

## Filming concerts for YouTube: seeking recognition in the pursuit of cultural capital

Article (Accepted Version)

Colburn, Steven (2015) Filming concerts for YouTube: seeking recognition in the pursuit of cultural capital. *Popular Music and Society*, 38 (1). pp. 59-72. ISSN 0300-7766

This version is available from Sussex Research Online: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/65236/>

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies and may differ from the published version or from the version of record. If you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the URL above for details on accessing the published version.

### **Copyright and reuse:**

Sussex Research Online is a digital repository of the research output of the University.

Copyright and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable, the material made available in SRO has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

# **Filming Concerts for YouTube: Seeking Recognition in the Pursuit of Cultural Capital**

Steven Colburn

## **Abstract**

Over the last few years, music fans have filmed portions of live concerts on their mobile phones or compact video cameras and upload this footage to YouTube. This article focuses on what motivates “filmmakers” to place a camera between themselves and the performance on stage to capture footage consumed later. A notable facet of the culture of concert filming is that filmmakers tend to only film concerts. They eschew the traditional image of YouTube users who use the site as a dumping ground for all manner of cultural ephemera. Filmmakers are small scale broadcasters who provide access to limited spaces and often take pride in the audio / visual quality of their products. They are unpaid for their efforts but instead seek recognition from their audiences as their compensation. Drawing on interviews with a sample of concert filmmakers from across the globe, this article offers a contemporary recalibration of Pierre Bourdieu’s influential work and argue that filming concerts can be understood as a specific iteration of “cultural capital.” It suggests that fans position themselves as cultural intermediaries, blurring the boundaries between producers, consumers and broadcasters.

My motivation? Genuinely, it is altruism. I share them with other fans. However, it is altruism tempered by a need for regard. I do these things, people thank me; either it's a recollection for them or a peek into something they couldn't attend. If people thank me, they are grateful. Others notice it, others give me respect. Respect heightens my profile and can lead to popularity and it happens time after time on sites I use; not just video clips but photos too, and not just of concerts.

Patrick<sup>1</sup>

Patrick, in his thirties and from Guildford in Surrey, films concerts. He attends these events as a paying audience member and chooses to film portions of them with his digital camera. The act of filming transforms the concert experience by distancing the “filmer” from the immersive experience of being in attendance.<sup>2</sup> This article examines the motivations of ordinary people who film concerts without expectation of financial gain. The paper focuses on the motivations of ordinary people who film concerts. More specifically, it examines arguments, as articulated by Patrick above, that filmmakers are motivated by social recognition. It uses Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital” to explain the nature of this recognition and the manner of its construction through the architecture of YouTube. The article begins by setting out the background and scope of my research, provides an overview of the methodology of the project, then discusses my findings alongside recent work on fandom and YouTube.

With the mass distribution of affordable digital video cameras and the emergence of video sharing websites such as YouTube, in the last decade concert filming has become an easily accessible cultural pursuit. Thirty four filmmakers and thirty seven YouTube viewers from around the world were interviewed for this study throughout 2010. Interviews were conducted in English either by email or the message service available within YouTube from a global sample of filmmakers and YouTube viewers. Participants were identified by entering

English language terms such as “live concert” and “gig” into YouTube’s search function. This led to a bias towards participants using English words to describe and code their videos. It also meant that those whose first language was not English were engaging with “Western” music rather than their own local musical styles. Most filmmakers interviewed tended to film portions of concerts, often just two or three songs per show. Few had filmed full concerts. Those who recorded full concerts did not necessarily upload their unedited footage to YouTube. Users often chose to only upload what they considered to be the “best” material, defined either in terms of the standard of the performance or quality of the captured footage.

There are two key ways in which people begin to find a hobby in filming concerts. One stems from advancements in camera technology. The shift to digital technology in the past decade has resulted in cameras that are able to capture video as well as still photographs. For many years, concert-goers had taken cameras with them in order to take a few photographs. Some I spoke with referred to shooting a few snippets of video on a whim at a concert purely to test the functionality of their new digital cameras. They were pleasantly surprised by the quality and clarity of the footage, so began the transition from taking photographs to filming. People also found this hobby as a result of browsing on YouTube in hope of finding amateur concert footage before or after they attended live shows, then deciding to try filming their own.

I am a YouTube viewer but not a filmer. I frequently attend concerts myself but have never felt the need to film nor take photographs. I do, however, sometimes watch YouTube concert videos to get a sense of a musician’s stage show prior to seeing them live. I tended to watch a few videos from each filmer approached for the project and compliment them on their videos

as part of my opening message to them. This approach may have contributed to the good response rate I received as it displayed the recognition discussed in this paper.

My research included input from people who filmed concerts and posted them on YouTube, as well as viewers. I engaged with people who were live music fans and those who are YouTube contributors. Around fifty per cent of filmers I approached responded and the majority of those went on to complete an interview. YouTube viewers were selected by contacting people who had left comments beneath the videos of the filmers interviewed for the project. All YouTube viewers interviewed had, therefore, watched at least one video produced by one of the filmers participating in the study. While YouTube viewers were asked five questions, filmers were asked a series of twelve such as how their activities modified or transformed the experience of attending a concert, what their reasons were for starting to film and for subsequently contributing to YouTube, and what social functions both live music and their videos fulfilled.

The concert goers I interviewed were all committed filmers who had uploaded between fifty and several hundred concert videos. Their experiences led them to refine their camera techniques. Several mentioned that they had developed a formula to try and capture the best possible footage. Most stated that filming was only realistically possible within the front ten rows of a concert audience: any further back and the image of the stage is too distant to capture any detail and makes the video unwatchable. Filmers rarely reported major issues with other concert goers. One interviewee spoke of her brother, also a filmer, receiving a complaint that the light from his camera was in the line of sight of a neighbour in the audience. Other interviewees recounted infractions with security personnel. A much more

common complaint came from filmers who stated that, due to the mass of bodies in the audience, they were often prevented from getting a clear view of the stage, so filming was not always possible. Some said that their footage was ruined by people walking in front of the camera mid-song. Most filmers accepted this situation and took a pragmatic view, managing their expectations and discounting the possibility of creating a 'perfect' concert film. A few displayed a more determined attitude and spoke of pushing to the front of the audience, asking people around them to be quiet, or even pushing people out of the way to capture footage.

One interviewee was a dedicated Madonna fan who named his YouTube account after one of her songs. His video library comprised almost exclusively his videos from Madonna concerts. Another interviewee from Las Vegas recounted travelling all the way to Seattle to film the opening night of an Oasis tour of North America. He was particularly proud of this video. It received a high number of views and generated a high number of comments from YouTube users. Some interviewees filmed more obscure music. A filmer from Florida specialized in capturing hardcore bands such as Escape the Fate while another from Finland shot cult hard rock bands like Voivod and Motorhead. Other filmers were more interested in obscure rock and indie music. One interviewee from London proudly explained that Seattle punk band The Briefs included one of his videos on their official DVD. The direct commodification of his video offers a good example of a situation where a filmer obtained recognition rather than economic capital; indeed the record company who sold The Briefs' DVD accrued economic capital in that case.

Interviewees expressed various reasons for uploading their footage. Since YouTube was designed to be a video archive site, many used it as an ideal storage space for their videos. In

some cases, that videos were openly available to other people was incidental to the filmers' aims. For others, YouTube's capability as a broadcasting platform was much more important. Most interviewees indicated interest in broadcasting concert footage to others, but a few were unequivocal in their ambition to broadcast to a global audience.

Interviews with individual fans have a tendency to 'individualise' their subjects. Elizabeth Silva and David Wright make the case that sociological methods have contributed to the fabric of modern society. As a mode of enquiry the interview is both a trope and discourse of modernity, contextualising the experiences of individuals in relation to their wider social networks and ontological experiences. As a result of fans being engaged empirically and individually, cultures of fandom are no longer considered homogenous. This leads to two problems: relating the experiences of one fan to another, and extrapolating these recorded experiences into wider fan communities. It is from this perspective, attention to particular media forms might help us interpret the behaviours and motivations of fans in a way that applies to wider fan communities. Michael Scott has conducted a study of musicians who use social media, such as YouTube, to promote their music. He points out the limitations of the interviews he conducted in order to uncover the cultural economics of social media: "It is difficult to recount what are highly nuanced social exchanges without more exhaustive ethnographic work" (251). The "exhaustive ethnographic work" that Scott mentions may involve the pursuit of participant observation to contextualise and supplement his interview data. This article will show how filmers draw on discourses of recognition to present motives for their activities. It will also acknowledge that the smaller details may vary in the context of each difference filmer.

Much of the early academic literature on YouTube is based upon textual analysis, political economy or historical analysis. The work of Jean Burgess and Joshua Green offers a clear example. They provide a historical overview of the development of the website and a typology of texts that appear. There is no ethnographic research or much evaluation of the *use value* of YouTube in their research. Similarly Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vondereau edited a volume of academic articles on the subject. None of the articles included offer any ethnographic research. Along with Burgess and Green's book, what such pieces offer is a textual and historical overview of YouTube. They provide a synopsis of its logistics, structure as a text, place on the Internet and typologies of its associated content. More recent research - particularly in relation to music culture - tends to contextualise it as social media. Its ability to connect globally at grassroots level has been described as an attack on traditional mechanisms of power in the music industry. Hence, "The development of the global social media and music nexus clearly resonates with the worries of the critical political economy tradition" (Mjos 143). Mjos's work suggests that this attack requires us to rethink the traditional "few to many" media communication models: "Global social media is the result of the development of systems like the Internet so MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube are therefore part of this 'mobility turn'" (148). By empowering people with no prior access to positions of influence, social media have challenged received power structures. According to Lilie Chouliaraki, "This mediated participation of ordinary people in public cultures is being hailed as blurring traditional boundaries between media producers and consumers, and leading to new forms of playful citizenship, critical discourse and cosmopolitan solidarity" (227). The general consensus among Internet researchers is that social media have created a new, democratized means of sharing music tastes and preferences, thereby influencing music consumption patterns at grassroots level and without explicit influence of the music industry. Like Goran Bolin, both writers perceive social media as mobilizing an unpaid cultural



workforce who promote media products of their own volition. Social media offer opportunities to accrue cultural capital through appreciation and recommendation of cultural forms whilst generating income for the industries from which these cultural forms emerge. This paper explores a range of practices pursued by filmers – including recording concerts, uploading the digital footage, and watching the uploaded video and its comments.

Academic understandings of “recognition” tend to be associated with the work of critical theorists such as Axel Honneth. Honneth uses the term to articulate the formation of social power in increasingly atomized societies. This is a political notion of recognition that explores how people express and embody power as individuals rather than part of national or communal identities. My formulation of recognition is more cultural than political, but not unrelated to this term’s political sense. It is based upon Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital.” Cultural capital is a concept that Bourdieu sees as part of a shared “game of culture” (12). Inasmuch as it puts individuals into competition with one another, based on the culture and intellectual knowledge and experience of every participant. The game involves trading knowledge and experience for kudos and reputation. In terms of recognition, the game means impressing other people by displaying a superior understanding of forms and formats.

Bourdieu argues that such trading is manifest in the difference between being *aware* of a cultural form and *appreciating* it: “the considerable gap between knowledge and recognition” (319). Moreover, the politics of culture is highlighted by the relationships between economic and cultural capital: “the profits accruing from their (artists, artisans or similar) cultural capital are at least partially appropriated by those who have power over this capital” (303). This implies that although industrial frameworks providing mass access to culture can withhold financial reward, cultural capital can be seen as the means by which people find symbolic compensation for their creativity.

Paying attention to the public turn towards social media such as YouTube provides a way of stratifying and clarifying of the pursuit of recognition through cultural capital within the rubric of music fandom. One contention is that social media monetizes friendship, fandom and fan communities:

When we orally discuss the qualities of a television drama, the experience of playing a computer game, or the new release by Lady Gaga, these are value judgements that are transient, living on only as memories, among the co-present discussants. But when we engage in the same evaluations on Facebook, YouTube or any other social networking site, this conversation results in textual expressions that can be appropriated by the media industry. (Bolin 806)

Bolin's suggestion is that social media publicize endorsements of cultural forms by fan communities and monetize grassroots publicity for these forms. What his article seemingly does not recognize is that many social media users are aware of these transactions and actively want to participate in them as a way to express cultural capital. With that in mind, this article explores the forays of a number of music fans into social media and address their motivations for participation by considering their displays of cultural capital and bids for social recognition.

Shelley is in her twenties, lives in Los Angeles and regularly films the concerts that she attends. The feedback that she receives from other YouTube users is, for her, an important part of the filming experience. She particularly values comments received from users outside of the United States:

I love it. Most of the comments have been very positive. I have received so many comments and messages from people all over the world; Germany, Africa, Japan, Canada, Brazil, etcetera. Mostly they are very appreciative of the fact that I share these videos since, due to their locations, they will likely never get to see the artist live and in person themselves, and certainly not in a small club setting like I am fortunate enough to do living in Los Angeles.

The comments that Shelley received performed at least two functions. First, they were straightforward articulations of appreciation from YouTube viewers. Second, they served to mark out a distinction between presence and absence: a global spread of viewers suggests the relative scarcity of the popular culture to which Shelley has privileged access. While a majority of the audience were restricted to watching amateur footage on YouTube, Shelley was able to experience highly valued concerts first hand. Since access to this music culture is highly desirable for others, Shelley's rarefied position is implicitly recognized by these global viewers and her status established. Scarcity is part of such transactions. Shelley provided access and in return gained acknowledgement of her position within a rarefied space of music consumption.

Shelley had reason to understand the value of having physical access to Los Angeles. Prior to moving there she lived in a more remote location that did not afford her the same level of access to popular culture. She previously engaged in the same sort of remote accessing pursued by her current global YouTube audience:

Before moving to Los Angeles I always heard of the great club shows going on practically every night. I was always searching YouTube, Vimeo and other video

websites for fan shot videos of the performances I wanted to see. One of my favourite musicians is Dave Navarro and when I began going to see him perform in various settings I would tape portions of the show to share with other fans not living in the area. Since I know how it feels to not live “where the action is” I decided to start uploading videos for those people who were in the same situation I once was. My motivation was, and is still, to share the live show experiences with those people who don’t live close enough to attend these shows themselves.

This system of value is self-constructed. Shelley projected the dissatisfaction that she once felt onto those now watching her videos in other parts of the world. The gratitude she would have felt when previously not living “where the action is” and being offered access to popular culture is projected onto those who are now watching her cultural dispatches from Los Angeles. Viewing figures indicated the *relative* popularity of videos but it was the *comments from other users* that provided tangible evidence of interest from other people. The logistics of YouTube allowed a filmer to trace the origins of these comments by clicking on the profile of those commenting and get a sense of who is watching the videos. This combination of empirical evidence with her personal experience in accessing popular culture allowed Shelley to construct a system of cultural capital without it being explicitly articulated, a system where she could display cultural capital and accrue recognition for providing others with access to popular culture.

Shelley was the most forthright in articulating her interest in reaching global audiences, taking viewing figures and comments as markers of success in filming. Many of the filmers that I interviewed spoke of appreciating comments and paying attention to the number of views their videos received. Shelley, however, framed her filming in terms of reaching out to a global audience of YouTube viewers. This approach raises issues relevant to mainstream broadcasting. Shelley chose what she films at concerts and what proportion of this material to upload to YouTube: “Usually I will record a song which I recognize or is one of my

favourites. I will also record if I know that a large number of people will enjoy that particular song or artist.” She presented her agenda as ostensibly self-interest, but quickly followed up by acknowledging the need to consider wider audiences. Shelley did not elaborate on how she knows what other people would find valuable. It is tempting, therefore, to suggest this is also a self-constructed concept. Responses from others, however, indicated the ways in which filmmakers assessed what would be popular with YouTube viewers. They referred to checking Internet forums, for example, to see which songs are being discussed by fans and also paying attention to popular amateur concert videos on YouTube, then offering a better quality version of the song contained in those videos if they can.

There were, however, filmmakers who framed their filming and uploading of concert videos in more participatory terms. While Shelley sought respect and admiration from a global audience, other filmmakers were more interested in contributing to the fan community. Mark explains:

I always thought it would be great to capture on film some of the great bands I was going to see, but rather than just buy a live video, it would be more personal to capture your own footage, from your point of view and then re-live the whole thing. And the added motivation to do it is the joy of sharing your clips with friends, and more recently with complete strangers on YouTube and hearing/reading their comments. Also I think it's good to have some kind of footage of bands that mostly get ignored by the media, such as The Briefs, Cute Lepers, as well as legendary figures like Jayne County who only makes few appearances here and there. Now it's all there for future generations to investigate and enjoy.

Mark problematized the notion of recognition as motivation for filming and uploading. He demonstrated an interest in the opinions of others rather than rationalising comments as interest in his contributions to popular culture. Most filmmakers interviewed demonstrated a certain level of disinterest in the content of the comments they received; preferring to

quantify them as evidence of the attention of others on their work. In relation to Shelley's views, Mark's displayed the nuanced differences in attitudes towards social media discussed earlier by Goran Bolin. Mark enjoys the act of sharing his films and his reference to 'complete strangers' indicated an interest in courting the attention of wider audiences. This is a softer form of the recognition seeking that Shelley articulates. Mark's reference to obscure bands provided an archetypal example of the display of cultural capital within the framework of 'indie' music, a field where the appreciation of obscure cultural forms can express a heightened level of cultural capital.<sup>3</sup>

One way in which filmmakers assess their efforts is the quality of their films. A number of filmmakers interviewed distinguished their output by claiming that they created material of superior quality to that of others. According to Arne from Norway, "My friends who saw the footage said it was such good quality and sound that I should post it on YouTube. There are far too many people posting crappy footage in low resolution and with bad sound." Arne speaks of being motivated to upload videos to YouTube as a result of his friends' encouragement. In a relatively nuanced statement, he took the appreciation of his real world friends and transposed it onto his relationship to other filmmakers in the virtual world. The feedback that he received from other YouTube users commenting on his videos is framed with this notion of recognition: "I love video comments. It shows that people care for my posts." Many of the filmmakers interviewed stratified the types of comments they received - for example, into positive and negative categories. Arne does not seem to do this. He welcomed comments as an indication of other people taking an interest in his videos. In a sense, he already had the quality of his work validated by his friends, so he felt recognized before uploading his footage. Even if a YouTube viewer left a negative comment it can be rationalised as evidence of another person watching his videos.

Since the videos are stored on remote Internet servers rather than - or as an adjunct to - being stored in filmers' hard drives, YouTube represents a version of the cloud storage that is used in computing as a means of storing significant amounts of data remotely on servers. A few interviewees referred to using YouTube as a convenient archive for their videos. However, the majority of filmers interviewed spoke of their wish to broadcast to other people. Their primary audiences was people who lacked access to the material being broadcast. This could mean anything from those unable to attend a concert to people who have not heard of the musicians performing in the video. In every case it is the filmer working as a gatekeeper providing access to relatively scarce material for a wider YouTube audience. Filmers are primarily interested in providing access to restricted cultural spaces - in this case concert venues - and receiving credit for doing so. This is why Roberta from London filmed concerts:

Just to show my friends moments in the gigs that I enjoyed, or found funny, or just wanted to generally show off how close I was (to the stage)! I also wanted to show people who didn't have the opportunity to go to the gig, a little snippet of it, so maybe they didn't feel so left out!

Filming at a concert and uploading the films as files to YouTube are two related acts. They are still distinct from one another and so can be motivated by different reasons. Interviewees suggested that filming was motivated by a wish to capture a moment, whereas uploading was a wish to broadcast the filmers' *presence at* this moment. By extension this means that filmers are seeking to demonstrate their attendance where their YouTube audience was not present when the moment was captured on film. It is telling that Roberta only hoped to show her audience a "snippet" of what she enjoyed. It is perhaps unrealistic for a YouTube video to adequately capture the experience of being at a concert so this might be a case of pragmatism on her part. Her response, however, was couched in terms that suggest Roberta sought to

impress her audience and gloat over her attending an event that many viewers might have enjoyed attending, but could not. As broadcasters, filmmakers contended that they supplied a demand from culturally dislocated YouTube viewers. This contention was only somewhat reflected in my conversations with YouTube viewers. Those from less culturally vibrant parts of the world seemed to typify the audience that filmmakers such as Shelley perceive for their videos. According to Jodi from Canada:

I'm from Winnipeg; no one ever came here that was really cool. You try living in a city where The Tragically Hip played here 6 times a year from 1989 to 2000. It's getting better since they built the new arena.

Jodi's circumstances were representative of a demographic of YouTube viewers reliant on the website to bridge cultural gaps. As Shelley inferred, the usual target audience for filmmakers was people who were not physically present at the concert. My research suggests, however, that many viewers *did* attend in person. These people are the unintended beneficiaries of the transaction between cultural intermediaries like Shelley and their core audience.

Another facet of the architecture of YouTube is that every uploaded video has a viewer counter that shows how many times it has been streamed. This can also be used as a marker of value for filmmakers: a rudimentary viewing figure that cannot show how many different people have watched a video but can show how many times a video has been watched.

According to Teresa from Toronto:

I have also developed a bit of a curiosity around what acts will get a lot of hits or not; a bit like throwing a lure into the water and seeing how many fish you'll catch, so I enjoy watching to see the level of interest the videos generate. In some instances, more people view the videos I've posted online than saw the concert originally. One video I've posted has over 20,000 hits, which is twice the attendance; a bit of a head shaker to think that 20,000 have experienced *my particular view* of the event. It makes me feel like the effort and at times pretty sneaky stealthy filming is worth it.<sup>4</sup>



YouTube counted every time an individual clicked to start watching her video irrespective of whether that person watched the video through or has watched the video multiple times. The viewing figure was, therefore, not a reliable indicator of how many people have watched a video. Teresa had no way of knowing how many people watched her videos or who these people were. Much of her system of value was, again, self-constructed. It is possible that Teresa was aware of the unreliability of the viewing counter, but chose to take the raw number as a viewing figure in order to maximize her perceived audience. Teresa took a raw number given to her by the architecture of the YouTube website and created a narrative in which twenty thousand people who were unable to go to the concert watched it via her video. She had no further evidence to support her claim. The evidence from interviewing YouTube viewers suggests that many *would* have been at the concert. They were not using the videos to access the concert but instead as an adjunct to their own memories. Although such viewers were afforded less recognition, Teresa constructed a narrative that offered her the maximum level of recognition.

Many viewers spoke of leaving comments to thank filmers for their efforts. My experience with the website indicates that these types of message appear quite regularly. Above all, establishing the objective facts or truth about this economy of YouTube seems redundant. Filmers may construct their systems of recognition to gain pleasure and satisfaction from their use of YouTube. They may take respectable viewing figures and occasional message of thanks for their videos as circumstantial evidence of the gratitude for their work that has circulated amongst YouTube viewers. Since there is no way of objectively verifying this gratitude, the filmers' self-constructed systems performed this function for their own benefit.

Filmer and YouTube viewers exist within online fan networks, and - as Lucy Bennett (2011) has identified - these networks operate as hierarchies. They are global in geography but relatively small in number and this serves identifiable hierarchies. A filmer can broadcast a concert video to five hundred viewers around the world. The filmer can therefore become the figurehead for a fan community: an example of the “gatekeeper” identified by Tim Wall and Andrew Dubber (2010) in their study of spaces created for music culture on the Internet. While the musician is the subject of fandom, the filmer facilitates this gathering of fans. Given the casual manner in which YouTube videos tend to be consumed, such fan communities are often transient in nature. Lorrie from the United States and Sonya from Chile, are YouTube viewers. Lorrie explains, “I don't usually leave comments on videos, I'm often ready to go to another video after a bit. I do like to check the little thumbs up/down on other people's comments, if they've already said something interesting.” Meanwhile Sonya states:

If YouTube charged me for every video I watched, I'm not sure I would watch them because in that way my father would have to declare bankruptcy. But I do pay to watch concert videos because I'm constantly buying live DVDs through Amazon.

Rather than the consumption of cultural products such as concert DVDs, this transient consumption was closer in nature to web browsing. It meant that fans who might gather together around a particular concert video did not stay within one community for long, perhaps only the duration of the video. Fans did not inhabit this space simultaneously. Weeks or months might elapse between comments being left for each of the videos. Nevertheless, viewers could attempt to promote themselves within fan communities by leaving comments beneath the video. They might state that they also attended the concert or offer their opinion about the quality of the music or video, or they might offer the name of the song being played

if it was not specified by the filmer. Each case was a matter of displaying cultural capital in exchange for kudos: demonstrating knowledge or experience with a view to self promotion.

Despite being bracketed as social media, YouTube is not ideally suited for communal activities. A quantitative analysis by Thelwall *et al* suggested that the comments sections beneath YouTube videos operate as “asynchronous online discussions” (618). Their work also discerned that music content was less likely to attract comments than political or current affairs videos. Thelwall *et al* found that the average age of a YouTube commenter is around twenty and they are predominantly male. Videos could attract thousands of comments if they were showcasing provocative material or opinions but this was rarely the case with music based videos (*ibid.*). Though drawing on a much smaller sample, my research into YouTube commenters indicated less of a gender divide and a broader age range. Filmers also referred to their videos attracting significant numbers of comments. According to Robin from Las Vegas:

The upload I am most proud of is the opening of Oasis’ Dig Out Your Soul tour. I flew to Seattle to see the first performance of the tour, knowing that it was my intention to capture the opening. I didn’t know whether the venue would allow cameras inside, but I was hopefully optimistic. I began to shoot the moment the lights dimmed and carried on for about 7 minutes or so. I also attempted to record audio via an application on my iPhone, but the audio did clip out on that device, so I was grateful for the video/audio functionality on the point and shoot still camera. I uploaded the raw footage to YouTube as soon as I returned to Las Vegas then the comments began to fly.

It seems that many Brits were dismayed at the lack of enthusiasm by the crowd in Seattle. I initially deleted the first negative comment, but then I left it wide open for discussion. I never commented myself. However, I think what many people that are diehard fans in the UK don’t realize is that this was a theatre venue with reserved seats and tight security. There was no (mosh) pit per se, so the audience was tightly controlled. Even more telling is the fact that Oasis isn’t viewed as a rowdy band here as they might be in Manchester, etcetera. Oasis have always been rather melodic. We have extreme music which certainly elicits the type of response that I believe many people wished they would have witnessed with the Seattle crowd. Rage Against The Machine is a perfect example. When they played Coachella a couple of years ago there were riot police on hand. The crowd was

intense but broke up very peacefully afterwards. Nine Inch Nails comes to mind as another extreme example. The music of these two types of bands and the hundreds of other hard core performers just doesn't merit an apples-to-apples comparison with Oasis, who are more Beatlesque. Overall, I'd say that comments are provocative, with potentially positive and negative bias, yet productive.

Robin offered a qualitative account of a live concert video inciting a debate amongst Oasis fans. Less mooted, but underlying the story, was his own role in capturing the footage and kick-starting this discussion. That such an interesting discussion ensued is implicit recognition of the value of his footage. The fact that he chose not to comment arguably represents an effort to place himself as the chair of the debate and therefore occupy a high position within a hierarchy of Oasis fans.

Thelwall *et al* suggest that YouTube viewers are politically motivated to write comments. There was a socio-political bent to Robin's anecdote which places it in the context of national identities. However, any discussion of political motives is somewhat confounded by the way that – as they frequently told me - viewers tended to leave comments for videos on YouTube from shows they had visited. As another filmer called Kelly explained:

I get excited when other people leave comments for shows that I was at. Comments like 'this show was so good!' and "this song was amazing!' Maybe because music is such a big part of my life I like when other people can appreciate a good solid live performance.

Several YouTube viewers interviewed also commented that YouTube can extend the concert experience. It demonstrated the value that some YouTube viewers ascribed to live concert videos and allowed the filmer to gain credit from viewers for facilitating this experience. It also identified a transient fan community that may not be accessing the concert video synchronously, but still feel a sense of community in the act of viewing and commenting on YouTube videos, an experience for which they are indebted to the filmer.

Discussion so far in this article has outlined the role of recognition in motivating the efforts of people who film concerts and upload the videos to YouTube. This recognition is reliant upon fan networks and communities, so it is useful to relate these findings to other studies of contemporary fan culture. One anthropological concept recently adapted to participation in Internet fan cultures has been the idea of the “gift economy,” but it has been made clear that the process of filming and uploading is not motivated by giving. It is not - as Roberta Pearson has explored - a case of fans sharing content or information freely with each other. There is always an agenda. Filmers are not compensated for their efforts, neither are the people leaving the comments, so it is tempting to frame these offerings as gifts. As filmers made clear to me, however, the compensation they are looking for is recognition from other fans, both for having attended concerts and for going to the trouble to film and broadcast footage from them.

It is tempting to look at this mode of compensation - cultural rather than economic capital - as a way of demarcating professionalism and amateurism. As Bertha Chin and Matt Hills demonstrate, however, media professionals are willing to enter into this mode of providing free content as a way of ingratiating themselves with fan communities and appearing to operate from within these spheres of fan production. Professionals can sometimes *appear* motivated by passion for the medium as well as, if not more than, financial rewards. For the professional, the provision of free content is a way of courting positive PR within fan communities. For amateurs it is a way of approximating professional production and vying for superiority within fan communities that value free access to content related to their objects of fandom. The fact that media professionals are becoming active in social media raises the status of amateurs who already use such media to gain large audiences.

Some filmmakers aimed to capture footage of musicians who receive little in the way of mainstream media exposure. Hye Kyung Lee identifies a form of fandom that fills a somewhat similar gap in professional media output. His subjects translate and broadcast Japanese Manga cartoons before official translations are available. Filmmakers can provide a similar function by capturing musicians that perform rare or as yet unreleased music and broadcasting it to other fans via YouTube. Viewers interviewed for this project spoke of using fan footage to find out about musicians who were yet to make an impression in their own country. A musician may be famous in their home country but yet to tour outside it. Fan footage on YouTube allows fans across the globe an opportunity to see these musicians in concert. Another function that videos perform is in offering fans more material to consume. Rebecca Farrugia and Nancy Gobatto highlight the role of collecting in fandom and the Internet in facilitating it. Many interviewees in my study spoke of searching YouTube for more videos to watch featuring musicians they were particularly interested in at the time. Therefore, filming has not radically altered the nature of fandom, though it has, perhaps, offered a natural progression. Fans are now more involved than ever before in the creation and maintenance of fan communities. The global connectivity of the Internet allows fans to see what other fans around the world are consuming, in this case attending and filming concerts, and offers opportunities for fans to connect with one another and compare their commitment to their fandom. It also allows for the enactment and display of fandom that offers rewards to those who are willing and able to capture their experiences as fans at concerts and share these amongst wider fan communities. A lack of physical interaction between these fans leads to misunderstandings about the precise nature of these fan networks. Many filmmakers do not appear to be aware of their own core audiences. Or perhaps they prefer to conceive of the gratitude of music fans from the other side of the world that are unable to

attend the concerts, rather than the lack of respect from the music fans standing next to them at the concert.

This article argued that recognition is a significant motivator for participation in social media. It focused on the case of people who film concerts and upload these videos to YouTube. The study explored the premise that these people are not paid for their efforts and so have alternative motivations. A discourse centring on recognition has been identified in discussions by filmers. This discourse has related to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital." Although cultural capital operates as an alternative form of capital, it can, in turn, be used to generate economic rewards. Additional research would be fruitful to explore how YouTube – both the company and those who run it - benefit from the efforts of filmers who create content for the website. At this point, in lieu of financial reward, filmers are compensated by drawing upon viewing figures and comments as evidence of recognition from other a global audience of music fans. These transactions serve as part of the economy of YouTube that rewards filmers with recognition of their high levels of cultural capital. The article has begun to relate this culture of concert filming to other social media phenomena and has consequently started mapping this economy of YouTube on to wider social practices, an area that also invites further research.

---

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> All research participants have been given pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> I refer to "filmmers" as amateurs who film concerts as opposed to professional film crews that film concerts for official concert productions.

<sup>3</sup> See Hesmondhalgh's work for an interesting discussion of Bourdieu's schema.

---

<sup>4</sup> Her emphasis.



## Works Cited

- Bennett, Lucy. "Music Fandom Online: R.E.M. Fans in Pursuit of the Ultimate First Listen." *New Media and Society* (2011): 1-16. Web.
- Bolin, Goran. "The Labour of Media Use." *Information, Communication and Society* 15.6. (2012): 796-814. Print.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge, 1984. Print.
- Burgess, Jean and Green, Joshua. *YouTube*. Cambridge: Polity, 2009. Print.
- Chin, Bertha and Hills, Matt. "Restricted Confessions? Blogging, Subcultural Celebrity and the Management of Producer – Fan Proximity." *Social Semiotics* 18.2 (2008): 253-272. Print.
- Chouliaraki, Lilie. "Self-mediation: New Media and Citizenship." *Critical Discourse Studies* 7.4 (2010): 227-232.
- Farrugia, Rebekah and Gobatto, Nancy. "Shopping for Legs and Boots: Tori Amos' Original Bootlegs, Fandom and Subcultural Capital." *Popular Music and Society* 33.3 (2010): 357-375. Print.
- Fraser, Nancy and Honneth, Axel. "Redistribution or Recognition? A Political – Philosophical Exchange." London: Verso, 2003. Print.
- Hesmondhalgh, David. "Bourdieu, the Media and Cultural Production." *Media, Culture and Society* 28.2 (2006): 211-231. Print.
- Honneth, Axel. *The Fragmented World of the Social*. Albany: State University of New York, 1995. Print.
- Lee, Hye Kyung. "Between Fan Culture and Copyright Infringement: Manga Scanlation." *Media, Culture and Society* 31 (2009): 1011-1022. Print.
- Mjos, Ole J. *Music, Social Media and Global Mobility: MySpace, Facebook, YouTube*. London: Routledge, 2012. Print.
- Pearson, Roberta. "Fandom in the Digital Era." *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 8.1 (2010): 84-95. Print.
- Scott, Michael. "Cultural Entrepreneurs, Cultural Entrepreneurship: Music Producers Mobilising and Converting Bourdieu's Alternative Capitals." *Poetics* (2012): 237-255. Print.
- Silva, Elizabeth B and Wright, David. "Researching Cultural Capital: Complexities in Mixing Methods." *Methodological Innovations Online* 2.3 (2008). Web.
- Snickars, Pelle and Vonderau, Patrick. Eds. *The YouTube Reader*. Lithuania: logotipas, 2009. Print.

Thelwall, Mike, Pardeep Sud and Farida Vis. "Commenting on YouTube Videos: From Guatemalan Rock to El Big Bang." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 63.3 (2012): 616-629. Print.

Wall, Tim and Andrew Dubber. "Experimenting with Fandom, Live Music, and the Internet: Applying Insights from Music Fan Culture to New Media Production." *Journal of New Music Research* 39.2 (2010): 159-169. Print.