out of home, co-habited, and started their own families – this was very much demonstrated in field interviews with Michael, Richie, Barry, and Conor. It mirrors Shuker's attestation that 'buying tends to decline with age, increased family commitments, and with the items still sought becoming fewer and more difficult to acquire' (2010: 126). Whereas fans in other cultural activities (for example, Geraghty's toy collectors, 2006) increase their collections as they get older and have more access to the financial means to do so, I have found that many fanzine collectors in Ireland do the opposite and decrease their collections for a variety of reasons – detachment from the music scene, disposability of the format, and a lack of potential future economic capital that comes with other types of collecting, such as toy collecting.

Personal space – in both a physical and psychological sense – has become more limited as active members of the fanzine community have progressed into their thirties but

also other commodities and interests have started to fill their lives. Willie – who operated a store in Dublin that specialised in fanzines and underground publications – has since relocated to a remote part of the West of Ireland. He recalls that as a teenager, he threw himself headfirst into building up a large collection:

I was mad for everything – finding ads for mail order distros in England and sending them money to buy zines. My zine collection was huge, it was ridiculous. I gave most of it away. I think if you are going to do a zine there is a good chance that you are obsessed with zines.

Keeping a collection and sharing it – via a mini-distribution or otherwise – demonstrates a social aspect to collecting. While fanzines still play very much a part of his life – he most recently published an edition of his fanzine *Non-Plastique* in 2013 – Willie readily admits that he does not search out new fanzines as much as he used to. Like Willie, other fanzine producers have decided not to maintain their collection over the decades, including Boz, the writer of the fanzine *Nosebleed*:

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

Interestingly Boz notes that the copies he has kept are ‘well-preserved’ which does tie in with the idea that what remains in these collections is similar to what Miller (2010) proposed. There can also be a link drawn between Boz’s collecting practices and Boym’s idea of ‘reflective nostalgia’ (2001). Boym speaks of an acceptance of individuals that a particular era has passed by but that there is still a wistful longing for a certain time and place. This is a particularly strong argument when looking at those who retain collections of fanzines from a period before circumstances and ageing changed their personas and the personas of their peers somewhat⁵. Furthermore, as Jenkins succinctly notes, ‘the essential point about nostalgia is that things are not the same’ (2007: 243), and that is something clearly recognised by Boz. He has shed his collection as he has gotten older and moved further away from the punk scene, yet he has still kept hold of those that he deems to be of most importance, and has done so with a careful curatorial obligation.

Having a strong and ‘well-preserved’ collection surely gives one some credibility and subcultural capital, but it is hard to fathom how far one will go for a rare copy of a music fanzine. An eBay search conducted in July 2014 brought up just one Irish music fanzine. Issue 6 of *Unfit For Consumption* failed to attract any bids, despite a starting price of just 99 pence. However, as it is just a decade old, it is still relatively recent history, whereas a glance at titles from other fields and countries shows that there is value in certain underground publications. For example, a rare copy of the first Irish science fiction fanzine *Hyphen* from

1955 (Issue 15) was on sale for \$250 from a US trader. An Irish football fanzine entitled *No Way Referee* (issue 1, 1992), which was written by Niall who also produced the punk fanzine *React*, was available for £6 from a UK site specialising in football fanzines. Older international music fanzines did attract a great deal of attention, including an original copy of the UK punk fanzine *Sniffin' Glue* from 1976 (Issue 5), which was listed at £150, illustrating that a format that was so there to represent the 'other' was now considered a commodity, or an antique. However, *Sniffin' Glue* was a title that was far more influential internationally than any Irish fanzine has ever been, and as such Irish fanzine collectors do not believe that their collections will provide for a future financial windfall, unless it contains a rare and significant international fanzine. As the collector Thomas notes:

I would love if they did have some economic value, but they have none as far as I'm aware, they have a sentimental value to me ... I might sell it if I thought it was worth anything, unfortunately I think not.

There are other reasons beyond a lack of financial incentives as to why individuals do not sell their collections. Again, Thomas touches on this notion of sentimentality, and this retention of ephemeral publications is a substantial contributor to his emotional capital. Thomas also feels that others should have accessibility to his fanzines, if they want to read them within the confines of his own home, but other collectors have taken it a step further. Either as a way of dealing with having to downsize their collections or because of a sense of communal responsibility, or more than likely as a mixture of both and certainly with an element of 'reflective nostalgia', some fanzine producers donated their collections to the establishment of the Forgotten Zine Archive, based in Dublin since 2004. Over 1,200 fanzines feature in the library, and are a mixture of music, politics, sports, literature, art, etc., from Ireland and further afield. The archive was visible to the public at the Dublin Zine Fair, held in the summer of 2014. When I attended, it was fascinating to encounter (again predominantly) men in their late thirties and early forties flicker through publications that were undoubtedly part of their youth, but perhaps similarly to Conor who had forgotten that he had a collection in his father's attic, they were a trigger for nostalgia.

Conclusions

As an unabridged collection, the Forgotten Zine Archive is undoubtedly worth a sum of money, but generally speaking there is not any real strong component of economic capital attached to private collections of Irish fans. Instead, as demonstrated in this article, Irish fanzine collectors primarily generate subcultural capital through the maintenance and display of their collections. Within a niche fandom or taste community that is specific to a certain genre of music or a certain publication title, having a strong collection gives one that sense of standing to other members of the scene. The punk music fanzine collector differs from many other collectors encountered in studies of fandom because they frequently

preserve collections of material objects comprised of primarily free works produced by other fans.

Sharing that collection with others, and having a form of archival obligation, can give a more communal sense of nostalgic value to it. However, it needs to be recognised that there are collectors of these publications that traverse Pearce's (1995) typology of collecting; systematic collectors acquire what they need, while others display more fetishistic traits. Contemporary collectors are becoming scarcer as digital media becomes more and more commonplace, leaving the printed fanzine become an increasingly isolated medium. Nevertheless, there are individuals that desire material objects, and argue that their emotional attachment to analogue media is stronger.

For those no longer actively collecting, but instead retaining their collection (or at the very least, important parts of it), they are partaking in souvenir collecting. For these collectors, the single most important characteristic of their collection is memory attachment; it is the personalised connections that they can recall as a period of time is captured to give an overall sense of emotional capital.

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- No Barcodes Necessary* (2002) #2 (Armagh, Northern Ireland).
- React* (1993) #22 (Dublin, Ireland).
- Scumbag* (1997) #Unknown (Dublin, Ireland).

Notes:

¹ Nonetheless, collecting in fan cultures can sometimes be quite a lucrative pursuit; indeed, Lincoln Geraghty opens his recent volume on *Cult Collectors* (2014:1) with the story of a comic book that fetched over \$2 million at auction.

² Up until 1978, Ireland had just one licensed (public broadcaster) television station and two state public broadcaster radio stations (one of whose output was entirely in the Irish language). Media in the country was somewhat liberalised during the 1970s, particularly with the introduction of pirate radio stations playing pop and rock music (Morash, 2010: 186-189).

³ The 'white label' record was more a fixture in 1980s/1990s clubbing circles. It would refer to a pre-release of a 12" single that would appear with a simple white label and no artwork, and was often distributed (as a limited edition) to clubs and DJs prior to release for promotional purposes. Langlois (1992: 233) discusses how it was a device used by record labels to see if a track had potential for success prior to an expensive outlay on the pressing of a single for release.

⁴ Diane Reay (2000; 2004) is one of the few scholars that utilises the concept of 'emotional capital', and she uses it very much to describe inter-family relationships stating that it 'encompasses the emotional resources you hand on to those you care about' (2004: 60). This is quite a different way to

how I see the nostalgic/emotional capital framework, but there is a link to be made here to the gendering of the collection process (see Straw, 1997, for how 'connoisseurship' of records is a male-dominated custom): fanzine making and collecting in Ireland anyway has been predominantly done by males.

⁵ It should be noted that many fans of punk music do not necessarily leave the 'scene' as they age; their practices may change somewhat but they still associate themselves with the punk scene, buy merchandise and media related to the genre, and go to 'gigs'. Bennett (2006) has looked at this in greater detail with his ethnographic study of older punks in the UK.