Music in the age of the internet: an investigation into the relationship between music, music use and technology

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Abstract

This thesis provides an empirical investigation into the relationship between music, music use and technology. The data for this thesis is gathered from three field sites, each representing a different type of music user.

The thesis engages with literature from the sociology of music to discuss the impacts of recent changes in technologies of music reproduction upon a range of music related practices. Reflecting upon this literature, the thesis goes onto to identify a number of points at which technology impacts upon the meanings which music has to listeners, how listeners use music for identity work and the social uses to which music is put.

Throughout, this thesis develops new conceptual frameworks for understanding the relationship between music, listener and technology in the age of digital audio files.
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Chapter one: introduction

One of the first human artifacts to be sent beyond our solar system was a phonographic record.

In the months of August and September 1977, the Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 space craft launched from Cape Canaveral Airforce Station in Florida. Within the very precious cargo space attached to each of these ships was a 12 inch gold plated copper record entitled ‘Sounds of Earth’, and a record player to play it upon. Like conventional records, these extraordinary artifacts were enclosed in record covers and on those covers were a series of diagrams representing the position of planet Earth in the galaxy; an explanation of how to operate the record player and decode its analogue signal, and a depiction of the hydrogen atom. At the centre of the record itself was a label proclaiming ‘THE SOUNDS OF EARTH – NASA – UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – PLANET EARTH’.

Discourses surrounding the ‘Sounds of Earth’ records at the time of the Voyager launch emphasised the largely symbolic meaning of this artefact. President Jimmy Carter, in a statement which was placed on the Voyager 1 space craft, drew attention to this issue in the following way: ‘This record represents our hope and our determination and our goodwill in a vast and awesome universe’ (Wikipedia, 2006). Similar feelings were expressed by Dr Carl Sagan, who was responsible for compiling the sounds and analogue images contained upon the record: ‘The spacecraft will be encountered and the record played only if there are advanced space faring civilizations in interstellar space. But the launching of this bottle into the cosmic ocean says something very hopeful about life on this planet’. These two quotations show the duel importance of the ‘Sounds of Earth’ record. Firstly, this object was to act as ambassador to the human race, and, as Carter said, it was intended to ‘represent’ something about humankind, potentially to life forms outside our atmosphere. Sagan’s comments, whilst further underlining this, also hint at the extreme unlikelihood of this record ever being played, placing particular emphasis upon the largely symbolic value of this object. The ‘Sounds of Earth’ record
simultaneously communicates important messages about humankind to both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial life.

In 1977, the 'Sounds of Earth' phonographic record represented the state of the art in sound recording. The illuminating thought experiment I wish to engage in at the outset of this sociological study into the relationship between music, music use and technology is two fold: if a similar mission were to launch today, would a material object such as the 'Sounds of Earth' record still be included in the cargo, when a digital audio file could communicate the 'same' sounds, whilst consuming vastly smaller amounts of cargo space; and, if an mp3 file were included, what differences might this make?

In this speculation, I wish to return to the way in which Carter's statement closely tied the representational significance of 'Sounds of Earth' to the material artefact itself ('This record represents...'). This raises significant questions. Could a similar form of signification be attached to a digital audio file, which, physically can neither be seen nor touched? And, in order for this to happen, might the file first have to be placed upon an mp3 player, thus giving the file an artefactual basis? Today, might a gold-plated, or similarly reinforced iPod be included in the cargo, containing ten thosand sounds of Earth as opposed to a mere ninety minutes worth?

Pushing this speculation further, there is also the specific materiality of the record to consider in relation to digital audio formats. The phonographic record consists of a spiral within a circle, making it an artefact which speaks of the recurrent shapes of the universe in its very materiality. Furthermore, the record cover of 'Songs of Earth' contains information about the position of Earth in the Universe, grounding the artefact, explaining its origin in a way not currently possible with a digital music file. Equally, however, the digital audio file also has certain distinct advantages over the phonographic record in this context. Existing as data, the only storage space that digital audio files require will be within computer hard drives, thus conserving precious cargo space. Finally, playing a digital audio file requires far less physical exertion than playing a record. Indeed, a digital file could be set up to play automatically, whereas setting up a
phonograph is a complicated procedure (especially, I would imagine, for the record's intended audience).

I have elected to embark upon my thesis with this discussion, because it helps me highlight a number of the key themes which I shall be investigating throughout the course of this study. Whilst both of the musical formats discussed above have advantages and disadvantages relative to one another, one thing is clear: each format would provide a different impression of Earth to its intended recipients. This example highlights one of the central arguments of this thesis. Musical format, and the wider technologies of music reproduction, are neither passive nor neutral carriers of content but, rather, have bearing upon how content is received and understood, and the uses to which that content can be put.

The aims of this study

This thesis investigates the relationships between music, music use and technology. The study is pitched at a key point in the development of these relationships, as new technologies of music reproduction and transmission are influencing the ways in which music can be acquired, stored, used, traded, shared and ultimately disposed of. In investigating the various implications of this, I draw upon two partially overlapping bodies of literature within the sociology of music. The first investigates the importance of music to issues such as identity, social structure and forms of sociality (Adorno (2002), DeNora (2003, 2000)), whilst the second broadly explores the relationship between music, technology and forms of sociality (Bull (2006, 2000), Katz (2004)). Drawing upon this literature, my thesis investigates both the emerging and existing practices which have evolved and coalesced around new and traditional technologies of music reproduction, examining how these impact upon the social uses to which music is put and the work of meaning creation and identity formation around music.

I pursue these questions on a number of different fronts. The structure of this thesis is informed by Kopytoff (1996), who suggests that material artefacts have 'biographies',
typified by various cultural classifications and reclassifications which occur over the
length of their 'social lives'. I therefore divide my analysis around broad divisions in the
social life of the object, charting the trajectory of musical objects, both material and
virtual, as they move from acquisition to their various appropriations and
reappropriations, both within and without the domestic environment and, ultimately, to
their obsolescence and disposal. Although the life-cycle of music will not be considered
in a completely linear way, such a perspective allows me to investigate the processes by
which social meaning comes to be inscribed within music and its uses over time. This
perspective also enables me to represent the influence of technology upon various stages
of the life cycles of musical objects. The thesis, therefore, focuses upon the following
areas, which will form the basis of my data chapters, investigating the influence of
technology at each stage: the acquisition of music; the trading and sharing of music; the
everyday use of music; the storage, collection and disposal of music.

Throughout the thesis, I shall investigate certain key themes. As I have already indicated,
a major theme for this research is a consideration of the importance of musical format,
both to musical experience and the uses to which music is put. A second key theme I
shall consider is closely related to this: the issue of materiality. Digital audio files
fundamentally alter the relationship between music and materiality which has existed
since Edison first committed sound to object in 1877. Whereas traditional formats, such
as vinyl and CDs, can be physically handled and displayed, digital audio files have a less
tangible reality. DeNora (2003, 2000) illuminates the relationship between music and
identity, but there is also literature which shows how these identity forming properties of
music are bound up with the materiality of music collections (Cavicchi (1998); Adorno
(1934, 1927); Hodgson, 2002)). To reiterate a question I raised earlier in this chapter, can
the same forms of self representation documented in this literature occur with digital
audio files? These material shifts in music, which I have been discussing, also help
illuminate the relationship between music and its material base, a further central
consideration of this thesis. Whilst a CD or piece of vinyl is a vessel of musical content,
it can also be an aesthetic object in its own right. The task of investigating the impact of a
radical dematerialisation of music, through digital audio files, draws other questions
regarding music and materiality into sharp focus. For example, and in admittedly
dichotomous terms, does a music collector collect music or objects, and how are these
differently valued? What does it mean to own a limited edition or an ‘original’; what
makes something a ‘copy’? These, and other, questions about the relationship between
music and materiality have, so far, and with certain notable exceptions, received only
scant attention within sociology. And, considering the rapid changes within the material
nature of music, rarely has there been a more opportune time to interrogate these
relationships.

Different musical formats imply not only different forms of materiality, but also different
forms of sonic embodiment. For example, a CD uses uncompressed digitalised audio,
whereas vinyl uses an analogue signal. While the perceptible differences in sound quality
from format to format may be subtle, nevertheless the sound will be acoustically different,
even when the music is ‘the same’. A similar point is stressed by Sterne (forthcoming),
who states that, because of the masses of audio data that is removed during mp3 encoding,
the mp3 file ‘literally hears on behalf of the listener’. Sterne’s research illustrates the
ways in which recent technological developments are leading to new configurations
between listener, music and technology, which are only now beginning to be investigated
sociologically. This thesis explores these new configurations, whilst also investigating
how music users understand and value the different sound sources implied by different
audio formats.

I wish to draw together this opening discussion and conclude by listing the major
research questions and aims for this study. In the following, I am using the term ‘music
related practices’ as an umbrella term to encompass a wide variety of ways through
which users engage with music, ranging from music acquisition and sharing, to music
listening and storage.

- What music related practices are emerging around new technologies of music
  reproduction, storage and transmission, and how do these relate to, and co-exist
  alongside, established practices?
• What impact do emerging and existing music related practices have upon issues of sociality and identity formation surrounding music use?

• How are different musical formats understood, valued and used by listeners?

• How does consideration of these questions help illuminate the relationships between music and its material and technological base?

**Thesis overview**

I shall now give an overview of the thesis as a whole, providing a brief summary of each chapter in turn. Through this, I illustrate the main body of my argument and how it develops throughout my thesis.

**Chapter two** engages with literature drawn primarily from the sociology of music. This body of literature emphasises the importance of music as a social medium, illuminating how it impacts not only upon modes of social conduct but also upon issues of identity maintenance and formation. Within this body, there is also a small, but significant, literature dealing specifically with the impact of technological factors upon these issues, which I also delve into.

I isolate a number of key areas within this literature which have particular resonance for the current study. One of these relates to the centrality of structure and/or musical choice to the listening experience, points which are variously developed by Adorno (1941), DeNora (2003, 2000) and Bull (2006, 2000). Given the unprecedented access to the music collection which new technologies afford, and the opportunities this presents for users to create their own subjective musical arrangements (for example, in terms of play lists), I develop this notion of musical structure as a central conceptual tool within my literature review, and one which I build upon throughout the study.
A further point, which arises from the literature, is the position that music, its meanings and its effects, arise not simply from the musical text but, rather, from a complex interplay of textual, contextual and subjective factors. This perspective is most forcefully made by DeNora (2003, 2000), but also finds parallels in the work of Adorno, Bull (2006, 2000) and Feld (1994). A consideration of this literature, in the context of this research, leads me to investigate the ways in which musical format and technology itself feed into these ‘extra-musical’ (DeNora, 2000, 61) or ‘paratextual’ (Genette, 1997) elements of musical meaning creation. The literature review therefore also considers current socio-technical studies of music in use, in order to examine the ways in which these relationships have so far been considered. This section begins by exploring the ontological issues which have been raised by sound recording, a process which in effect bifurcates sound from its original sound source. From here I go on to consider other studies specifically related to the impact of technology on the listening experience and the social uses to which music can be put.

Chapter three documents the process by which I converted the research questions arising out of the literature review into a concrete scheme of research. Here, I illustrate how I employed theoretical sampling in the recruitment of three separate ‘groups’ of listeners: costumers at a second hand record store, members of a music sharing website and a group of UK mp3 bloggers. Within this chapter I also consider the ethical implications of my research and engage in a reflexive deconstruction of my own position as a research, in relationship to the subject matter of this thesis.

The next four chapters present the empirical findings that originate from my fieldwork. The first of these, Chapter four, explores what is, in some respects, the first stage of the life cycle of music, i.e. the acquisition of music. Under analysis here are the different methods through which music is acquired, shared and traded (i.e. through purchase, download or hard copy audio trading and sharing) and how these invoke different modes of social conduct. This is achieved by focusing on the continuities and differences which exist in acquisition practices across my three field sites. Whilst the processes of acquiring,
sharing and trading music were shown to be deeply enmeshed in social practices, the nature of these practices differed significantly from field site to field site, as I shall illustrate.

**Chapter five** moves on to explore the issue of music copyright and how it is understood by listeners, an issue intimately linked with the questions of acquisition which I will have explored in the previous chapter. Here, I discuss the complex moral and ethical choices, into which members of my sample enter, when deciding whether to purchase from music stores on or offline, or to acquire music through illegitimate means. Whilst many reasons were offered for using either, or both, of these channels of acquisition, often such reasons were found to rest upon various and shifting notions of both author and the record industry.

**In Chapter six**, I explore the impact of technology itself upon the listening experience, investigating the various practices which are forming around new technologies of music reproduction and how they relate to existing practices. Here I revisit with the work of Adorno to identify a number of new technologically afforded modes of listening, discussing their impact upon issues of identity and social conduct.

**Chapter Seven** concludes the empirical phase of this thesis by investigating the issue of musical format, considering how different formats are understood and variously interacted with by members of my sample, and the impact of this has upon musical experience. This will be undertaken on three main fronts: the first investigates how new and traditional media are variously valued and understood by members of my sample; the second examines the importance and meaning of tangibility to traditional media, and how the lack of tangibility of digital audio files is managed and understood; the third explores the importance and meanings of music collecting within the domestic environment.

**In Chapter eight** I draw my findings together to construct a holistic conceptualisation of the musical experience. This theoretical framework illustrates the relationship between music, individual music listener and technology.
This thesis closes with **Chapter Nine**, where I speculate about future directions in music technology. Here, I also provide some final personal remarks regarding music, technology and musical experience.

In summary, this thesis seeks to explore the ways in which new music technologies have impacted upon listening practices, understandings of music and modes of sociality and identify formation around music. Drawing on qualitative data drawn from three distinct field sites, it explores the intersection between traditional and new methods of music consumption, and in doing so deepens current understandings of the relationship between recorded music and its technological and material base.
Chapter two: Review of literature

Introduction

What is music, and how does music come to have its specific effects upon us?

The former part of this question can be straightforwardly, but by no means uncontentiously, answered with reference to dictionary definition. According to the Oxford English Dictionary music is:

The art or science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds to produce beauty of form, harmony, melody, rhythm, expressive content etc.

If we accept the above definition, which one may argue does not describe adequately the fullest extent of what music is and might be (opening up debates far beyond the scope of this thesis), the question of how music works still remains. Music has the 'power' to uplift, to change and transport mood and bestow brief moments of transcendence. Equally too, music may operate as background, an ambient backdrop impacting subtly upon moods and modes of social conduct. The question remains, however: from where does this 'power' in music originate. Is it located within the specific properties of the music, or within the interpretative faculty of the subject? Is music language without meaning; meaning without language; something in between, or something entirely other?

Such provocative questions have underpinned, either implicitly or explicitly, much of the sociological research into music. This chapter considers a variety of sociological perspectives upon music, its use, its implications for forms of sociality and its relationship to technology. Drawing upon the work of such authors as Adorno, DeNora (2003, 2000) and Bull (2006, 2000), I shall chart the ways in which music, and the modes of its reception, have been understood sociologically. Within this, I shall spotlight the relationship between music, the social and the importance of the technological architecture of its reception to the ways in which music is used and understood.
This chapter is comprised of three main sections, considering two separate, but overlapping, bodies of literature related to the research questions identified in the introductory chapter. The first section explores literature which considers the questions set out in the opening paragraph of this chapter, i.e. theoretical and empirical work which seeks to explain and explore how music 'works' and why music comes to have its specific effect. This discussion will be based largely around a consideration of Adorno and DeNora (2003, 2000), and will investigate issues such as musical structure, musical choice and the importance of listening context, both social and technological. Whilst there will be some discussion of the impact of technology upon music and listening in this section, the bulk of this discussion will take place in the second and third part of this chapter, which deal explicitly with literature that considers the relationship between music, music use and technology. In these sections, I shall primarily explore socio-musical studies of technology, in order to explore current understandings of the relationship between music and technology.

**Sociological perspectives on music**

Adorno’s work is relevant to this thesis on many levels. It provides a strong conceptual framework from which to think about music, illuminating the relationship between music, social structures and cognitive and emotional response, whilst providing many insights into the connection between music and technology. Furthermore, much of Adorno’s work on music is historically situated at a point of profound transition in the means of production and reception of music. He wrote at a time of huge technological change and witnessed the rise of the mass commodification of culture and of the recording and communication technologies which facilitated it. I argue that we are at a similar moment, where the relation between music, society and the individual is again been reconfigured, giving elements of Adorno’s work particular resonance not just to present study, but, also, to current debates about the nature and meaning of music in late modernity. For the purposes of this review, I shall limit my consideration of Adorno’s work to those elements which speak most directly to the aims and intentions of this thesis, i.e. those
elements most closely related to the nature of music, musical experience and the role of technology in this area.

Much of Adorno’s work is pitched at the theoretical level, allowing little room for empirical analysis. Whilst this aspect of Adorno’s work has led to criticism by many authors, his approach is unsurprising, considering his very close affiliation with the Frankfurt School and his role in the institution of Critical Theory. However, as Bull notes (2000), Adorno’s lack of empirical engagement may be a consequence of the way in which he conceptualises the musical experience. Leppert (2002), writing about Adorno’s involvement in the empirically based Princeton University Radio Research Project, quotes the following from Adorno:

Something specifically musical impeded my progress from theoretical considerations to empiricism – namely the difficulty of what music subjectively arouses in the listener, the utter obscurity of what we call ‘musical experience’. (Leppert, 218).

The above quotation provides an insight into Adorno’s view on music, which I shall now elaborate. For Adorno, music is a form of communication which shares many similarities to language, but, of itself, is not strictly a language. This division between music and language has to do with music’s lack of ‘concepts’. In *Music, Language and Communication* (1956), Adorno charts music’s structural similarities with language, which arise largely from the ways in which tonality can be read as a form of vocabulary. It is worth quoting at length at this point:

The distinguishing element [between music and language] is commonly sought in the fact that music has no concepts. But quite a few things in music come rather close to the ‘primitive concepts’ that are dealt with in epistemology. It makes use of recurring symbols, insignia that bear the stamp of tonality. If not concepts, tonality has, in any case, generated vocables: first the chords, which are always to be used in identical function, even worn-out combinations like the
steps of a cadence, themselves often merely melodic phrases that reformulate the harmony. Such general symbols have the ability to merge with a particular context. They make room for musical specification, as the concept does for the individual things, and, like language, they are simultaneously healed of their abstractness by the context. But the identity of these concepts lies in their own existence and not in something to which they refer (113-114).

For Adorno (1956), music is a vocabulary without true concepts, a language without definite signification. Meaning creation around music arises, in part, from the musical context in which these tonal vocabularies are deployed, a fact which, as I shall explain, plays into Adorno’s theories about the importance of musical structure. However, within Adorno’s conception of music, there remains space for ‘something distinctly mystical’ (Leppert, 2002, 85) within the specific methods by which music operates and affects the subject. Indeed, Adorno (1956) brings this mystical element into his conceptualisation of music, stating that music has a ‘theological aspect’, describing it as ‘demythologized prayer, freed from the magic of making anything happen, the human attempt, futile, as always, to name the name itself, not to communicate meanings’ (156). This again emphasizes the distinction Adorno makes between music and language, highlighting music’s ability, in a sense, to bypass signification and advance straight to the communication of meaning. ‘No art can be pinned down as to what it says’, states Adorno, ‘yet it speaks’ (1956, 122).

Despite Adorno’s views on the obscurity through which music speaks, elsewhere in his work, Adorno engages in musicological inflected readings of musical texts. Whilst Adorno reads the work of classical composers such as Beethoven, it is his readings of the differences between popular music and classical music which has most resonance for the present study. A key text in this regard is On Popular Music, first published in 1941. In this polemical work, Adorno offers a withering critique of the culture industry, spotlighting the damage inflicted upon music, and indeed the listener, by the mass commodification of culture. Central to his argument in this is the idea of musical structure.
Adorno (1990) made a fundamental distinction between the sphere of Popular Music and 'serious' music - such as certain classical composers, for instance Beethoven, and avant-garde music. According to Adorno, standardization is 'the fundamental characteristic of Popular Music', and applies to all aspects of this genre, from common structural elements to generic harmonic and rhythmic conventions. For example:

[It is a] rule [in Popular Music] that the chorus consists of thirty two bars and that the range is limited to one octave and one note. The general types of hits are also standardized: not only the dance types, the rigidity of whose pattern is understood, but also the 'characters' such as mother songs, home songs... Most important of all, the harmonic cornerstone of each hit – the beginning and end of each part – must beat out the standard scheme. (1990, 305)

Because of their adherence to such rules and clichés, Adorno considers all elements of Popular Music to be, in essence, substitutable. He juxtaposes this aspect of Popular Music to the workings of 'good serious music'. With reference to the first movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, Adorno demonstrates how the piece's individual sections and themes obtain their true meaning and significance only with reference to the entire work. In other words, if a single theme or movement within the work is listened to in isolation, a proper understanding of that element becomes impossible. It is only when played in the context of the rest of the piece that it is imbued with its meanings: 'the detail virtually contains the whole and leads to the exposition of the whole, while, at the same time, it is produced out of the conception of the whole' (1990, 307). By contrast, in popular music, each section and each detail is understood not with reference to the other elements of the song, but with reference to the standardized framework upon which the song is based:

It would not affect the musical sense if any detail were taken out of context; the listener can supply the 'framework' automatically, since it is a mere
musical automatism itself. The beginning of the chorus is replaceable by
the beginning of innumerable other choruses. (1990, 306)

These two different types of music lead to two fundamentally different modes of listening:
structural and regressive. Furthermore, these two modes of listening have different effects
upon the listener's cognitive states. Popular Music provides music which, because of its
'patterned and pre-digested nature', requires virtually no concentration on the part of the
listener, whilst also providing a distraction and an escape from the harsh reality of their
lives:

The frame of mind to which popular music originally appealed, on which it
feeds, and which it perpetually reinforces, is simultaneously one of distraction
and inattention. Listeners are distracted from the demands of reality by
entertainment which does not demand attention either (1990, 307)

However, if music has the power to subdue, it also has the power to emancipate. Adorno
argues this point in relation to music of the 'serious avant-garde', which engender
structural modes of listening. For example Schoenberg, who, through his rejection of
formal rules of harmony and structure, fosters critical reflection within his listeners:

Schoenberg's music demands from the very beginning active and
concentrated participation, the most acute attention to simultaneous
multiplicity, the renunciation of the customary crutches of listening
which always knows what to expect... it requires the listener to
spontaneously compose its inner movements and demands of him not
mere contemplation but praxis (Adorno, 1967, 149)

Whilst Adorno's concern with musical structure may have arisen from his background as
a trained musician and composer¹, the idea of structure is a central theoretical concept in

¹ Indeed, Martin (1995) quotes Adorno as saying 'I approached the specific field of the sociology of music
more as a musician than a sociologist' (118).
his analysis of music, and re-emerges elsewhere in his work. Within his analysis, Adorno also considered the impact of specific technologies upon the listening experience. This is most clearly evident in Adorno’s consideration of two specific forms of music technology, the radio and the vinyl record. In his consideration of these technologies, Adorno shows how technological modes of reception influence meaning creation and the experience of listening to music. Within Adorno’s discussion of the radio, the idea of musical structure emerges again.

In The Radio Symphony: An Experiment in Theory (1941), Adorno examines the impact of the radio, noting the ‘threat to structure’ (258) which it presents to symphonic music. Using the example of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, Adorno re-iterates arguments found in On Popular Music (1941), stating that symphonic music demands structural modes of listening. Adorno argues that although there are melodic themes which form repetitive elements within Beethoven’s work, they are not mere repetitions but a series of developments leading to a profound cumulative effect. Adorno’s view of symphonic listening is most clearly summed up in the following: ‘Structurally, one hears the first bar of a Beethoven symphonic movement only at the very moment when one hears the last bar’ (1941, 255). However, the symphony, when broadcast over the radio is not transmitted in its entirety, but rather in individual movements or themes. This leads to ‘atomistic’ listening and ‘quotation’ listening, which not only serve to ‘trivialise’ music, but also wreaks ‘havoc on musical sense’ (1941, 263). In Little Heresy Adorno (1965) expounds upon the impacts of atomistic listening, upon both music and the listener, and its inferiority to structural listening.

Musical understanding, musical cultivation with a human dignity that means more than mere information content, is tantamount to the ability to perceive musical contexts ideally developed and articulated, as a meaningful whole. This is what is meant by the concept of structural listening... Atomistic listening, which loses itself weakly, passively, in the charm of the moment, the pleasant single sound, the easily graspable and recollectable memory, is pre-artistic. Because such listening lacks the subjective capacity for synthesis, it also fails in
the encounter with the objective synthesis that ever more highly organized music carries out. Since music, after all, lacks concepts, the person who listens atomistically is not capable of perceiving it sensually as something intellectual and spiritual. (1965, 318)

The above shows the centrality of structure to Adorno’s (1941, 1965) musical thought. It is only through serious and engaged forms of listening, which attend to symphonic works in their full meticulously structured entirety, that the listener can gain a full appreciation of that musical work. Atomistic listening represents the displacement of structure for the sake of attending to simple thematic content, a move which destroys musical sense and leads to impoverished forms of listening.

Adorno’s (1941) analysis of the radio symphony also encompasses discussion of the specifically technological impact of the radio upon symphonic music. This argument centers on the ‘sound intensity’ of the radio broadcasts. Adorno felt that the specific sonic qualities of radio broadcasts, and the devices used to amplify them, were not sufficient to fully represent the ‘symphonic space’. Speaking of a Beethoven symphony broadcast over the radio, Adorno states:

The finer shades of motifical interrelationships within the construction, the finer necessarily the shades of changing sound colors. These essential subtleties more than anything else tend to be effaced by radio. While exaggerating conspicuous contrasts, radio’s neutralization of sound colors practically blots out precisely those minure differences upon which the classical orchestra is built (1941, 260).

Elsewhere, Adorno (1941) also states that sound volume, something lacking in radio broadcasts, is necessary for the individual to ‘“enter” the door of the sound’ and ‘become aware of the possibility of merging with the totality which structurally does not leave any loophole’ (256). Both these examples draw attention to the fact that, for Adorno, the impact of the symphonic form upon the listener is diminished when channeled through
the technology of the radio and the institution of broadcasting, a fact which impacts upon the manner in which the individual receives and understands the music.

Another still developing audio technology of which Adorno (1934) made a similarly far reaching analysis was the phonographic record. In *The form of the phonograph record*, Adorno investigates the implications of the objectification of music which occurs within this audio format. Adorno argues that within the phonographic record, the nature of music undergoes a fundamental shift, becoming itself a form of encrypted writing: ‘music, previously conveyed by writing, suddenly itself turns into writing’ (1934, 279). If music is a particular form of language, as Adorno claimed, then the musical format represents music in its *written* form, in a more immediate and literal way than musical notation.

Adorno (1927) also discusses the specific implications of the materiality of the record, exploring ‘the contours of its thingness’. In this discussion, Adorno analyses the implication of the record as a possession that can be accumulated and collected:

> Records are possessed like photographs: the nineteenth Century had good reason to come up with phonograph record albums alongside photographic postage-stamp albums, all of them herbaria of artificial life that are present in the smallest space and ready to conjure up every recollection that would otherwise be mercilessly shredded between the haste and hum-drum of private life (278-279).

In this, Adorno (1927) is drawing attention to the manner in which the material nature of music collections can operate as a form of memory repository, a material referent for memories which may otherwise be lost. Elsewhere, Adorno also explores the importance of recorded and collected musical object for identity:

> What the gramophone listener actually wants to hear is himself, and the artist merely offers him a substitute for the sounding image of his own person, which he would like to safeguard as a possession. The only reason that he accords the
record such value is because he himself could also be just as well preserved. Most of the time records are virtual photographs of their owners, flattering photographs (1927, 274).

In this quotation, Adorno shows how two specific characteristics of recorded music, i.e. repeatability and material permanence, imbue the music collection with a particular significance for the individual. Because music provides a mirror, as it were, reflecting aspects of the individual back to him or herself, the materiality of the record is safeguarded in collection, and through this, reflected aspects of the individual are also preserved and protected. Music in its material form, therefore, becomes a simulacrum of the individual, and is valued as such.

As I stated earlier in this chapter, I do not wish, nor have I attempted, to offer a complete synthesis of Adorno’s thought on music, as his arguments cover a territory too wide to be mapped out in this review. Rather, I have sought to focus on those elements of this thinking which bear most relevance for the substantive area of this thesis and the development of my arguments within it. With this in mind, I now offer a summary of the aspects of Adorno’s work which I have considered, drawing out their potential relevance for the study I am engaging in. Adorno states that music’s impact upon the individual is, at least partially, a result of the intrinsic features of the music. Fundamental to this, is the notion of musical structure, which operates at the heart of Adorno’s ideas about musical effect and modes of musical listening. Popular music is structured in such a simplistic way as to lead to regressive listening, whereas ‘good’ symphonic music is structured in such a way that it leads to more engaged, structured forms of listening. Furthermore, and of particular interest to this study, Adorno’s analysis considers the technological mediation of recorded and broadcast music and its impact upon musical structure, the acoustic nature of music and the listening experience. These are significant points, which I shall build upon later in this chapter, through discussion of other writers.

I will now move theoretical focus to the work of Tia DeNora (2003, 2000), whose research shares strong continuities with Adorno’s. DeNora, who engages in ethnographic
investigation of everyday listening practices, makes the connection between Adorno’s work and her own explicit, stating that she wishes to:

lay Adorno’s analysis alongside empirical studies, to convert his assertions into researchable questions so as to see, at the level of real musical events, how Adorno’s ideas might be investigated and assessed (2003, 54)

This quotation hints at the fundamental difference which exists between Adorno and DeNora’s work, i.e. one of methodology. DeNora states that the ‘weakness of Adorno’s approach lies in its failure to provide some means by which its tantalizing claims can be evaluated’ (2000, 2), and that his analysis is conducted at the ‘wrong level’. By ‘wrong level’, DeNora refers to ‘a level of theorizing that does not address or attempt to document the actual mechanisms through which music plays a mediating role in social life’ (40). DeNora’s concern with Adorno’s analysis arises from its lack of empiricism, and, consequent to this, the fact that he never engages with actual, lived examples of music playing and listening in the real world, nor how meaning is created on a day to day basis around music. These criticisms are at least partially justified. Whilst it is true that Adorno did not engage in empirical studies of music, beyond his early work with the Radio project, his approach did not explicitly exclude the place for empirical study. Indeed, Bull draws attention to Adorno’s interest in empirical research, as is exemplified in the following:

Adorno’s work on radio and television of the 1940s and 1950s [...] has been largely ignored in the literature on culture and technology, with even those writers sympathetic to Critical Theory claiming a lack of empirical interest in the work of Adorno. Whilst there is some justice in this claim, Adorno was not primarily interested in empirical work, per se; it nevertheless underplays both his concern with empiricism as a method and his own empirical work’ (15).
Bull goes on to directly quote Adorno, revealing that Adorno placed real emphasis upon the need for empirical, as well as theoretical, investigation, highlighting the connection between these two forms of enquiry.

Empirical investigations, even in the domain of cultural phenomena, are not legitimate but essential. But they should not be hypostatized and treated as a universal key. Above all, they themselves must terminate in theoretical knowledge. Theory is not merely a vehicle that becomes superfluous as soon as the data are available. (Adorno, quoted by Bull (2000, 16)).

DeNora also levels similar criticisms at musicological studies, and some sociological studies of music. Citing work by McClary (1991; 1992), DeNora critiques musicological investigation for an almost exclusive reliance upon semiotic readings of musical materials, thereby locating all musical meaning within the text itself. In this form of analysis, music is literally understood as a text which can be unambiguously read (or perhaps, more accurately, deciphered by those with the requisite forms of knowledge). Such an approach is reductive in that it allows no room for the subject’s interpretation of the piece, nor a consideration of circumstances of music’s reception. DeNora (2006) also draws attention to some deficiencies within the sociology of music, where studies have tended to focus specifically upon how the ‘composition, performance, distribution and reception’ of musical goods are socially shaped, whilst not taking into account the operation of the specific properties of the music and how they affect these things. Although DeNora critiques musicology’s lack of social grounding, she nevertheless sees the discipline as having the potential to provide a perspective which has been lacking from many sociological studies of music. It is this thinking which leads DeNora to synthesise musicological and sociological perspectives within her analysis. This results in a musicologically inflected, sociological analysis of music listening in practice. In such a way, DeNora is able to consider the social reception and use of music, whilst also investigating how music’s specific properties (such as tempo, harmony, melody and pitch) play into these processes.
DeNora’s aim in this is ambitious, i.e. to locate the precise source, or sources, of music’s power to impact upon humans in terms of agency, emotional response and social conduct. In short, DeNora wishes to ‘specify music’s semiotic force’, asking:

In what way should we specify music’s link to social and embodied meanings and to forms of feeling? How much of music’s power to affect the shape of human agency can be attributed to music alone? And to what extent are these questions about music affiliated with more general social science concerns with the power of artifacts and their ability to interest, enroll and transform their users? (2000, 20)

In pursuing these questions, through in-depth ethnographic study, DeNora seeks to unpick the musical moment, thereby illuminating what Adorno referred to as ‘the utter obscurity of musical experience’. It is DeNora’s thesis that musical meaning creation, and the impact which music has upon the individual and the social, is a result of the intermesh of the musical text, contextual factors of music’s reception and the unique psychological mindset that the listener brings to the moment of listening. This approach shares many similarities with Feld (1994), who, in a similar way to DeNora, also argues that the meaning of a musical text is derived not only from the musical text, but from the way in which the listener interacts with this text, through a series of ‘interpretive moves’ (89). Feld’s work in this area, however, is purely theoretical, whereas DeNora’s approach pursues similar questions on an empirical plain.

While the link between identity and music has been researched in sub-cultural studies, which have focused on such issues as the relationship between musical tastes and identity formation through group membership and modes of dress, DeNora (2000, 2003) shows how identity is constituted and reconstituted through real time listening events. DeNora investigates this process through the concept of ‘music as a technology of the self’ (2000. 46). By this, DeNora refers to the ways in which music is used by individuals as a ‘means for creating, enhancing, sustaining and changing subjective, cognitive, bodily and self-conceptual states’ (2000. 49). In exploring this, DeNora draws upon theories of identity and the concept of ‘aesthetic reflexivity’, stating that in late modernity there has been a
rise of ‘aestheticization as a strategy for preserving identity and social boundaries under anonymous and often crowded conditions of existence’ (2000. 51). DeNora explores how music operates in this respect, allowing listeners to shift mood and energy levels ‘as perceived situations dictate, or as part of ‘care for the self’’ (2000. 53). Through this, DeNora shows how music is used as a key touch stone to identity formation and maintenance.

Especially in relation to music and memory, DeNora (2000) argues that identity is created through a presentation not only of self to others, but also of self to self. Music therefore becomes a way of saying ‘I am here’ or rather, ‘I am, hear’. It is within these self presentations that DeNora locates music’s identity forming properties, also arguing that identity is reaffirmed through real time listening encounters.

DeNora illuminates a range of music listening strategies through which her respondents both project and match their own mood, or shift their current mood through music, a process which she refers to as ‘musically reconfiguring agency’ (2000, 53). ‘Venting’ is one example of this, referring to a form of cathartic listening which literally provides an outlet for negative feelings. Another example is related to the ways in which music is used by the listener as a form of motivation, for example, when music is used before going to a social event. In these, and other, examples, DeNora (2000) spotlights the importance of making the ‘correct’ choice of music for achieving these ends, illuminating the implicit understandings that music listeners’ have of what they ‘need’ to hear at a particular moment. Listeners draw upon established repertoires of songs in order to shift mood or energy level. As important as the correct choice is the incorrect choice, which forms a kind of dissonance when there is a mismatch between music and current or desired mood. It is because of this activity, that DeNora described how music listeners often acted ‘like disk jockeys to themselves’ (2000. 49). Elsewhere, DeNora summaries some of the ways in which listeners in her study used music:

The respondents exhibited considerable awareness about the music they ‘needed’ to hear in different situations and at different times, drawing upon
elaborate repertoires of musical programming practice, and were sharply aware of how to mobilize music to arrive at, enhance, and alter aspects of themselves and their self concepts. Part of the criteria for the ‘right’ music was how well it ‘fitted’ or was suitable for the purpose or situation they wished to achieve, or for achieving a particular emotional state’ (2003, 93)

This stance finds many parallels in Bull’s (2006, 2000) studies of Walkman and, more recently, iPod usage. In his research, Bull also highlights the ways in which music is used as a means to reflect or transport mood, a process which he refers to as ‘the management of cognitive contingency’ (2000, 43). Bull provides many examples of the ways in which music listening through personal stereos enables listeners to ‘kickstart’ (2000, 46) required moods, control thoughts, manage the gaze and regain control over time, amongst other things. The following quotation elaborates the relationship which Bull (2000) identifies between music and mood:

Maintenance of mood or the need to be in a particular frame of mind features prominently in users’ accounts [...] For many users the idea that they might go outside without music is often described as distressing, as is the failure of the personal stereo to function correctly in use. Other users may decide not to use it on a particular journey but nevertheless prefer to have it with them ‘just in case’. The ‘just in case’ also extends to having spare tapes to cover the possibility of mood changes, thereby minimizing the possibility of not having the ‘right’ tape to play. Failure to have the correct music invariably makes the personal stereo dysfunctional, leading users to switch their machines off as a preferable alternative to listening to ‘incorrect music’. Incorrect is defined in terms of the sounds not matching either the mood of the user, or surroundings. (20)

The above has strong continuities with DeNora’s (2003, 2000) findings, similarly revealing the importance of choice of music in the task of mood maintenance. Bull highlights the significance of music’s suitability when used in this manner, illustrating the clear understandings which listeners have of ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ music, and what
constitutes these. The impact of technology in the processes which Bull (2006, 2000) describes is not insignificant, and will be explored in the next section of this chapter which deals with the technological aspects of listening. However, the point remains that both Bull and DeNora draw attention to the ways in which the desired, or actual, mood of the individual intersects with music, and the importance of choosing the 'correct' music in 'the management of cognitive contingency' (Bull, 2000) and for music to serve the function of a 'technology of the self' (DeNora, 2000). This illustrates that the work of both these authors highlights the need for a degree of congruence between music and mood, in order for music to work in particular ways. The implications of this for the current study will be drawn out at the close of this section.

Whilst Bull argues that the effects of music are contingent upon the technologies of their reception, at least to an extent, DeNora, as I have stated earlier, pursues a similar line, arguing that the effects of music arise from an interplay of textual, contextual and subjective factors. This is what DeNora (2000) refers to as 'human music interaction', a term which forms the basis of her theories of the origin of music's semiotic powers:

Music affect is contingent upon the circumstances of music's appropriation; it is... the product of 'human music interaction', by which I mean that musical affect is constituted reflexively, in and through the practice of articulating or connecting music with other things (33).

DeNora provides an example of human music interaction at work by using a close reading of the manner in which Lucy, one of her research subjects, listened to Schubert’s Impromptus. DeNora draws attention to the fact that, although the music itself is embedded with calming tonal triggers, it is primarily through Lucy’s interaction with the music that it comes to have its specific soothing effect on her emotional state. It is worth quoting from this section at length at this point:

For Lucy, the [musical] works are associated with comfort; they are bound up with a complex of childhood memories and associations. Her late father,
to whom she was close, used to play the piano after dinner and these works, wafting up the stairs, were ones Lucy used to hear as she was falling asleep. Secondly, the material culture of listening is also an accomplice, in this example, of music’s power to shift mood on the morning she describes. Lucy’s listening is conducted in a quiet room. She sits in a rocking chair placed between the speakers and so is almost nestled in the, as she perceive it, calm and nurturing music... The point is that music’s power to ‘soothe’ derives not only from the musical ‘stimulus’ but from the ways in which Lucy appropriates that music, the things she brings to it, the context in which it is set (42-43).

This example of DeNora’s analysis illustrates that the power of the piece to create and transform mood originates not solely from the musical text, but rather arises from a complex interplay of factors to which Lucy herself was party. Furthermore, this example shows how contextual factors surrounding music reception have specific impact upon the effect that music has upon the listener. The placing of the speakers, and no doubt their quality and sound fidelity, created a certain sonic environment into which Lucy could retreat.

In After Adorno (2003), DeNora formalises much of her earlier work on human music interaction and draws it together in an attempt to model more accurately exactly what occurs when an individual listens to music. DeNora refers to this model as the Music Event (Figure 1). This model is comprised of three distinct times zones corresponding to the before, during and after elements of the listening experience. The model examines what occurs both in and around the listener at each of these times.
TIME 1 – Before the Event (all prior history as meaningful to A. Actor(s))

1. Preconditions
Conventions, biographical associations, previous programming practices

TIME 2 – During the Event (the event may be of any duration, seconds to years)

2. Features of the Event

A Actor(s) Who is engaging with music? (e.g., analyst, audience, listener, performer, composer, programmer)

B Music What music, and with what significance as imputed by Actor(s)?

C Act of Engagement with music What is being done? (e.g., individual act of listening, responding to music, performing, composing)

D Local Conditions of C. (e.g., how came to engage with music in this way, at this time (i.e., at Time 2 – ‘During the Event’))

E Environment In what setting does engagement with music take place? (material cultural features, interpretative frames provided on site (e.g., programme notes, comments of other listeners))

TIME 3 – After the Event

3. Outcome
Has engagement with music afforded anything? What if anything was changed or achieved or made possible by this engagement? And has this process altered any aspect of item 1 above?

Fig. 1 The Musical Event and its conditions (DeNora, 2004, 49)
While DeNora’s Music Event provides a powerful conceptual model for thinking about how music gets into action, there are elements of the music listening experience which it does not adequately cover. Specifically, here I am referring to the impact of the technological circumstances of music reception. Throughout DeNora’s analysis, she illuminates the ways in which the social and individual circumstances of music reception coincide with the particular properties of the musical text to produce a specific musical result. And while there is nothing in this analysis that specifically precludes a consideration of the impact of technology upon musical meaning creation (for example, technology could be considered as part of the local circumstances of use in the Music Event), this consideration, in DeNora’s analysis at least, is never undertaken. True, there are certain occasions when technology is referenced by DeNora (for example, in her consideration of the placing of speakers by a member of her sample (2000, 42) but these considerations are always brief and do not form a major element of her analysis, nor the Music Event itself. That being said, however, this is a matter which DeNora has begun to address in her most recent work (2006), in which she acknowledges that ‘music’s technological mode of presentation is far from neutral; by contrast it affords, in its own right, music’s possibilities, its potential uses and thus its powers.’ (32). However, this is an area which DeNora has not yet investigated on an empirical plane, and the bulk of her theories about music are constructed without a deep consideration of either the impact of technology on music listening at the everyday level, or the social consequences of this. Indeed, DeNora (2006) highlights the need for research into the relationship between music and technology, stating that ‘these... questions... call for ethnographic, applied and action-based investigations and the future of socio-musical-technical research... is an area which promises much for our understandings of the musical bases of being...’ (32).

DeNora’s detailed studies of the reception of music do beg certain questions (which she herself is now asking): if the circumstances of use have such profound impact upon music listening and the social uses to which music is put, then might we not expect the role of technology, which structures the listening experience in specific ways, also to have a significant impact upon these issues?
It is with this question in mind that I embark on the second section of this literature review.

**Music and technology**

The record is an object that perfectly symbolizes and embodies its morbid role in the preservation and transmission of sonic culture. A spiral scratch, its gleaming dark circle is the black hole into which memories are poured, only to emerge again as ghost voices, life preserved beyond death. Frozen in time within grooves, a voice, an instrument, a sound, becomes the living dead and is worshipped in the way that a loved one, deceased, maybe adored for years by the bereaved. (Toop, 2004, 168)

While the previous section considered sociological perspectives on music and their link to issues such as identity and sociality, this section will consider literature which explores the relationship between music, music use and technology, discussing how it intersects with some of the issues previously highlighted in this chapter. There exists an intimate relationship between recorded music and technology, and the activity of listening to recorded music is closely linked to, and in a very real way inseparable from, the technologies of its storage and reproduction. While it would be technologically deterministic to state that such technologies themselves create specific modes of musical conduct, it is nevertheless undeniable that these technologies exert strong influences upon the uses to which music can be put. As Katz (2004) notes in the introduction of his book investigating the impact of recording upon music:

I myself write of recording’s influence on human activity and of phonograph effects, both of which impute causal powers to technology. Although we often respond to technology within a context of limited options not of our own making, we must remember that in the end, recording’s influence manifests itself in human actions. Put another way, it is not simply the technology but
the relationship between the technology and its users that determines the impact of recording. (3-4)

In order to arrive at a proper understanding of the social uses of music, one needs to consider the impact of technology upon the ways in which music is used, listened to, handled and understood, as the literature considered here highlights.

The widespread adoption of digital audio files as a method of listening to music has implications for virtually all music related practices, ranging from the acquisition and sharing of music to the playing and storing of music. Given the relationship between music and a whole swathe of sociologically relevant issues and practices, the following question is raised: does such a fundamental change in the technological reception of music represented by the adoption of digital audio files engender associated changes in the social practices surrounding music use? This is a question which underpins not only the structure of this section, but also the thesis as a whole. Current research investigating the impact of digital audio file use strongly suggests an affirmative to this question. As O'Hara and Brown (2006) state, when discussing the impact of digital audio file technology:

While in some respects, these new digital alternatives afford some common social and behavioral phenomena with their historical counterparts, there are also significant new behavioral and social consequences of their new digital capabilities (4).

The above quotation provides two useful insights, which help underpin the selection of literature in this part of the chapter. Firstly, it reveals that new technologies of music reproduction are indeed changing social aspects of music reception; and secondly, it emphasises the existence of older forms of music reception, which themselves enable differing modes of sociality. As emphasised in Chapter One, this thesis seeks not only to explore new technological modes of listening to music, but also to investigate established modes, such as CD and vinyl listening, to understand how they coincide and co-exist with
each other. Therefore, in order to fully ground and contextualise this research, this and
the following section will explore a wide variety of sociological literature and socio-
musical studies related to different forms of music related practices, both old and new.
The following discussion will be based primarily around the following five music related
issues, although these may not be covered in a completely linear manner: the embodied
nature of music (both material and sonic); the acquisition and sharing of music; the
relationships between listener, artist and record industry; social practices surrounding
music use, and music playing practices. By exploring these areas, I also aim to illustrate
why DeNora’s lack of engagement with the technological aspects of listening is such a
serious omission.

I shall begin with a discussion of the impact of sound recording upon the nature of sound
and music itself, a fact which touches on many of the above issues, whilst having great
resonance for discussions within the main body of the thesis itself.

The splitting of sound

There is more to sound recording than just recording sound (Katz, 2005)

The development of sound recording in 1877 represents a pivotal point in humankind’s
relationship to sound. Although originally envisaged as a technology to aid voice
dictation, the possibilities of this recording medium for music rapidly became apparent.
The recording of music to phonographic cylinders heralded a change not only in the
social contexts of listening, but also represented a shift in the nature of sound itself. On
this subject, Symes (2004) states:

recording radically changed the ‘geography’ and the history of music,
liberating it from the here and now and utterly transforming its ‘tense’, its
spacing and timing… Furthermore, that music (as well as other sounds) could
be present without the presence of musicians and could be re-performed
almost without end represented a profound shift in auditory metaphysics for which there were no obvious precedents (3)

As Symes indicates, the recording of music altered what had always been a temporal and situated phenomenon, and in doing so opened up new social contexts for listening. The concert hall gave way to the domestic parlour, as the primary place of music listening, just as a unique performance in the concert hall became a fixed repeatable performance within the parlour. Furthermore, and as Symes also indicates, the fundamental bifurcation of sound from sound source implied by sound recording also had a profound influence upon the nature of sound itself. This bifurcation, which Schafer (1969) refers to as 'schizophonia', raises a number of ontological questions regarding the nature of recorded sound: what is this sound, does it simply mirror reality, or is it a mediated refraction?

Regarding these debates, Katz (2005) draws attention to a number of discourses which have underpinned understandings of recorded sound, highlighting the existence of what he describes as a ‘discourse of realism’. Katz charts the path of this discourse through turn of the century advertisements and their claims that music recordings were ‘the real thing’ and ‘a true mirror of sound’, to the 1970s and 1980s Memorex audio tape ‘Is it live, or is it Memorex?’ campaign. Katz also reveals how these discourses resonate through the work of composers such as Stravinsky and ethnomusicologist Japp Kunst. However, differing discourses also exist, expounded by individuals such as phenomenologist and composer Pierre Schaffer and experimental musician Francisco Lopez, who states that sound recording provides the ‘illusion of realism’, but is in fact a ‘fallacy of the “real”’. Lopez argues that the meaning of sound to the individual is a matter primarily of subjective perception making the notion of ‘objective’ sound recording absurd:

I don’t believe that there is such a thing as the ‘objective’ apprehension of sonic reality. Regardless of whether or not we are recording, our minds conceptualize an idea of sound. And not only do different people listen differently, but the very temporality of our presence in a place is a form of editing. The spatial, material, and temporal transfigurations exist independently of photography. Our
idea of the sonic reality, even our fantasy about it, is the sonic reality each of us possess. (85)

While these discourses run through both advertisement and academic work, they also underpin many day to day aspects and understandings of music listening, sometimes in complex ways. A notable example of this is the existence of the Lo-fi genre of music (for a discussion of this genre see Spencer 2005). Lo-fi often relies upon inexpensive recording methods, such as old tape recorders, making the use of low fidelity recording techniques a central element of its aesthetic. Often, the ultimate aim of Lo-fi is to capture more ‘authentic’ recordings than could be achieved in a professional, multi-track recording studio. The results, however, present a paradox. While recordings are more authentic in terms of obtaining a one-take recording, often capturing ambient sound at the time of the performance, they also serve to sonically highlight the technological aspects of recording in terms of tape hiss and distortion. This helps illustrate one of Katz’s (2005) fundamental critiques of the discourse of realism: ‘discourses of realism [have] reinforced the idea of recorded sound as the mirror of sonic reality, while at the same time obscuring the full impact of the technology’. What should become clear from this discussion is that sound, when captured, is sound mediated by technology, a fact which impacts upon the ways in which that sound understood and interacted with by the composer and the listener.

Schaeffer (2004 (1966)) theorises about the impact of this change, stating that sound recording produces a particular relationship between sound/music and listener, which he describes as ‘acousmatic listening’. In constructing his argument, Schaeffer references Pythagoras’s practice of teaching his disciples from behind a curtain, thereby focusing their attention solely upon his voice rather than his physical presence. Schaeffer makes an analogy between the curtain which Pythagoras used and the audio speaker, arguing that because the original sound source is removed and invisible with recorded sound, a far more focused attention is paid to the sonic elements of the music. This new relationship of listening produces what Schaeffer refers to as the ‘sonorous object’:
In listening to sonorous objects whose instrumental causes are hidden, we are led to forget the latter and to take an interest in these objects for themselves. The dissociation of seeing and hearing here encourages another way of listening: we listen to the sonorous forms, without any aim other than that of hearing them better, in order to be able to describe them through an analysis of the content of our perceptions. (78).

Schaefer argues that once the origin of sound is removed, the importance of sound source becomes subsumed into the act of listening, thereby creating the sonorous object. However, if recorded music creates a sonorous object, it also produces a *material* object, the implications of which I shall now consider.

**The object of study**

*We cannot know who we are, or become what we are, except by looking in a material mirror, which is the historical world created by those who lived before us. This world confronts us as material culture and continues to evolve through us.* (Miller, 2005, 8)

*Things are perhaps the most faithful witnesses of all, and in their fidelity to us they function as extensions of ourselves, reflections and echoes of who we are, were, and will become* (Romanysyn, 1989, 193)

Since the advent of the age of sound recording it has been possible, indeed necessary, to bind recorded music to a material object of some sort. This development has had numerous profound and far reaching implications not only for the ways in which music can be accessed, but also for what music is, and how it can be used socially. Instead of being connected to the original sound source, recorded music became connected to an object, a thing, and unlocked by other objects in playing. The importance of materiality to human relations and identity is highlighted by quotations at the beginning of this section,
which highlight the importance of material culture, not only to how we live, but to who we are.

Such perspectives find resonance in Bourdieu's (1984) claims that 'there is an economy of cultural goods' (1). He argues that the central currency of this economy is 'cultural capital', which he argues arises from the different ways in which forms of knowledge and material objects accrue status to their owners. This 'cultural capital' operates as a form of social differentiation and, according to Bourdieu, takes three forms: a) embodied, b) objectified and c) institutionalized. The latter of these refers to institutional recognition of the cultural capital held by an individual, most often understood as academic credentials or qualification; however it is the embodied and objectified forms of cultural capital which are perhaps most applicable to the study of music as a material artefact. Embodied cultural capital resides within the individual and refers to the ability to appreciate certain arts, which is clearly relevant to music. It is a matter of taste. Objectified cultural capital, in contrast, refers specifically to objects owned by the individual. Bourdieu (1984) argues that such objects, whether they be priceless paintings or a set of paint brushes, serve a symbolic function, expressing their owner's aesthetic preferences and tastes, again serving as a means for social distinction:

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed (6)

A consideration of cultural capital reveals some of the ways in which objects stand in for us, and speak on our behalf, communicating something of ourselves to others, and of ourselves to ourselves. The materiality of recorded music means that it circulates in the economy of objectified cultural capital, the consequences of which I shall explore throughout parts of this thesis. Materiality, it is clear, has meaning. But what are the specific meanings which materiality holds for music?
Symes (2004) explores this issue, employing Genette’s (1997) concept of ‘paratextuality’ to elaborate the significance of music’s new found materiality in the age of recorded music. Paratextuality, a concept which Genette primarily applied to the narrative architectures of the novel, but one which he argued could also be applied to records, considers the various material and rhetorical supplementations which exist in and around the main text of a novel, helping to fix its meaning and reception. These various supplementations, or paratexts, accompany a text "in order to present it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to make present, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption." Genette divides paratexts into two main types: epitexts, which are located outside of the body of the text, in the form of such things as reviews or advertising; and peritexts, which exist within the main body of the text. Peritexts themselves are divided into ‘pre-textual’ zones, which occur at the beginning of the text, encompassing things such as front cover and contents; and ‘post-textual zones’, which occur at the end of the text, encompassing such things as appendices and endnotes. Supplementing this are sub-textual features, such as chapters and subheadings, which frame certain parts of the text.

Symes (2004) notes that ‘Genette has argued that the notion of paratextuality can be extended to records, where the disc itself is the text, and its containment devices the peritext and the epitext’ (95-96). Building upon this, Symes goes on fruitfully to explore the paratextual elements of physical music formats such as CD and vinyl, stating that, although these artifacts ‘occupy a model universe different from the book, they exhibit analogous features of paratextuality and perform many of the same functions as those associated with books’ (96). In terms of physical music formats, Symes identifies record labels, record sleeves/covers and linear notes as forms of paratextuality, exploring the graphical and textual information they contain and how this influences the listening experience. For example, Symes charts how colour coding and use of religious emblems on record labels, plus the cover designs of classical music records, ‘have generally reinforced a discourse of seriousness that is an integral part of classical music’. (123). Throughout his analysis Symes draws attention to the fact that ‘recordings... provide a record of themselves’, stating that ‘the indecipherable semiotic of the record, at least in
its unplayed state, has made the exigency of textual supplementation and prompted a 'documentary reality' to cover the record' (88). This paratextual 'documentary reality' informs 'the listening process and play[s] an important role in meditating the way the music is heard and understood' (89). The notion of paratextuality, when applied to musical formats, reveals the importance of materiality in anchoring the meaning of music and the ways in which it directs and primes the listener to receive the music in certain ways. This occurs through a combination of textual, graphical and sub-textual features, ranging from record sleeves and covers to song and lyric notes, to track listings and even the song titles themselves. Each of these elements is potentially disrupted when musical storage shifts from physical media, such as CD and vinyl, to digital file format, such as mp3 or Ogg Vorbis, a fact which makes a consideration of paratextuality an important element of this study. The implications of these shifts in format, as reported in the literature, will be discussed presently, but for the moment I wish to consider briefly a further consequence of recorded music's materiality: the physical music collection.

Belk (2001) explores the practice of collecting at an individual level with reference to collectors of, amongst other things, used beers can, wines and tattoos. Throughout his exploration Belk identifies a number of commonalities between different types of collectors and collections. One of the traits which Belk suggests is common to all collection is that items within the collection are divorced from their original use value, instead coming to exist primarily as parts of the collection:

The things comprising the collection are removed from ordinary use. This may either be the case from the start as with art objects which exist for their own aesthetic sake, or by virtue of being taken out of use as with postage stamps which will not be used to send mail or salt and pepper shakers which are no longer expected to dispense salt and pepper. (66)

This trait of divorce from original use value as significant and central is also identified in a number of other definitions of collecting. This is made clear by Pearce (1992), who,
after entering into discussion over the various definitions of collecting found in the literature, states that

Ideas like *non-utilitarian gathering*, an internal or intrinsic relationship between the things gathered - whether objectively 'classified' or not - and the subjective view of the owner are all significant attributes of a collection [emphasis added]. (159)

Pearce describes this non-utilitarian form of collection as fetishistic, in that individuals remove items from their original uses and contexts and give them new self defined purposes and meanings. Pearce also makes clear the connection between collecting and identity, stating that most collectors use their collection to 'extend the self' or 'act as reminders and confirmers of our identities' (1992, p. 158).

Cavicchi also investigates the connection between identity and collection, showing how music collections act as an identity forming resource on a number of different levels. Through an exploration of the collecting practices of a group of Bruce Springsteen fans, Cavicchi shows how the collection becomes implicated in the maintenance of self over an extended period, revealing the ways in which Springsteen fans used their collections to mark different life stages, confirm their identities as fans, and form 'coherent narratives' of self over time (156). Cavicchi concludes by stating that 'such activities allow fans to 'brand' and gather together their previous selves and to evaluate, interpret, and organize their personal histories' (156). As I have already shown in the first section of this chapter, Adorno also has written about the autobiographical associations bound up with the act of music collecting, however similar viewpoints are also offered by Symes (2005, 47) Katz (2005) and Hodgson (2002). Indeed, in his study of CD collections, Hodgson states that:

As a text, a CD library forms a micro-narrative of the collector's life that s/he reads, or interprets, according to personally and culturally determined variables. The personalization of musical experience that is achieved through a CD library
makes the text a mico-narrative of the collector’s life, as both the locus, and a record, of his or her musical activity (9).

A similar perspective is offered by Katz (2005):

Record collecting involves more than music. Collecting is about the thrill of the hunt, the accumulation of expertise, the display of wealth, the syntethetic allure of touching and seeing sound, the creation and cataloging of memories, and the pleasures (and dangers) of ritual. Record collecting represents a relationship with music that helps us, in some part small or large, to articulate and, indeed, shape who we are (11).

The music collections considered by these authors are more than just conglomerations of material goods, they also serve a number of identity forming and maintaining roles which, according to both Cavicchi and Hodgson, are bound up with the issue of the display of the collection. These collections act as both representation of self to self and self to others in similar ways to those identified by DeNora and Bull, in relation to music listening. Part of this identification arises from the materiality of these collections, which provide a focal point upon which to ‘pin’ these meanings. What occurs, however, when music is stored in less immediately tangible digital audio file formats - formats which do not have the peritextual cues of traditional media, which radically alter the notion of music storage and reproduction? The next section will consider these, and other, questions related to recent changes in music technology, and how they impact upon the various social meanings of music, through a consideration of recent socio-technical studies of music.

Music and new technology

This final main section of the chapter continues a thematic vein established in the previous section, i.e. to investigate the relationship between music and technology, this time shifting my orientation to studies which specifically consider the impact of new music technologies. Both O’Hara (2006, 4) and Sterne (forthcoming) argue that the study
of the rise and widespread use of digital audio files, and their associated technologies, have so far tended to concentrate on the legal implication of this development, rather than upon the new social practices and understandings which have arisen around these new media. Nevertheless, there is a small, significant and steadily growing body of literature which considers this latter point, investigating the day to day uses of these new media, how they are appropriated in people’s lives and the meanings which they hold. This section of the review will consider these studies.

Brown and Sellen (2006) compare user’s understandings of traditional and new music formats, finding that users view these formats in different ways. Central to this is the issue of tangibility, which impacts upon notions of collectibility and identity. Brown and Sellen find that, due to their lack of tangibility, mp3s are not viewed as a ‘collectable’ format, but are rather seen as ‘copies’, and are understood as being ‘inferior’ to, and less ‘legitimate’ than, original recordings. Traditional formats such as CD and vinyl, on the other hand, were valued in terms of their collectability and display. Furthermore, owning a piece of music as an original, rather than an mp3 ‘copy’, was shown to have implications for identity, denoting the owner as a ‘true fan’ of the music.

Brown and Sellen also investigate practices of music sharing over peer to peer networks, comparing this to sharing of music through traditional media such as audio tape and CD. They reveal that this later form of music sharing is deeply embedded in a range of social relationships, often arising within social listening environments, such as when teenage friends gather at each others houses. These social scenarios also provide space for ‘word of mouth’ recommendations, and space for communal filtering of music, based upon understandings of each others musical tastes (44). During these encounters, the searching of physical music collection often operated as a precursor to music sharing. Brown and Sellen contrast the richness of these music sharing encounters with the largely anonymous sharing practices which occur through peer to peer networks. Due to the anonymity and lack of co-presence which typifies this method of sharing, they argue that this form of sharing is stripped of its sociality. Furthermore, they state that filtering of music, and the passing on of recommendations which occurs with traditional media is
also removed, meaning that, coupled with the much larger pool of music to share online, music collections tend to become more eclectic and varied.

However, there is literature which offers a different angle on internet based music sharing, illustrating the rich and varied social nature of this phenomenon. An early study in this regard is Cooper and Harrison’s (2001) research into music sharing over Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Cooper and Harrison found that music sharing over IRC took place in a ‘rich and highly textured social system’ (71), based around a complex and shifting hierarchy of roles. They identified three main roles into which ‘audio pirates’ fall: the leech, who simply downloads music without uploading; the trader, who exchanges music rather than sharing it; and the citizen, who provides music for the ‘benefit of the community’, supplying music for the leeches to consume. Cooper and Harrison also explore the status symbols which exist within IRC networks, which revolve either around hardware specification such as bandwidth and disk storage capacity, or the number of files uploaded by the individual. In relation to this later point, the rapidity with users offered new music for download was found to be a crucial element of the accrual of sub-cultural status, with users often competing to be the first to ‘get music out there’. Cooper and Harrison argue that the amount and type of music offered for download operated as a form of cultural capital, raising the individual’s status within the IRC hierarchy, enabling them to gain access to passworded FTP (File Transfer Protocol) areas, from which they could download further music. At one point, Cooper and Harrison state:

It is often difficult to determine whether a given trader actually wants a given file for personal use, for trading capital or simply because they like to transmit data around cyberspace (77).

This observation suggests that such new forms of trading and sharing music may engender changes in the relationship between music and the individual. For example, in the case of traditional music collections, the music may be valued for personal consumption, or as a form of embodied cultural capital, and be prominently displayed and valued as such. However, in the case of IRC traders, music files may be accrued
simply as a form of trading capital, in a way which does not apply with the same degree of fluidity to traditional music collections.

Cooper and Harrison states that most IRC users are ‘extremely computer literate and network savvy’ (74), and it seems reasonable to assume that the technical demands of this form of music exchange operate as a barrier to entry for the more casual computer user. However, with the rise of the original Napster network, and subsequent peer-to-peer exchange networks such as Limewire and Kazaa, the practice of music sharing has become a more widely practiced and mainstream phenomena. A number of writers (Veale, 2003; Giesler and Pohlamann, 2003) have conceptualised peer-to-peer networks as ‘gift economies’. The term gift economy has been used by many authors, but the term’s origin is in the work of anthropologist Mauss (1990), who identified the notion of the gift exchange in his study of Samoan communities. Mauss states that the gift is an object which, when given, engages the honour of both the giver and receiver, creating a social bond based up reciprocity. If the receiver of the original gift does not reciprocate then he or she will loose honour within the community. Furthermore, the gift is also intimately bound up with individual giver, to the point where the giver gives not only the object, but also part of him or herself: ‘the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them’ (1990:31). Mauss states that this interdependence between giver and reciever creates social bonds and cohesion within the community.

It seems intuitively correct, and is clearly conceptually rewarding, to class peer-to-peer networks as gift economies, as others have done so. Nevertheless there are certain difficulties with this application, which revolve around the central aspect of gift economies: reciprocity. Adar and Huberman (2000), monitored the usage of the p2p network Gnutella over a 24-hour period, and found that almost 70% of users shared no files, and that nearly 50% of all files shared were contributed by the top 1% of sharing hosts. They defined this practice of taking without giving to the network as ‘free-riding’, a notion which has clear echoes of Cooper and Harrisons (2002) ‘leeching’ on IRC networks. They argue that such asymmetric use of p2p networks weakens the system’s performance of the networks whilst adding to its vulnerability. In relation to this later
point, as only a small number of peers share music, all copyright enforcers have to do is target them, and the system goes down. A follow up study by Hughes, Coulson, and Walkerdine (2005) states that free-riding has increased since Adar and Huberman’s (2000) original study. Both of these pieces of research suggest that the P2P networks, while facilitating the ‘free’ exchange of data, are not, for the vast majority of users, based upon a bedrock of reciprocity.

This literature reveals that new technologies are changing the way in which individuals and groups access music and how this impacts upon the social uses to which music is put.

Turning now to consider further literature on the implications and usage of new music technology, I consider Bull’s (2006) recent work on iPod users. In his earlier work on personal stereo users, elements of which have already by addressed, Bull illustrated how, through the use of personal stereos, users were able to experience transformed urban experiences. Bull explores user’s experiences of personal stereos in relation to traversing the urban environment, and discovered that personal-stereos enable an altered form of experiencing space. He found that the use of media in such an immediate and intimate way disturbed notions of public and private space and enabled forms of ‘auditized looking’ whereby ‘users either escape the ‘look’ of others or engage in strategies of ‘looking’ without being seen’ (240). Furthermore, use of personal stereos imbued the city with a filmic quality for users, and also allowed users to manage and ‘repossess time’ (64). This research illustrates some of the impacts of technology upon the listening experience, revealing how the mobilisation of music affords the aural overlaying of urban spaces, recontextualising music and, in doing so, recontextualising the user’s experience of the urban.

Bull (2006) illustrates how the ‘unprecedented control’ (140) which the Apple iPod gives users over their music collection extends some of the uses of music which he highlights in his study of personal stereo users. Here, he illustrates how users construct thematic playlists of music in advance in order to reflect given moods, observing that users ‘engage in a form of “mediated spontaneity”’ as they skip songs within playlists in order
to find the correct music to fit their mood (138). Bull also draws attention to the manner in which users utilise the iPod ‘shuffle’ mode, describing how ‘users give themselves over to their music collection and the technology of the iPod’. This has a number of consequences for listening. On one level, the shuffle mode enables users to ‘rediscover’ lost or neglected parts of their collection, but on another it serves to extend the relationship between mood, music and technology. Bull illustrates this later point in relation to the use which one user made of the iPod on long car journeys. Here, Bull shows how, through the shuffle mode, this user was ‘transported’ to different points in his own personal history through the nostalgic associations he had with certain pieces of music (140), and also how the same user was able to control his own memory through the his own volitional musical choices. In relation to this, Bull states that this user was ‘able to control his memory through the use of playlists or to have memories unexpectedly evoked as the ‘shuffle’ device throws up songs from his musical past’ (141). Throughout his study, Bull reveals how the opportunity that the iPod presents the user to carry and access their entire music collection at any point enables the user ‘to fine tune the relationship between mood, volition, music and the environment in ways that previous generations of mobile sound technologies was unable to do so’ (137).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has considered music and music use from a number of different perspectives. Throughout this concluding section, I shall return to the research questions I raised in the introductory chapter, revealing how these questions arise from, or address gaps within, the literature I have considered in this chapter.

At a meta-level, two fundamental points arise from the literature. Firstly, the literature has revealed that music is a social medium, which impacts upon modes of sociality and identity formation in diverse and multiple ways. Secondly, the literature has also revealed that these social aspects of music are highly influenced by the technological architecture...
through which music is consumed. Bound by these two main insights, my thesis seeks to investigate the impact of both new and existing technologies of music reproduction upon the social meanings and the social uses to which music is put.

Within this over-arching aim many further sub-questions exist, which also arise from the literature. In different ways, the work of Adorno, DeNora and Bull all draw attention to the importance of musical choice and musical structure to the listening experience. This begs many questions. If symphonic radio listening presented a ‘threat to structure’, how much more prevalent is this ‘threat’ in the domain of digital audio files, where the user can order and re-order music at will. Bull has drawn attention to the ways in which iPod usage extend listening possibilities, in terms of such functions as play-lists and shuffle play, whilst highlighting some of social consequences of this. Do the same issues apply to other types of digital audio playback device, for example personal computers? Also, what further consequences might arise from the increased access which digital audio file technology gives listeners to their music? Furthermore, and with some notable exceptions, little research has yet been conducted into the every day uses of digital audio files and their associated technologies. My thesis will therefore contain a purely exploratory element, through which I shall illuminate how music related practices are still emerging and developing around new technologies and how these intersect with the usage of traditional music technology. Finally, the literature has also revealed the sharing of music in on and offline environments to be a socially inscribed practice. However, there is disagreement about the extent to which online sharing networks are based upon reciprocity, while some findings suggest that the majority of use of these networks is based up ‘free-riding’ self interest. This disagreement within the literature encourages me to investigate how the practices of music sharing and acquisition in on and offline environments are variously motivated, and what social norms govern the sharing and trading of music.

The above points and questions arising from the literature form the basis of my first two research questions:
What music related practices are emerging around new technologies of music reproduction, storage and transmission, and how do these relate to, and co-exist alongside, established practices?

What impact do emerging and existing music related practices have upon issues of sociality and identity formation surrounding music use?

As mentioned above, there is only a small amount of literature exploring the day to day usage and understanding of digital audio files, a fact which serves to highlight several gaps in existing knowledge. For example, as literature considered in Section Three of this chapter revealed, the very fact of recorded sound raises a number of ontological questions, which have been played out variously in the discourses of realism highlighted by Katz (2005). As Sterne (forthcoming) states, the mp3 file represents a particular sonic embodiment of music, yet, on an empirical level, the specific significance of the sonic aspects of different audio files has yet to be considered. My thesis will therefore trace how various acoustic embodiments of music are understood and valued by listeners, and how this impacts upon the listening experience on a day to day basis. On a related front, I shall also draw upon the concept of paratextuality when exploring digital audio formats. Many aspects of paratextuality are bound up with the materiality of the musical format, a fact which raises several questions when applied to digital audio formats. How do listeners understand and interact with music when the paratextual cues are reduced or removed, as occurs with digital audio formats? Does this interfere with sense making around music? Such issues feed into my third research question:

How are different musical formats understood, valued and used by listeners?

While the literature has illuminated the relationship between music and technology, there is a deeper, and associated, issue which I wish to explore. Since the commitment of music to an object through the process of sound recording, there has been an intimate relationship between music and materiality. The research I have considered shows that the physicality of music collections, while holding important identity forming properties,
are also highly valued and prized in their own right. But why should this be so? Is a music collection valued in the same way as a collection of stamps, or is there something specific about music collections? How are collections of digital audio files valued? Are they valued? Finally, what might these questions reveal about relationship between music and materiality? Throughout my thesis, I shall attempt to unpick the relationships between music and materiality. Thus, my final research question is:

- What is the relationship between music and its material and technological base?

These four major research questions will be used to underpin and drive this thesis's exploration into the relationship between music, music use and technology.

In the next chapter, I demonstrate how I went about converting these questions into a scheme of research which would enable me to answer them.
Chapter Three: Methods

In this chapter, I provide a document of the research process, providing details of my research design, whilst also highlighting the various factors which influenced it, methodological and otherwise. In this discussion I will illustrate my core methodological approach; sampling strategy; the ethical considerations I entered into; the practical aspects of engaging with the research, and also reflexively consider my own position as a researcher in relationship to the subject matter of this thesis.

Selecting a research paradigm

In this section, I illustrate how my choice of research methodology was driven by my research questions and a consideration of previous literature in the field.

A number of different methods are available to the individual conducting research, and an early consideration in the planning stages of my research was whether to pursue a qualitative or quantitative approach, or seek to utilise both. Would my research interests be best served with a survey, or should I conduct instead in depth interviews? What data would this allow me to gather? Would this help address my research questions?

The arguments relating to the relative advantages and disadvantages of both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms are by now well rehearsed. Crudely put, quantitative study is based upon the belief that there is a measurable objective reality ‘out there’. In such studies, the researcher remains removed and independent from that which is being researched, and, in the positivist tradition, often seeks to establish links between certain causes and effects. Qualitative approaches take a different tack and work, rather, from the basic assumption that truths are multiple and contextual. Rather than establishing objective, quantifiable social ‘facts’, qualitative studies are concerned with experience and meaning, and how these are formed at a micro-level.
A quantitative approach to this study might have taken the form of a questionnaire survey of music and technology use administered to music users. Such an approach would have provided, potentially, a significant amount of data regarding the use of certain music technologies (for example, who uses them, how often, when and for what reasons), which could in turn be used to conduct statistical analysis. However, this approach would not have allowed me to engage fully with the research questions driving my thesis. These questions are pitched at a level that requires the extraction of fine grained data regarding the underlying reasons for which individuals engage in certain music-related activities and the methods they use to achieve their ends. Furthermore, the thesis conducts research into the area of musical experience, and asks how this is understood and constructed on the micro level. Previous studies of this area by DeNora (2003, 2000) and Bull (2006, 2000), who have themselves used qualitative approaches in their research, have shown that the production of musical experience is contextual and contingent upon a wide range of influences. Therefore, it was in order to gain the fine grained, contextually situated data required by my research questions, and also to engage fully with previous studies in this field, that I selected a qualitative approach in this thesis.

**Qualitative interviewing**

My core method of data collection was qualitative interviewing, selecting a diverse range of respondents, in order to gather the detailed data necessary to answer my research questions. In the paragraphs below, I consider the various forms of qualitative interviewing and how I chose to pursue a method which encompassed a variety of these approaches. I also consider some the practical issues around interviewing which I encountered when conducting the pilot study.

Patton (2002) states that ‘we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe’ (340). Interviewing, when done well, allows the researcher access to people’s feelings and perspectives, their histories and future hopes. The defining characteristic of qualitative interviewing is its foundation upon asking open
ended questions, allowing interviewees the opportunity to speak of their own experiences in a manner which is not predefined. Patton (2002) identifies three main types of qualitative interview, which are primarily differentiated by the degree to which they are structured. According to Patton, the most structured form of interview is the 'Standardised Open-ended Interview', which asks respondents fixed, pre-determined questions in a pre-determined order. While this method increases the ease with which it is possible to compare interview results and helps reduce interviewer effect, such as bias and leading questions, it reduces significantly the degree of flexibility and maneuverability available to the researcher to pick up and follow potentially interesting digressions. In contrast, the least structured type of qualitative interview – what Patton (2002) refers to as the 'Informal Conversation Interview' - does not use predetermined questions, but relies instead on the interviewer to direct the ebb and flow of conversation toward relevant research areas. Such an interview approach is closest to a 'normal' conversation, and, as a research method, shares both its strengths and its weaknesses. It has the advantage of being sufficiently flexible to allow the interviewer to adapt questions to suit an individual respondent, as well as providing the opportunity for the spontaneity necessary to follow up interesting leads as they 'naturally' occur. However, Patton (2002) states that such a method is particularly susceptible to interviewer effects, and also makes interview data, which may differ widely from interview to interview, difficult to analyse.

An approach which straddles these two is the 'Guided Interview', or 'Interview Guide Approach' (Patton, 2002). With this method, the researcher approaches the interview with a series of topics and issues which he or she intends to address, the exact order of which can be decided during the interview. This approach frames the interview in a quasi-conversational mode, allowing the interviewer a degree of freedom not available in the structured interview. However, this freedom does compromise the comparability of results, due to the fact that questions are not asked in a standardised manner.

Of course, these approaches are not mutually exclusive, and, in deciding upon my interview technique, and constructing my interview schedule, I drew upon all three of
these methods. In all my interviews, I began with a standardised open ended question ('Tell me about your music use on a typical day'), before working through other research interests in a more guided way. Often, in my pilot interviews, I slipped into a more conversational approach in order to follow up on potentially interesting digressions. Mason (2002) draws attention to the importance of such fluidity in interviews, stating that interview schedules which are too rigidly structured ‘lack the flexibility and sensitivity... required if we are to listen to our interviewees' ways of interpreting and experiencing the social world’ (213). My transition between approaches was informed by on the spot decisions concerning the most appropriate manner to pursue my research question, whilst remaining aware of the general pace and progress of the interview. For example, if I reached the end of a particular area of conversation within an interview, I would make use of one of a series of standardised question, specifically designed to stimulate conversation and redirect the interview to address another research theme.

I will now consider some of the interpersonal aspects of qualitative interviews, with reference to my experience in conducting the pilot interviews for this study.

The research interview is not a ‘normal’ conversation, nor does it represent an everyday social situation (at least, not for the interviewee!). Therefore, interviewees may be confused about roles and expectations surrounding the interview and may react in a number of different ways, not always helpful to the research process. In relation to this point, Oppenheim (1992) states that respondents may

want to share in control of the interview and ask questions of the interviewer... Or, conversely, they may feel enormously flattered at being interviewed at all; engage in elaborate displays of friendship and hospitality; involve the interviewer in personal or family matters; and seek to strike up a lasting relationship’ (66).

Indeed, during my pilot interviews, I encountered such reactions to my research. On one particular occasion I had been conducting interviews with a household consisting of a
mother and her teenage son and 9 year old daughter, all of whom were very warm, welcoming and friendly. During the course of one interview, I was invited by the teenage boy to watch his band play in a local heat of the Battle of the Bands contest, an offer which his mother urged me to accept. While this was gratifying, and I felt that it indicated that rapport had been established successfully, I declined the offer, wishing to retain some distance between myself and the research. This alerted me to the personal nature of much of what had been discussed and to the ways in which bonds can be established quickly, under such circumstances. This was an aspect of the research process which I had not anticipated. Reflection upon this impressed upon me the importance of delineating as far as possible, the point at which research stops and more personal connection begins. While the interview is, indeed, a conversation, and at times feels very natural, it is important never to forget that the primary reason for its existence is to gather data.

The pilot study

In this section, I discuss the pilot study I conducted for this thesis, illustrating some of its findings and how these informed my subsequent sampling strategies and helped me to re-orientate certain aspects of my research questions.

In the November and December of 2003, I conducted a series of interviews with individual music users and households of music user, in order to pilot my research schedule and further explore my research questions. Up to this point, my research questions had arisen primarily from a consideration of the literature, which had alerted me to gaps in knowledge and to areas which could be explored fruitfully in relation to recent changes in technologies of music reproduction (as documented in the previous chapter). However, testing these research questions, through the pilot study, allowed me to pick up on the main elements of interest within these questions and, thus, to make decisions about how to conduct the main study and what questions to ask interviewees.
In order to arrange a small group of interviewees quickly, I recruited the pilot study using personal contacts. My strategy in this was to ask these contacts to introduce me to people whom they knew, but whom I did not. For example, one of the households in the study was recruited through a fellow PhD student, who put me in contact with a family which she knew. In this way, I was able to construct the pilot sample quickly, but also to retain a degree of distance from the people whom I interviewed (as they were not directly known to me).

The pilot consisted of a total of eight interviewees. Two of these interviewees were individual music listeners, while the remaining six were drawn from two separate households (one consisting of a single mother, with a teenage son and nine year old daughter, the other consisting of shared house of four students (three of whom were interviewed)). All interviews were conducted at the interviewee’s place of abode. The reason for this was so that I could ask the interviewees to show me their music collections and, also, to request them to demonstrate how they accessed music, thus enabling me to observe their practices as well as hear about them. This was a technique I emulated, where possible, in the main study.

Firstly, and on a personal level, the pilot study provided me with an opportunity to ‘cut my teeth’ in the task of qualitative interviewing. Prior to my involvement with PhD study, my only experience of conducting interviews was as part of the data collection phase for my MSc dissertation. However, my MSc interviews were far shorter than those necessary for PhD study, and so I felt not a little nervous when contemplating conducting interviews for over an hour with people whom I did not know.

The pilot interviews provided invaluable experience about how to pace, structure and subtly guide the interview process. Indeed, my first pilot interview left me quite disheartened, as nerves got the better of me and I raced through my interview schedule in less than fifteen minutes. However, in subsequent interviews, the situation improved, as I came to rely less on what was, at that stage, a highly structured interview schedule, and learned to relax more and follow up on leads and interesting tangents as they emerged.
Indeed, it was this experience in the pilot interviews which led me to adopt a particular blend of standardised and non-standardized questions in my interview schedule (as detailed in the previous section). I saw my experience in these initial interviews as part of an 'initiation' into the craft of qualitative interviewing. This also brought home to me the fact that research techniques are not something that can be easily 'taught', but are rather things that have to be learned through first-hand experience.

The findings from the pilot study confirmed that many of the issues, around which I was structuring my interviews, and my research, were indeed areas which should be further explored in the main study. For example, the pilot study strongly revealed the importance of tangibility and materiality to the ways in which my interviewees thought about and used music, an issue which had arisen in the literature also. However, the pilot study findings also raised areas for further enquiry which, previously, I had not considered and which I had never seen mentioned in any other literature. The main issue which came to light was that of the sound quality of different formats, and debates surrounding digital and analogue sound sources. The importance of this issue to two members of my pilot sample encouraged me to include questions about sound quality in the final iteration of the interview schedule for the main study (which provided the data around which a major part of Chapter Seven now revolves). A further issue, which arose from the pilot interview, was the importance of the issue of musical rarity to the meanings that arise around music. In the next section, I will show how this previously unconsidered element in the relationship, which listeners have with music, helped me to inform my sampling strategies.

**Strategies of sampling**

Earlier in this chapter, I illustrated the reasons underlying my decision about how to conduct research for this thesis; in this section I illustrate the manner in which I answered the question about *whom* I should research.
In order to locate a group, or groups, who would enable me to answer my research questions, I decided to employ a process of theoretical sampling (sometimes known as purposeful sampling). Mason (1996) describes this method of sampling in the following way:

Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position and analytical framework, your analytical practice, and most importantly the explanation or account you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample [...] which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds upon certain characteristics of criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation (94).

My sampling strategy involved selecting interviewees who were relevant, in some way, to my research questions, and who would enable me, therefore, to explore these questions in a meaningful way. While I could have constructed my sample to represent conventional socio-economic groupings, this would have been unlikely to provide access to the types of people or practices that I needed. As Mason (1996) states, when conducting qualitative research, the researcher needs to ‘work out what is the most appropriate units of classification to use in making sampling decisions, and common sense everyday classification may or may not suffice’ (87).

My primary aim in constructing the sample frame was to represent a wide range of music related practices. Through this, I would be able to explore a variety of ways in which individuals related to music and to create space to conduct comparisons between various groups of music users. On this basis, I decided to construct my sample around more than one field site, in order to better represent different music related practices. On deciding which practices to represent, and which ‘type’ of listeners to target, I returned to my research questions and the insights I had gained from the pilot study.
As one of my main research questions concerned the relationship between music and its materiality, and also because this issue had often arisen in the pilot study, I decided to select a second hand ‘collectors’ record store as one field site. The reason for this is that I wanted to gain access to listeners, whom I felt would have a strong regard for the material aspects of music, in order to better explore the relationship between music and materiality. The second field site I chose was a Yahoogroup dedicated to the late radio broadcaster, John Peel, and my reasons for selecting this as a field site were based upon two separate issues. The first of these was because I wanted to represent a group whom I thought would place less emphasis on the material aspects of music than the record store sample, and have a different set of musical practices to that group. The second reason suggested itself to me because, in my pilot work, the importance of musical rarity had arisen, which led me to wonder whether this notion also existed in relation to digital audio files (given that they are easily and endlessly replicable), so I specifically sought out a website which I felt might deal with digital audio files of obscure artists. John Peel was famed for playing the music of relatively unknown artists, and I expected this to translate to the music which was exchanged over this site.

The final field site which I selected was a group of UK based mp3 bloggers. I chose this group because they presented an interesting use of music collection, another of my research interests, and was an emerging group upon whose practices research had not yet looked.

The field sites

In this section I shall describe my three main field sites in more detail, illustrate the practicalities involved in making contact and conducting research with these groups.

The record store, the first field site at which I gathered data, was a small establishment which sold second-hand music on tape, CD and vinyl, located in a medium sized town in South East England. The owner of store revealed that the stock was obtained either as job
lots from record fairs; though individual sales from record collectors; from other record stores, or from house clearances. Because of this method of acquiring stock, much of the music sold at the record store tended to be obscure, rare or specialist in nature. Unsurprisingly, the store attracted a large number of music collectors from the town and the surrounding area.

I spent approximately an hour in the store on my first, unofficial, visit, in order to gain a 'feel' for the place and its clientele. After this visit, I felt confident that the record store represented a suitable place to gain access to the types of people whom I wished to talk to, for my research. On a subsequent visit to the store, armed with literature explaining the project, I approached the owner, Simon (as I refer to him for the purposes of this study) and asked if he would allow me to recruit interviewees from the premises for my research. Simon was very enthusiastic about the project and invited me to come to the store whenever I wished, for this purpose. On the basis of this contact, I arranged to attend the record store on Tuesday and Friday afternoons to recruit interviewees. My first visit to recruit interviewees was in July 2004 and my final in early January 2005. While I did not attend the record store every week during this time, I visited regularly as and when I needed to recruit more interviewees. Typically, I waited near the store's counter, asking people to take part in my research, after they had purchased music (so as not to disturb their browsing). While I experienced a range of reactions to my requests, ranging from polite denials to more stern rejections, the majority of people I spoke to were keen to take part in the research.

While the majority of people whom I met in the record store agreed to be interviewed in their homes, some refused this, preferring to be interviewed instead in some other location. A number of reasons were given for this, some wished to be interviewed then and there (in which cases, I would go to a nearby café to conduct the interview) whilst others clearly felt dubious about inviting a stranger to their home. In Appendix A, I indicate where each sample member was interviewed.
The customer base of the record store was a largely homogenous group consisting of white males aged between 30 and 50, and this distribution is reflected in my sample. In total I recruited nineteen interviewees from this store.

My second field site was the Yahoogroup, which I joined in November 2004. The format of the Yahoogroup website consists of a central members’ message board and other features, such as a calendar and members’ profiles. Members of the group have the option of receiving each post to the message board as an email, or to receive a daily or weekly digest of emails, or to receive none at all. The message board was used relatively widely and often received in excess of one hundred posts each month.

Before attempting to recruit interviewees from the Yahoogroup, I contacted the group’s administrator, to ask permission to do so. Permission was granted. In mid November 2004, I posted my first message to the group, explaining the project, asking for interested parties to contact me, and supplying a link to a website I had set up to explain the project further. My initial post yielded only two replies, and a subsequent post yielded a further one. In response to this disappointing reply rate, I began searching the list of member profiles upon the site, and contacted group members in the UK individually, via email. This proved to be a far more successful method of approach, and by the time I had finished, I had gathered thirteen interviewees.

The geographical distribution of the Yahoogroup was such that I had to conduct telephone-based interviews with some members of this group (see Appendix A).

The final group of music users I contacted were UK based mp3 bloggers. Mp3 blogs (sometimes referred to as musicblogs) are websites where individuals post music files, typically in mp3 format, for others to download, often accompanying the post with a short review or personal reflection on the music. Mp3blogs are so called because they have arisen from the practice of blogging, a practice where an individual keeps a public online journal.
In order to recruit mp3 bloggers, I made use of an mp3 aggregator. Aggregators are websites which provide a consolidated view of recent posts across a wide range of other websites; mp3 aggregators provide this function for mp3 blogs, and this allowed me to compile a list of active mp3 blogs, for potential contacts. Once I had compiled a list of almost seventy separate active mp3 blogs, I began searching through for those based in the UK, paying special attention to those which were based close enough for me to travel to. Once I had reduced this list down to around twenty potentials, I began contacting the mp3 bloggers by email, beginning in February 2005. Through this method, I was able to recruit a total of eight mp3 bloggers, four of whom were geographically close enough to interview in person, the remainder of whom I interviewed via telephone.

The logic behind my sampling strategy was to locate particular ‘types’ of music user, who I expected to have particular relationships with music which I wanted to investigate throughout the course of my thesis. While my sample frame succeeds in providing a wide range of music related practices, and provides enough consistency to make meaning comparisons between these groups, my sample is not ‘representative’ in any conventional sense, but is rather representative of the music practices which I wished to investigate. As a result, my sample is largely homogenous, consisting mainly of white male music users in their 20s and 30s.

**Analysing the data**

Between July 2004 and May 2005 I conducted a total of forty in-depth interviews, ranging between forty minutes to approaching an hour and half in length. Although I had begun the process of transcribing my interviews and coding my data, during the data collection stage of my research, the majority of this task was undertaken after my interviews had all been conducted.

To aid me in the task of thematically coding my data, I purchased the qualitative software package Atlas.ti. This software played an invaluable role in the practical task of coding
my data, and proved invaluable, later, in the process of analysing my data. The main advantage of this software was the ease with which it allowed me to access and compare aspects of my data, allowing me to retrieve all the quotations relevant to a particular code at the click of a button. Furthermore, the ‘network view’ features of this software allowed me to access my data in a highly visual form, allowing me to make analytical maps from my codes, a process which I found aided the way in which I conceptualised the relationship between codes (Appendix D provides an early example of my use of the network view function, illustrating how I used the function to describe the relationship between codes in a visual manner). My use of Atlas.ti was primarily in order to organise, retrieve and visually conceptualise the relationships between my data, rather than making use of any of the more complex analytical functions that were available.

**Ethical considerations**

The main ethical issue I faced in conducting research was as follows. My research involved not only asking, but actively encouraging, some research participants to divulge detailed information concerning the illegal practice of downloading music via the Internet. As a result, my data set was tantamount to a detailed and comprehensive series of accounts of illegal acts. Indeed, one of my research participants somewhat proudly stated that he had downloaded £3000 of software and music from the internet. The dilemma is this: where do I stand ethically and legally in holding this type of information.

In searching for an answer to this problem I consulted both the British Sociological Association’s (BSA) and the Association of Internet Researcher’s (AoIR) ethical guidelines for direction. However, as the AoIR documents state, ethical guidelines are just that: guidelines. They are neither recipes nor panaceas for the complex ethical and sometimes legal issues which arise from research. Indeed, this is made more difficult by the array of guidelines which confront the researcher. It is almost as if there is a clamoring of voices highlighting how we might act, but it is only the researcher
him/herself who can judge how one should act. For these are decisions that only the researcher can make.

Looking to the BSA (2002) and ethical guidelines, I found that the researcher and research data are in no special position regarding the law, and data about illegal activities may be liable to subpoena by a court. At the same time the BSA guidelines, state that:

Sociologists have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. They should strive to protect the rights of those they study, their interests, sensitivity and privacy. (2)

There are potentially conflicting interests here, as the gathering of data about illegal downloading activities could adversely affect interviewees if it resulted in their being taken to court or being sued by a record company! Due to this, it was necessary for me to take concerted steps to ensure the confidentiality of the data and anonymise its sources. As a result of this, I have anonymised all my interviewees, first, by changing their names and, second, by not providing the name or location of the record store from which I recruited interviewees, nor the name of the Yahoogroup, nor the names of the individual mp3 blogs.

**Reflexive considerations**

Over the past few decades, reflexivity has arisen as a key element of sociology enquiry, a development which Bryman (2004) links to the growing awareness of post-modern thinking, since the late 1980s. Essentially, reflexivity operates as an attempt to overcome, or at least to acknowledge the, sometimes, subjective nature of social research and it is used as a method to factor oneself into the research and knowledge-creation, undertaken in research and analysis. In this way, the researcher may ‘lay his or her cards on the table’ concerning attitudes, values or beliefs which might colour his or her approach to the
research project. This process is important for two reasons. The first of these is that it alerts the reader to possible researcher biases, which may filter through in research and analysis. Secondly, reflexivity is also an important process for the researcher him or herself as, through extensive self reflection, it allows one to become more aware of one’s own attitudes to the phenomenon under research, a process which helps one to take such attitudes into account, when conducting research and analysis.

I now wish to consider my relationship, reflexively, to what will be a central area of analysis within this thesis: the music collection. A consideration of my relationship to my own music collection helps illuminate my personal approach to this study, and how my personal experiences help me engage with the research on a particular level.

Come into my room, look at my CD collection. My CDs are strewn about the place, boxless, stacked precariously on the edge of my desk, threatening to fall at the slightest disturbance. If you spend any amount of time in this room you will notice how CDs often turn up in the most unexpected places; in drawers, behind beds, on top of wardrobes, and even occasionally in CD cases. However, even though I do consider my CDs to be a hindrance, much preferring to own them on mp3 format, there are some CDs which I keep reserved from the general chaos of my ‘collection’. For example, and against all probability, I have 2 CD copies of Ladies and Gentleman we are Floating in Space, by Spiritualized, and three copies on tape (which I bought cheaply from eBay). What is different about this album? Why do I want it in a number of material forms, when I already have it on mp3 format? Why am I being so illogical about this? These are questions which enable me to approach my research from a particular position of vantage.

Bryman (2004) states that there is a strong feeling within qualitative research that, in order to engage fully with the research and generate meaningful data, one must ‘express a commitment to viewing events and the social world though the eyes of the people under study’ (279). Indeed, Loftland and Loftland (1995) state that, in order to undertake qualitative research ‘you must participate in the mind of another human being, (in sociological terms, ‘take the role of the other’) to acquire social knowledge’ (16).
In light of this, I approach this aspect of my thesis as both an outsider and an insider to the practice of collecting. One who simultaneously feels that CDs are objects of annoyance, and treats them as such, but also as one who feels that there is something about certain albums which can only truly be treasured materially.

In other matters regarding this thesis, I am also by no means neutral. I have strong views on the issue of copyright and the moral status of downloading music illegally. Here, I ally my views on copyright closely with those of Lessig (1999) who explores some of the inherent ambiguity surrounding copyright law.

Lessig’s over arching theme is that the Internet is moving from a world of perfect freedom, in terms of information flows, to a world of perfect control. Lessig argues that the Internet was originally founded upon a set of codes and architectures which made its regulation impossible. However, the use of the Internet for commercial purposes is leading to a situation where the Internet is becoming a more easily regulated environment:

As the Net is being remade to fit the demands of commerce, architectures are being added to make it serve commerce more efficiently. Regulability will be a by-product of these changes. Or put differently, the changes that make commerce possible are also changes that will make regulation easy. (30)

Part of this regulation deals with intellectual property and copyright. Lessig draws attention to the fact that copyright, although primarily in place to protect the interests of the copyright holder, also serves a public purpose through ‘fair use’2. However, emerging anti-piracy protocols and software, such as Digital Rights Management, effectively remove fair use, by granting copyright holders unprecedented control over digital media. This control includes determining when, where, on what digital devices and, even, how many times a piece of digital media can be played. Lessig sees this type of control as ‘a

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2 ‘Fair use’ allows certain uses of copyrighted material, for example making copies for one’s own use.
privatised alternative to law' (130), as it is a much more fine grained control of copyright than is mandated under the law and it is enforced by code, rather than by recourse to law.

Music sharing over the internet, whether it is through peer-to-peer networks, mp3 blogs or music sharing websites, subverts this move on the internet and, until recently, has proved to be an information space subject to very little in the way of regulation. Such networks as these represent pockets of freedom in an increasingly regulated cyberspace, and, as such, should be preserved through use. That being said, the vast majority of information traded on these networks is copyrighted, making these acts illegal. However, I do not see these networks, or these acts, as the problem. Rather, the problem centers on the unwillingness of the record industry to change its distribution methods or pricing structures, in such a way as to take advantage of the possibilities that the internet offers.

Furthermore, this view of the relationship between copyright and music has influenced my own stance on music creation and distribution. I am currently involved with a musical project which releases all its output for free over the internet, and distributes free hard copies of CDs at performances. One of the project axioms is never to charge for music. The reason being that we believe music should be a gift and not a commodity.

This reflexive exploration should provide the reader with an insight into some of my feelings regarding the issue of downloading music illegitimately. Whilst, as a researcher, I shall attempt to guard from allowing these attitudes and values to influence the way I conduct and analyse my research, it is, nevertheless, important to provide the reader with an insight into some of my feelings regarding the issue of downloading music. The importance of this is neatly encapsulated by Turnbull (1973) (quoted by Bryman, 2004) who states that:

‘the reader is entitled to know something of the aims, expectations, hopes and attitudes that the writer brought into the field with him, for these will surely influence not only how he sees things but even what he sees’ (22)
Chapter four: Acquiring, sharing and owning music

Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the various practices of music acquisition and music sharing which I encountered in each of my three field sites. In many ways, the moment of acquisition represents the beginning of the music life-cycle, or perhaps more accurately, the beginning of a music life-cycle. It is a point of appropriation, when music, in whatever form, enters the possession of the individual and passes under ownership. As I stated in the introduction, I wish to explore the impact of technology upon a wide variety of music related practices and I have chosen to begin my analysis with this early stage of interaction with music.

The variety of acquisition practices, which I identified within my sample, fell into two distinct groups: acquisition through purchase and acquisition through sharing. The frequency and manner with which music was acquired through these methods varied considerably across the three primary field sites. As illustrated in the previous chapter, my sample is drawn from the following three areas: the record store, the Yahoogroup and a group of UK based mp3 bloggers. While the majority of analysis in this chapter is based upon activities which occurred within those sites, I shall consider also a limited number of other sharing and acquisition practices in which members of my sample engaged. In the instances I cite, these practices are always related in some way to their involvement with a primary field site.

This chapter will consider, too, the use made by members of my sample of peer-to-peer networks. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, a large proportion of my sample, drawn from online sources (i.e. mp3 bloggers and the Yahoogroup), use, or had used, these networks. The data revealed that there were significant differences in the ways that sample members perceived and used peer-to-peer services for music sharing, as compared to the ways in which they perceived and used music sharing through the Yahoogroup and mp3blogs. These differences were striking enough to warrant further
Second, as explored in Chapter Two, there is growing interest in research on the uses and meanings of peer-to-peer networks (Adar and Huberman (2000) Hughes, Coulson and Walkerdine (2005)) and discussion of the usage of these networks, in the context of this study, helps to link my findings to other literature in this area, as well as extend understanding of the diverse cultures which surround the various means by which music is acquired and shared online.

At the heart of this chapter lies the contention that the method through which music is acquired and distributed impacts upon the meaning and value which is placed upon that music and the forms of sociality which arise around, and, in part, facilitate, music acquisition and sharing. In making this argument, I shall explore the various ways in which value is placed upon music itself, music as a physical object (e.g. CD, vinyl) or both. By this means, I will construct a taxonomy of musical value systems, through which to consider better the relationship between music and its material base.

**Symbolic and financial forms of value**

I begin my analysis by examining the various ways in which notions of musical rarity were valued by members of my sample. In each of my three field sites, study revealed that the rarity of a piece of music was one of the prime reasons for which it was valued... However, the reasons why rarity was valued differed markedly between each site and my analysis in this section will explore the factors underlying this difference.

I shall focus, initially, on the views put forward by members of the record store sample. Here, musical rarity was sometimes valued exclusively in financial terms, as the following response from Alex illustrates. Earlier in the interview Alex informed me that he chooses to shop at the record store, at least in part, because of the opportunities it presents to purchase rare and hard to find music. When questioned further on the matter of obtaining musical rarities, Alex responded in the following manner:
I'm sometimes curious about them; you read about a lot of rare stuff and wonder if it's really that good. And on the few occasions I've found something I can resell I've listened to it, just to check it out. But whenever I've found something rare I sell it on eBay. I mean, I'm not looking for these records to own, I'm just looking to make some quick dough [laughs].

(Alex, record store sample)

Here, Alex's comments reveal that his reasons for searching for and purchasing rare music are underpinned, not by a desire to own and appreciate the music itself, but rather by a desire to resell the music for financial gain. This quotation serves to illustrate one of the ways in which rare music was valued in my sample, i.e. as a form of financial investment, a commodity to be exchanged on the collectable record market. While understandings of the financial worth of rare music were often bound up with the reasons for which it was prized by members of my sample, my findings revealed that rare music was seldom exclusively valued for this reason. The following quotation from Peter helps to illustrate this point:

GO: Can you describe what you get out of shopping at [the name of the record store]?

P: I don't know really. I really enjoy myself in there. It's probably satisfaction at the end of the day. I mean the fact that you know that you've just got a bargain, that's worth a lot more than it is. And it's in good condition and that you know it's massively unlikely that that will depreciate, you know. What else? I got that Don Covey, funk album, it's thirty years old, mint condition, it worth about fifteen, twenty quid, it's beautiful stuff its Cold Funk. I can't remember what's on the front cover, cartoon. Quality. I bought it for two quid and I mean that is not, I mean unless there's a massive overhaul in the economy of this country, like Germany of the 1930s, then that album isn't going to depreciate.
Here, Peter associates the pleasure he derives from shopping at the record store with the
task of searching for and finding musical bargains which have potential high resale value.
However, unlike Alex, Peter, in the case of the Don Covey album, illustrates that he
actually appreciates the rare music in itself, and not just for its resale value. Therefore,
while Peter’s purchase of rare music is driven by an appreciation of the music, there is
also at least a subsidiary interest in the financial value of the acquisition. This is re-
emphasised by his comments regarding the unlikelihood that the music he purchases will
depreciate in value.

However, there was evidence of a further relationship between rarity and financial value,
whereby the rarity of the music impacted upon the ways in which that music was
understood by users. This is exemplified in the following three quotations:

*I don’t buy just because it’s rare. I mean I buy it if it’s an acceptable price and it’s
rare and its good and its beautiful. Well in my experience, which is pretty
significant, the rare stuff is rare for a reason, because it’s good and because it’s
rare, not just because it’s rare but because it’s good... Rare is rare for a reason.*
(John, record store sample)

*This stuff is hard to find because there’s limited numbers of it out there and there’s
only so many copies floating around and when people get hold of it they don’t want
to let go of it because it’s just so damn good.*
(Dan, record store sample)

*But clearly the rarity is just a subsidiary part of it. But what I’ve learned is that
there is some substance in the fact that some of the stuff that’s worth three, four,
five hundred pounds. It’s worth that for a reason, because it’s rare and also
because its very real quality stuff. I mean that’s Immancio De Sliva, I mean some of*
his stuff, you try check that guy, you see how much there is downloaded, because all of his stuff. I can almost guarantee that his stuff wont be anywhere to download. I mean Integration is on CD is absolutely premium stuff, and it is delicious, I mean it is maximum, it's that good, it's that good. If you play it you'll know that this is a ferocious album, and that's the thing you play stuff and you know. These are ferocious albums that I'm telling you about really heavy quality, but you pay your money you takes your choice. If you want a five pound album The Best of the Spice Girls, well you get your five pounds worth; you spend six hundred pounds you'll get six hundred pounds worth.

(Peter, record store sample)

In all of the above quotations, the individuals make explicit connections between the rarity of a piece and its intrinsic musical quality (John: 'rare is rare for a reason'; Dan: 'when people get hold of it they don’t want to let it go because it’s so damn good'). Peter, however, also makes a further link, suggesting that the financial value of music operates as an index of its innate musical worth. This is made clear when he juxtaposes the low financial value of a Spice Girls CD with the high value of the rare Jazz and Funk albums which he appreciates, suggesting that the divergence in their prices directly reflects the difference in their quality. Through this process, Peter is able to make identity claims about his status as a music listener, as one who has expensive and rarefied musical tastes. This is made clearer in the following quotation, taken from later on in the same interview:

*My musical taste is fine, very very fine. In fact I was thinking about a box set I got the other day and it really is connoisseur stuff. Rachis the complete mercury recordings of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, I mean that's everything he did within a five year period. I mean he was only on two labels, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, he's a blind saxophonist, he plays flute, he's just quality. He did about eleven or twelve albums on Mercury Records, and after that he went to Atlanta Records, quality stuff. And I mean a box set is eleven CDs, paid about fifty quid for it, total connoisseur stuff. I mean that is real connoisseur stuff [...]. People really need to know their stuff you know, they're victims of the media; you know the media are ramming these people*
down their throats. I mean, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, I could ask everyone out there [motioning out of the window of the coffee shop in which the interview took place.] and they don’t even know who he is and that is maximum stuff, and he died when he was about 40. I mean she could record music till she’s 70 [referring to picture of popular singer Kylie Minogue in an open paper] the calibre of her stuff just won’t compare to his.

(Peter, record store sample)

Here, the implications of Peter’s musical tastes for his sense of identity become clearer. He describes his musical tastes as ‘very very fine’, describing the music which he collects as ‘real connoisseur stuff’. Indeed, he again makes clear distinction between the ‘connoisseur’ music which he appreciates and the music of more popular artists, a move which allows him to distinguish himself and his tastes from popular aesthetic sensibilities, which he considers to be vapid and derivative. This is made clear when he states: ‘I could ask anyone out there and they don’t even know who he is’. This articulation between musical tastes and a sense of identity was made also by Warren:

You’ve got to know what you’re looking for here. A lot of people don’t appreciate this kind of stuff, but that’s fine, I wouldn’t expect them to. I mean, there’s stuff here for the real collectors, who really know what they’re about musically.

(Warren, record store sample)

So far, I have discussed how the notion of musical rarity is understood by members of the record store sample. In certain uncommon cases, rare music is valued solely in terms of its exchange value, and is pursued purely in these terms. However, in the majority of cases, rare music, while being valued partly for its potential resale value, was also highly valued in terms of the music itself. The valuing of these rare musical works was found to be linked to the individual’s sense of identity, enabling the individual to distinguish him/herself through taste. The importance of the meaning of taste in this respect is highlighted by Bourdieu (1984):
Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. (6)

I am now ready to construct the first element of a taxonomy of musical value, arguing that rare music can be valued either financially or symbolically. In the former case, music is valued for its resale value; in the latter case, music is valued as a symbolic method of making identity claims about musical taste and, thus, about aspects of the self. In the following section, I shall explore the impact of the musical object on this twofold form of valuation, exploring how value is variously placed upon the music, the musical object or both.

Differences between field sites

I now turn to an exploration of the ways in which members of the mp3 blog sample understand and value rare music. This section will reflect upon the previous discussion of the practices of members of the record store sample in order to highlight some fundamental differences in the ways that these two groups understand and value musical rarity. In doing so, I shall continue to draw also upon data from the record store sample, in order to bring these contrasts into sharper relief.

As a collection of individuals, the members of my mp3 blog sample were often, but not exclusively, drawn towards posting culturally obscure and non-mainstream music. Although much of this music tended to be rare, often this was simply because it was non-mainstream and, for that reason, the original copies would not have had a high financial value. (I will explore the importance of this form of posting presently). However, in some instances, mp3 bloggers chose to post music that they perceived to be rare, collectable and financially valuable. Discussion of the motivations of mp3 bloggers for posting such music drew out a number of significant differences between the ways in
which they and members of the record store sample valued music which they considered to be rare and of financial worth.

Both Darren and Tom posted rare and collectable music, the original copies of which would have had high financial value. In relation to his posting of rare and valuable limited run minimalist Electronica, Darren stated the following:

D: I don't think of music in terms of collector value of music. Erm, I've never really been a collector in that way, I've basically just bought records that I liked, that I wanted and that interested me in some way shape or form. Erm, I mean I've got a few things where the packaging is really excellent, it's like a limited edition and I've got a few bits of vinyl which are, you know, worth a fair amount of money now, nothing would stop me from actually posting them on the site, and I've actually posted some of that valuable stuff.

GO: Do you think this might affect the cash value of this music?

D: Yes, no, maybe. But I wouldn't really have any problem in terms of thinking that it's diminishing the cash value of that thing. And frankly that wouldn't bother me if it did.

(Darren, mp3 blogger)

In his comments, Darren describes a form of valuing rare music which is in stark contrast to forms revealed in the record store sample and which does not depend necessarily upon the financial worth of the music. For Darren, the value of rare and desirable elements of his collection is not generally seen in terms of their exchange value; but, where this is so, the importance of this type of value is subsidiary to its worth in terms of sharing it with a wider audience (‘I wouldn’t really have any problem in terms of thinking it’s diminishing the cash value of that thing’). Tom, another mp3 blogger who also posted rare and valuable music, held a view which, although similar to Darren’s, differs in some fundamental respects.
GO: Is there anything that would be too rare to put up there?

T: No, I think the rarer the better really. Because I'm not an elitist by any stretch of the imagination, used to be but not any more. But oh no, the rarer the better really, and I think that can only be beneficial because its going to give people a chance to hear something they're never going to able to hear elsewhere and, let's face it, you're never going to be able to go into a record shop and buy the records I've got, especially a lot of the seven-inches because of their age and their limited run. Because in the Eighties there wasn't a big run like there is for the commercial charts of a release, you're only talking about five thousand being pressed in some cases and even less than that so I'm quite happy to do that. I mean, some of the stuff I post in its original form is quite valuable nowadays, but, you know that wouldn't stop me posting it.

(Tom, mp3 blogger)

In the above, Tom reveals that he posts rare and valuable music, in order to bring it to a wider audience; however, doing so enables him to display his music collection publicly and to showcase its rare elements. He believes that posting this music does not necessarily diminish the financial value of the original (‘let’s face it, you’re never going to be able to go into a record shop and buy the records I’ve got’). This suggest that Tom understands the financial value of rare music as being located in the original physical artefact, and not in the music itself, once separated from its physical base through digitisation.

At this stage of unpicking the relationship between musical value, rarity and the material object, amongst mp3 bloggers, it is possible to isolate two stances. Darren’s stance is that he will post rare music from his collection, despite the fact that he thinks doing so may impact negatively upon the financial value of the original. Tom’s stance is that posting rare music will not impact upon the financial value of the original. Both these positions were in stark contrast to that of Paul, from the record store sample, who had a personal
collection of over two thousand records and seven hundred CDs. In the past, Paul had, for a brief time, used peer to peer networks to search for music, but had ceased this activity due to dissatisfaction with the type of music available on these services. When asked about whether he had shared, or would ever consider sharing any of his own music on these networks, he answered in the following manner.

No, I've spent far too long collecting this music to go and give it away like that. It's hard to explain, but I've made considerable investment over the years in my collection, and I've accumulated all this quality stuff, and, you know, I'm not about to undermine that by putting it on the internet. I'm a collector, and there's nothing a collector wants more than to have something really rare, just to know you've got one of the few decent copies still floating around, and, you know, you want to keep it like that.

(Paul, Collectors Records)

Paul’s comments expose a fundamental disparity between the ways he understands the value of musical rarity as compared with the understandings of the mp3 bloggers discussed so far. Tom and Darren both posted rare and collectable music via their mp3 blogs, irrespective of whether or not they felt that this would depreciate the value of their original copies of the music. Paul’s view is different. Not only does he take the view that distributing digital copies of music would actually cause the value of his original copies to depreciate, but this view actively prevents him from making music digitally available. This suggests that, not only is Paul’s viewpoint about understandings of musical rarity distinctive from those held by Tom and Darren, but that this distinctiveness extends to notions of the music collection and music collecting. For Paul, rarity was valued in terms of what it added to his collection (‘there’s nothing a collector wants more than to have something rare’), as well as in terms of its financial benefit... (‘I’ve made considerable investment over the years in my collection... and I’m not about to undermine that by putting it on the internet’). In order to keep these two aspects of rarity intact, Paul decided that he would not share his music digitally. He was maintaining the value of his investment in his collection by keeping access to it limited and private. In
contrast, Tom and Darren valued rarity, at least partially, in terms of the potential it offers for sharing music with a wider audience (Tom: 'it's going to give people the chance to hear something they're never going to be able to hear elsewhere'). The distinction between the two main views can be summarised thus: Paul sought to lock in the value of rare music by restricting access to it; Tom and Darren (at least in part) sought to release the value of rare music by making it available to a wider audience. This distinction also points to a fundamentally different approach to the music collection: one which sees the collection as private and personal, the other, which sees it as a public and shared.

The discussion of the value of rarity can also be seen in terms of Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital. In all cases, the music collection can be viewed as an objectified form of cultural capital, but the ways in which the collection is utilised point to different manifestations and mobilisations of this capital. For Tom and Darren, it is through the sharing and public display of their tastes in, and through ownership of, rare music that cultural capital is exercised. For Paul, the cultural capital in his collection is maintained by choosing not to share it over electronic networks, thus maintaining the rarity of the music.

The above also reveals something of the importance and bearing of format and the physical object upon musical value and understandings of music collections. For Paul, keeping music tied to its physical base (i.e. the original record and not a reproducible digital file) helps to maintain its value, its rarity and, thereby, its collectability. Therefore, rare elements of Paul's collection are valued not only in terms of their musical quality, but also as unique and fixed musical artefacts which represent the sole origin and embodiment of the music. In collecting music, to an extent, Paul is also collecting the objects which embody music. Tom's approach to his collection reveals a slightly different position in the relationship between format and musical rarity. For him, the financial value of rare elements of his collection is not based upon the ownership of music itself, but, rather, it resides in the ownership of the original copies of this music. Tom makes a distinction between the music (which, once digitised, is free to be shared and endlessly reproduced) and the physical artefact (which is limited, sometimes
extremely so). This is why Tom can confidently post music on his mp3 blog without feeling that this will diminish the financial value of his collection. Indeed, he perceives an additional benefit conferred by the digitising of rare music, in that it affords him the means of sharing with, and, thus, publicly displaying his tastes to, a wider audience. Darren’s approach is yet different again. For Darren, the value of rare music is not tied to the financial value of the original copy, but, rather, is based upon bringing the music to a wider audience.

Indeed, Darren, like many other members of the Yahoogroup and mp3 blog samples, was keen to differentiate his approach to music collection from what he perceived to be the negative effects of object based collecting practices.

_I mean, collectors, I mean it’s a slightly different mindset I think to get into it, and I don’t think it’s necessarily about the music a lot of the time, I mean obviously it is you know also about the music, you know you get Northern Soul fanatics or whatever and they are very into music and they are very into the collecting of it as well. Erm, but I still think that on the whole, it actually transcends the idea of the music, the record, the hearing of it, it becomes about an object. That’s not how I appreciate music, I think it’s a bit sad actually, to listen to music for, or to be into music for, you know, in that way. You know, get into stamps or something. Music’s something more than a commodity and something worth x amount of pounds._

(Darren, mp3 blogger)

In the above, Darren clearly defines his own music collecting activities as being in sharp contrast to those of individuals whom he understands as being interested primarily in music as an object. Indeed, he associates the valuation of the physical object, in some contexts, as superseding the act of music appreciation itself, stating that it ‘transcends the music’. For Darren, the commodity status of music which, at least partially, arises from the fetishised valuation of the objectified form of music, serves to degrade music in his eyes (‘Music’s something more than a commodity and something worth x amount of pounds’). Such views were also echoed by Leo, a member of the Yahoogroup sample:
What they're doing is just stamp collecting. And stamp collecting is alright in its way but it's nothing to do with music. So if you're collecting every single released on the Apple label or something or two-tone or whatever, and you've got this collection and now you've insured it for £2000 great but it's nothing to do with music, it's to do with stamp collecting.

(Leo, Yahoogroup sample)

The importance of culturally obscure music

So far in this chapter, my primary consideration has been about how rare music of high financial value is acquired, understood and shared. However, the original copies of much of the music acquired through, and shared upon, the Yahoogroup and mp3 blogs I investigated were of no special financial value. In this section, I change focus to discuss the uses and understanding of this form of rarity amongst members of the mp3 blog and Yahoogroup field sites.

Members of the mp3 blog sample often posted rare, culturally obscure music on their sites, for reasons congruent with the motivations for posting rare, collectable music considered previously, i.e. to bring that music to a wider audience. The following quotations help to illustrate this point, while also providing insight into the reasons which underpinned the posting of this type music:

G.O: What do you get out of running your mp3 blog?

S: Well, I'm just happy to share some music. Yeah, very much so, you know I love music. And I've got, you know, a fairly kind of eclectic range, and different sort of
musical tastes, and a fair amount of stuff that most people, well a lot of people won't be very aware of, if at all. So, it's, that's the ideal kind to share.

(Simon, mp3 blog sample)

I mean the idea behind the blog is to try and broaden people's tastes, in whatever small way I can. Yeah, absolutely, as I say I do feature quite an eclectic range, and someone might come across my blog, and it might be some kind of minimal electronic techno track, or whatever, which is particularly interesting to them, then they might come across some sort of dub reggae track that they would never have considered listening to, or some other track which they might not have chosen to listen to, something in that vain you know.

(John, mp3 blog sample)

I'd be trying, well more than anything, well usually it's just trying to give someone something they'll like, but I mean part of that is to introduce them to things they'll like which they haven't heard. I mean I think that's basically the main thing, just to show them some wonderful songs they're unfamiliar with.

(Sean, mp3 blog sample)

These quotations, typical of the mp3 blog sample as a whole, indicate that, for the owner of the mp3 blog, posting rare, culturally obscure music is partially driven by a desire to 'educate' listeners, exposing them to music they may otherwise not hear (Simon: 'a fair amount of stuff that [...] a lot of people wont be aware of. So, it's that's the ideal kind to share'; John: 'they might come across some sort of dub reggae track that they would never have considered listening to'; Sean: 'I mean I think that's basically the main thing, just to show them some wonderful songs they're unfamiliar with'). In this way, mp3 bloggers understand their function in posting this music as a form of 'tastemaking' (Bourdieu, 1984). So, posting music through the mp3 blog can operate as a means for the public display of cultural capital. It is also understood as a tastemaker activity. However, posting music also has a more personal aspect, one which can be explored with reference to current research on the practice of weblogging.
Reed investigates the relationship between weblogging and identity, illuminating the close relationship between the individual weblogger and his or her weblog:

Those webloggers I eventually met treated their texts as straightforward indexes of self [...] For them, there is no issue of representation; they commonly assert that 'my blog is me' (3).

Reed argues that such total representation of the individual through the weblog occurs through a 'substituting of texts for persons' (ibid), stating that the weblog is created 'so a subject can view himself or herself in mediated form, exteriorised as text' (6). Reed argues that the highly personal journal-based nature of weblogs is one aspect of this relationship, enabling the individual to look back over recorded events, and thereby re-experience them. In the same way that the practice of weblogging is based around a culture of substituting 'texts for persons', I argue that the mp3 blog is based, in some contexts, around a similar project, substituting music for persons. I make this claim on the basis that, when certain members of the mp3 blog sample posted music, they did so with reference to their current moods and personal biography. Simon, for example, stated the following:

_I sometimes post depending on my mood. It's like if I'm stressed out or angry, or whatever, I'll post something a bit angry and write something explaining why I posted it. And then that's good for the future, because if I re-read it I've got all these songs that remind me how I was feeling on such and such a day._

(Simon, mp3 blog sample)

Here, Simon illustrates how, when deciding what music to post, his current emotional state operates as an influence. Posting music which reflects current moods, therefore, operates as a way to 'exteriorise' his emotions - and therefore aspects of himself - in musical form, in the same way that webloggers perform similar functions through text.
While the mp3 blog is a site through which to share music, it is also an area where the individual mp3 blogger can musically work through current emotional states, in a media which enables him or her to review them chronologically, in what is tantamount to an annotated aesthetic journal.

**Forms and norms of reciprocity**

In Chapter Two, I discussed literature, proposing that modes of online file sharing could be conceptualised as particular forms of gift economy (Giesler et al., 2003; Veale, 2003). Central to the concept of the gift economy is the associated concept of reciprocity, which refers to the importance and expectation of mutual gift giving within the particular group, a phenomenon which keeps the gift economy in motion. In this section, I explore the forms and norms of reciprocity which exist within the different modes of online sharing present in my sample (i.e. mp3 blogs, the Yahoogroup and peer-to-peer networks), illustrating the processes through which it arises and the role of the material artifact in this

In the following, Leo, a member of the Yahoogroup, provides an example of internet-facilitated music sharing, illustrating the senses of reciprocity upon which this form of sharing is based:

*Only the other week a friend of mine gave me an old chewed up tape of a bootleg video tape of some songs which you can't get, it's not commercially available anymore, it used to be, called Festival, from the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. So it's got Dylan on it, but a host of other things too. And this is a nasty copy, bootlegged, and it went wrong in a few places, and it just occurred to me I'll bet that on the internet there is a bunch of eager beaver Dylan fans that have got all this stuff down on DVD. It took me about ten minutes to find the site and then about another ten minutes to register onto it and then one minute to have a request, has anybody got Festival on DVD? Next day I get an email from some guy, I don't know where he is or who he is, he might be you for all I know, who said 'yeah, I've got this, do*
you want it?’ and I said ‘well what do you want in return’, usually an assessment of his thing called ‘B&P’, which is his ‘blanks and packaging’. Ok, so I haven’t got anything that the guy wants and he said ‘No, I’ll just send it to you, what’s your address?’ So three days after that, it came through the door, free. [...] Now that’s happened to me several times before and I now begin, I now do this for people if they want something, I just send it to them, and when they say ‘what do you want in return?’ well if they haven’t got anything that’s ok by me, I just tell them to bear this in mind and send it to the next person who wants it and doesn’t have anything to give you back.

(Leo, Yahoogroup sample)

The above clearly illustrates how modes of reciprocity underpin certain forms of internet-facilitated music sharing, and how these modes of reciprocity emerge. Here, Leo describes how his search for a copy of Festival ended in his reception of a free DVD copy through an arrangement made over the Internet. As a consequence of this, Leo now chooses to post music to others for free. The wider significance of this is revealed when, later in the interview, Leo reveals that his internet-facilitated music exchanges, prior to receiving a copy of Festival, had been based upon the mutual trading of music, where songs were exchanged only after equivalences of musical value had been negotiated, often via email. The above, therefore, provides an example of the emergence of reciprocity and how it is ‘passed on’ within internet-based sharing networks. Receiving free music stimulated Leo into changing the methods by which he negotiated music transactions, from trading to sharing. The anthropologist Mauss (1990), who first observed gift economies, states that in a gift economy the gift is an object which, when given, engages the honour of both giver and receiver, creating a social bond based upon reciprocity. The above example illustrates how Leo, through the initial gift of the Festival DVD, is ‘initiated’ into this particular music sharing gift economy and its norms of reciprocity. Furthermore, when Leo shares music, he does so under the proviso that the recipient of that music should also share it, illustrating how reciprocity is perpetuated and extended within these networks. The shift in Leo’s music transfer practices, from trade to sharing, suggests a change in his evaluation of music, i.e. music comes to be valued not
in terms of its exchange value (as it was through trade) but rather in terms of what it adds to the gift economy and how it facilitates the further circulation of gifts. Leo is also an active member of the Yahoogroup, a site where music sharing is also underpinned by, and indeed structured around, a strong sense of reciprocity, as I will now illustrate.

The Yahoogroup is a space, around which forms of internet based reciprocity have coalesced, forming the bedrock of community. The community related aspects of this site are well illustrated by the following from Neil, where he describes an incident in which the Yahoogroup as a whole came to the aid of one of its members:

There's one guy in particular who's recently had his hard disk crash, and the whole Peel community have come to his assistance, because all the people who've downloaded stuff have now offered to give him copies of what he's downloaded. So, that's a good test of how people give stuff back, so they don't just take and run, they're prepared to give it back as well.

(Neil, Yahoogroup sample)

The above example illustrates the workings of reciprocity within the Yahoogroup and how this informs a sense of community. Group members were keen to help replenish the music collection of the individual, whom Neil describes, because of the amount of music he had shared with the group in the past. This behaviour by the group appears to arise from a sense of group reciprocity, based upon individual desires to repay an obligation entered into when first downloading music.

On the Yahoogroup, music sharing is negotiated, or at least initiated, through the website forum. Here, group members post requests either for music, which they desire, or post details of the music which they have to offer. The exchanging of details necessary for songs to be shared or exchanged occurs either on the forum, or through private follow up emails. While a textual analysis of these posts would provide stimulating areas for further study, my methodology did not encompass this, as discussed in the previous chapter. My
interview data, however, provide many insights into the forms of distribution which underpinned these sharing activities.

The methods of distribution, underpinning hard copy music sharing over the Yahoogroup, were based around either one-to-one posting of music (where one member of the group would physically post to another, or two members would post to each other) or through 'distribution trees'. Distribution trees consist of 'seeds' (who provides the original source of music); branches (who receive music from the seed, replicate it and pass it onto subsequent branches, who do the same) and leaves (who, not having the means to replicate the music, are simply recipients). Such forms of distribution represent the continuation of a form which first arose in the 1970s, when the introduction of compact audiocassettes enabled fans to bootleg and distribute live performances (for discussion see Anderton, 2006, 166-167). In the following, George and Neil describe their involvement with such forms of distribution on the Yahoogroup:

G.O: Could you tell me about your involvement with the Peel group?

N: My involvement is just joining in discussions as and when I have the time and also there is a tendency to produce copies of shows for various people. I mean I didn't have much of an archive of shows but there's a lot of people out there who do and collectively there's quite a lot of material in the group. So I've been one of the people who receives stuff on CD or DVD from people and copy it and send it out to a certain number of people, at least one of which also has burning software and hardware so they can keep the chain going. And that way people get to have copies of John Peel shows.

(Neil, Yahoogroup sample)

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3 While the sharing of digital audio files also occurred on the Yahoogroup, members of my sample used the group to exchange hard copies of music only.
G.O: You also said earlier about your involvement in the Peel group and that you send CDs out to people. How does that work, do people contact you, or do you post on the website?

N: Well what usually happens is that if someone has some shows available, for example there's a guy in Finland who has 10 years worth of John Peel's radio mafia shows on tape, so every now and then he'll convert a batch to mp3 then he will make them available through some other guy whose on the Peel group and this guy will say 'ok, who wants a copy', so a bunch of people will say yeah, I want a copy, and then once three, four or five people have said they want a copy he'll make a hard copy and then send it to those people and then each person in turn then makes copies and sends them out. And sort of the rough rule is that you try and make sure that there are people who can't make copies, because it's not their fault they haven't got the kit, but you also make sure there's some people who can make copies, so that you keep it going and you form a sort of tree, so in that way, everyone who wants copies can have copies.

(George, Yahoogroup sample)

The above illustrates how distribution trees are configured in such ways as to foster forms of reciprocity, whilst ensuring that distribution of music spans the widest possible range of people. Both Neil and George perform the function of distribution tree branches, receiving music and replicating it for other members of the group, guaranteeing the continuation of the tree by ensuring they also post to other branches. Neil's comments illustrate how this form of dissemination functions as a way of harnessing and then distributing what he understands to be a collective archive of material within the group ('I mean I didn't have much of an archive of shows but there's a lot of people out there who do and collectively there's quite a lot of material in the group'). The above reveals how reciprocity is built into the very distribution networks which underpin elements of sharing on the Yahoogroup.
Social aspects of peer-to-peer sharing: a comparison

I wish to discuss these findings now in relation to the experiences of members of my sample in the use of peer-to-peer networks. As I have illustrated above, the circulation of music through the Yahoogroup is based upon a sense of communal reciprocity; however, such feelings did not typify the experience of members of my sample in relation to peer-to-peer networks. The following quotation from Dan, a regular user of peer-to-peer networks, exemplifies this:

*I'm downloading all the time, but then when I see some one uploading from me I'm like: 'Oi! What do to think you're doing!'. But at the same time I'm downloading off other people so I can't say anything coz I'm downloading. But there's like no politeness, there's no like communication between people, it's just like 'ah, I'll have that song, I'll have that, I'll take that'. It's taking rather than giving and it's a bit like, it hasn't got any depth to it.*

(Dan, record store sample)

Here, Dan explains that he feels that the peer-to-peer environment is a socially disengaged and disengaging space in which to share music. This dissatisfaction appears to arise primarily from the lack of social contact he feels when exchanging music ('there's like no politeness, there's no like communication between people, it's just like 'ah, I'll have that song''), a fact which excites feelings of resentment when people download music from him ('I'm like: 'Oi! What do you think, you're doing?''). Although Dan does allow people to download from him, thus displaying a level of reciprocity, this is done in a somewhat begrudging manner ('but at the same time I'm downloading off other people so I can't say anything'). Dan's statement 'it's taking rather than giving' succinctly expresses the differences which exist between his perceptions of sharing over peer-to-peer networks and ways in which sharing is understood in the Yahoogroup. In the Yahoogroup, the sharing and exchange of music is often first negotiated through email or forum contact. In other words, the sharing of music here engenders a process whereby social contact leads to the volitional transfer of an object from the sender to the recipient. This process involves identifiable social actors on both sides of the equation, even if they
are anonymous to each other. This contrasts with Dan’s experience with peer-to-peer networks, where no such process of negotiation is entered into. Here, the choice of whether or not to share is reduced to a binary between enabling the share function (sharing with all) and disabling the share function (sharing with none). After that, the negotiation for the exchange of music occurs through a series of technological protocols between computers. This fact leads to a subtle inversion of the gift economy. Dan does not feel that he is giving music, but rather that people are taking music from him (‘it’s taking rather than giving’). The above illustrates how the lack of social contact in peer-to-peer sharing serves to lower levels of reciprocity and alter the dynamics of gifting. Indeed, some members of my sample did not display any feeling of reciprocity in their use of peer-to-peer networks, as Matt exemplifies:

G.O: And do you let people download from you as well?

M: No, no I don't. Purely because I find it slows my connection down, I mean I might do now I've got broadband, I just can't be bothered most of the time

(Matt, record store sample)

Here, Matt’s actions are congruent with ‘free-riding’, a practice defined by Adar and Huberman (2000) to refer to individuals who use peer-to-peer networks to obtain files but do not provide files for others to download. Furthermore the fact that Matt states that he ‘can’t be bothered most of the time’ to enable the sharing of music, suggests that the acquisition of music through peer-to-peer networks excites no sense of reciprocity in him.

Mark, a member of the record store sample, highlights a further aspect of peer-to-peer sharing, drawing attention to the issue of anonymity within these networks.

Mark: Yeah, there's very basic instant messaging things, and they've got sort of once again a very basic chat room all through the same application, so its like all the chatrooms are dedicated to different types of music, so you can go into a room and say you're looking for different types of techno or something like that, so you
just go into a techno room and find a list of everyone who's in there at that time and search all those peoples' files basically.

G.O: Have you ever used that?

Mark: Yes, I've used that but I've never generally talked to people, because I don’t know, they might be weird [laughs]. So yeah, I do use that, and I just browse people's what they've got and if I like it, it'll be: 'I'll just take that'.

(Mark, record store sample)

Although opportunities for communication with other network users exist (through instant message chat functions), Mark chooses not to explore these options. The reason Mark provides for this centers upon the anonymous nature of the other users, whose precise identity is not known and, therefore, is not trusted ('they might be weird'). Furthermore, and as intimated earlier, unlike the Yahoogroup, actually contacting another user on the peer-to-peer network is not a necessary pre-requisite for obtaining music, which means that there is little functional need for Mark to engage in social contact with others ('I've never generally talked to people [...] I just browse people’s what they’ve got and if I like it, it’ll be: ‘I’ll just take that’).

I wish to draw some overall conclusions now regarding the differences I have observed in sharing practices between peer-to-peer networks and the Yahoogroup. This discussion illustrates how the social aspects of music sharing are variously enabled or constrained by the manner in which the music is shared, and also highlights the role of the musical object in sharing practices.

In the Yahoogroup, the sharing and exchange of music is negotiated through volitional social contact on a one-to-one or one-to-many basis. This condition is a necessary aspect of the sharing process, representing the only route through which music can be obtained via the site. The transfer of hard copy music, therefore, occurs between a known sender and a known receiver. Even though the identity of either party may be anonymous to the
other, trust levels sufficient for the exchange of postal address information are created through these initial exchanges. Furthermore, the use of distribution trees, for the dissemination of music to multiple members of the group, is based around and, indeed, actively fosters forms of reciprocity throughout the group. Finally, the fact that the music being exchanged is in hard copy (amongst the members of my sample at least) necessitates the emergence and use of these social sharing organisations. In other words, the practicalities of replicating and disseminating physical musical objects create the space for the social contact and social interaction of communal distribution.

Peer-to-peer networks, however, on both a practical and a social level, work differently. Peer-to-peer networks require no direct interaction between sender and recipient, as this occurs automatically at the technological level. As a consequence of this, members of my sample perceived these networks as fundamentally asocial environments and this perception fostered low levels of trust and reciprocity. These findings are in line with Adar and Huberman (2000) and Hughes et al. (2005) who also reveal that peer-to-peer networks are typified by low levels of reciprocity. However, by comparing different forms of sharing in my sample I help to illuminate why this is so.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the various forms of music acquisition and music sharing which I found in each of my three field sites. Through this consideration, I have sought to highlight the ways in which these methods of acquisition and distribution impact upon the meaning and value placed upon the music and upon the social practices which develop around music acquisition and sharing and which, in part, facilitate them.

This investigation enabled me to explore the different notions of value which surround various forms of musical rarity. Discussion of these notions of value uncovered fundamental differences around the ways in which the members of my sample assigned value to music, the musical object or both. In order to illustrate these different forms of
value, I shall now present a typology of musical value, illustrating the various ways in which music and the musical object are valued within my sample.

Firstly, music, and the musical object, can be valued for symbolic reasons, either for issues related to identity or as a form of cultural capital. My findings reveal that this form of value can be mobilised, either through the public act of music sharing on the mp3 blog (thus showcasing rare music), or through the ownership of music in embodied form. Secondly, and relating primarily to the musical object, music can be valued for financial reasons, often as a form of investment. This form of value was observed most frequently within the record store sample but was rarely the sole reason why music was valued. Thirdly, both music and the musical object can be valued in terms of their rarity, a form of value which potentially straddles both symbolic and financial value. My findings illustrate that rarity can be valued primarily via the musical object (a scarce resource which serves to increase both the symbolic and financial value of the music), or as a means to exercise cultural capital over internet based music sharing networks. Fourthly, music and the musical object can be have a communal value, whereby music is valued as a way of enriching electronically mediated sharing networks (as illustrated in the Yahoogroup).

These different orders of music related value are non exclusive, and may co-exist in complicated ways, as my findings indicate.

In this chapter I have considered the two separate methods through which music is acquired in my sample (i.e. through purchase or through sharing). In the next chapter, I shall investigate the complexly negotiated area of copyright, an issue directly related to the use of both of these channels of acquisition by members of my sample.

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4 Music is of course often valued by the individual for its 'intrinsic' musical worth. However, as this is a question of the individual's musical taste, I include it within symbolic value as it is bound up with issues of identity and may also operates as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984)
CHAPTER FIVE: COPYRIGHT, MORALITY AND MUSIC

Introduction

This chapter explores the importance of, and motivations and meanings behind, the use of two fundamentally different channels of acquiring music, as demonstrated by members of my sample. The first of these channels concerns acquisition through legitimate (legal) means - such as purchase from on or offline music stores - whilst the second concerns acquisition through illegitimate (illegal) means - such as downloading copyrighted material from a peer-to-peer service. In my sample, the choice of mode through which to acquire music was found to rest upon a number of considerations, justifications and negotiations undertaken by the user. Whilst many reasons were exhibited for using either, or both, of these modes of acquisition, often such reasons were found to rest upon various and shifting notions of both the author and the record industry.

In the previous chapter, my discussion of methods of acquisition and sharing allowed me to identify different values which users placed upon music and the musical object. In this chapter, my intention is to explore the importance of the act of purchase and the act of sharing itself, which I found to be anchored to a set of values and meanings, quite apart from those identified in the previous chapter. These meanings, which will be discussed throughout the chapter, arise as a result of the particular sets of relationships that arise between the music consumer, the artist(s) and the record industry through both the act of purchasing and of sharing.

This chapter, therefore, is largely about the moral and ethical decisions and negotiations that members of my sample make regarding the decision to purchase a piece of music legitimately, or the decision to download it illegally. However, this is not to suggest that all purchase decisions are driven solely by moral considerations; other, more pragmatic reasons also were found to be significant in this regard. I shall explore these reasons in more detail presently. However, first it is necessary, briefly, to consider work from the emerging field of the sociology of copyright.
Copyright and the romantic author

Marshall (2005) uncovers some of the various assumptions embedded in copyright as a concept, and describes the way in which the music industry has presented copyright infringement, especially during the so called Napster Wars of the late 1990s, recasting it as a moral crime through recourse to a discourse of the ‘romantic author’. Marshall locates current debates about copyright infringement historically, stating that publishing industries have, since the Statute of Anne in 1709, sought to extend their rights over intellectual property by arguing that certain rights were needed to protect the interests of the author. However, Marshall states that there are certain inherent contradictions in this stance. These contradictions arise from particular notions about art and creativity, which emerged during the Romantic Period, and which continue to resonate today. Foremost amongst these was a belief in ‘the individualisation of creativity; (tortured) genius; originality; the radical separation of art and market; art as spiritual not material’ (Marshall, 2). The argument Marshall makes is that copyright law, and the rhetorical stance the music industry has taken regarding mp3 downloading, is based upon an inherent contradiction, as the romantic artist is presented as a being above the market, yet copyright firmly embeds the author and his or her artistic output in a commercial setting. Marshall states that copyright is built upon a relationship between the public, the author and capital (the record industry). In my sample, I shall examine how the notion of the romantic author is used both to motivate purchase and to justify copyright infringement. I shall also explore how members of my sample understand the relationship between the individual, the author and the record industry, and how decisions to purchase, or otherwise, are based on these understandings.
Pragmatic purchases

This section concentrates on the importance and meaning of musical purchase to my sample, and the various motivations which underpin this act. While these potential motivations are many and diverse, a single motivation was found to underpin and link all acts of purchase recorded in my data. I refer to this as pragmatic motivation for purchase, a term I use to refer to purchases undertaken either to acquire pieces of music which cannot be obtained through any other means, or purchases made to acquire material objects (which, by definition, downloading cannot support). As I stated, I observed no act of purchase which was not, at least partially, motivated by this reason; however, at different times, members of my sample expressed purely pragmatic motives for buying music, which made reference neither the artist(s) nor the record industry. I shall now illustrate this.

Michelle was married to John, a participant I recruited from the record store, whom I met on a home visit and who agreed to be interviewed. During our interview, I asked her to tell me about her most recent music purchase, and her motivations in making this purchase.

_The last CD we bought was the Meatloaf one. We were going to see him in concert, and we couldn't get all, we couldn't guarantee getting the entire album off the internet, so we bought it._

(Michelle, record store sample)

Here, Michelle’s decision to purchase is clearly motivated by pragmatic reasons. Had she been able to obtain all the Meatloaf songs online she would not have purchased the album. However, because she wished to know all the songs prior to seeing him in concert, she made a purchase.

Other participants also displayed similar motivations for purchase:
Yeah, I was trying to download Ten, Pearl Jam's first album, but like I could only find like the big tunes off it, like Jeremy and Even Flow, but I like the whole album, and I couldn't find all the tunes to download so I ended up getting it [the album] from HMV.

(Jason, record store sample)

and:

Sometimes if I really like an artist, like Beck or Sigur Ros, I bought their album this year, because I really liked them and perhaps can't get all the ones, can't get all the ones off download. Can't get the entire album, you know, if it's an artist I really liked.

(Ben, Yahoogroup sample)

When probed further about this purchase, Ben replied:

I buy it for me; I mean it's nothing to do with the artist. Not a sense of loyalty or anything like that. It's more for my personal, so I can have all the songs. You know, though I like the artist, it's not because I'm loyal buying the CD, it's because I want all the tracks basically.

(Ben, Yahoogroup sample)

The above quotations illustrate purely pragmatic motivations behind purchase. In these cases, purchase is undertaken simply to obtain music, music which cannot be obtained through other means. For Michelle, the only way to obtain all the music on the Meatloaf album, prior to the concert, was to purchase the album, even though she had clearly attempted to acquire the music through illegitimate channels, and would have done so if this had proved possible. Ben also displays purely pragmatic reasons for purchase and, as his comments make clear, his purchase of a Sigur Ros album was not motivated by a sense of loyalty to the artist. He simply wanted to be sure of obtaining a complete set of songs from the album.
While the above illustrate purchases made to obtain music unavailable from other sources, further pragmatic reasons for purchase were found to rest on the importance of gaining a physical artifact, again something which could not be obtained from illegitimate channels of music acquisition. The following quotation from Marianna provides an example of this reason for purchase:

Beethoven I would buy, I wouldn’t download that because I would want to have the CD whatever it is, a symphony or whatever. I download Eighties tracks, things that remind me of my teenage, you know The Eye of the Tiger, and things like that remind me of when I was a teenager and give me back so many memories. I would sort of download all those, China in your Hand from T-Pau and those things [laughs] and put them all in my folder and listen to them whenever I wanted, but things that I treasure like classical music I always buy it I want to own it I want to have it.

(Marianna, record store sample)

The above reveals that the desire to own a physical artifact was an important element in Marianna’s decision to purchase. Her willingness to buy a Beethoven CD, for example, was not motivated by a desire to support the composer, since, for obvious reasons, Beethoven himself could not benefit by it. Rather, purchasing the music was the only means available to her to obtain an artifact which she could ‘treasure’ and also display in her collection. In the previous chapter, I discussed the link between cultural capital and the ownership of physical repositories of music. Here, I illustrated how the ownership of physical musical objects is closely connected to issues of identity and social distinction, factors which can be seen in operation in Marianna’s decision to purchase. For example, Marianna chose to purchase a Beethoven CD but not CDs of music from the Eighties, a fact suggesting that, perhaps, the ownership of the former type of CD has higher levels of cultural capital. This example, coupled with the discussions in the previous chapter, highlight the significance of the purchased object. In this chapter, however, I do not wish
to discuss the importance of the object per se, only to highlight that the desire for an object is an important element of the decision to purchase.

All the examples I have considered so far, illustrate that purchases do not always revolve around notions of the author, and that reasons for purchase can be 'neutral' with regard to issues of copyright. Indeed, the purchases investigated so far are undertaken with no reference to copyright, and, instead, revolve around finding a method of obtaining a set of songs and objects, which cannot be obtained by other means. These purchases are undertaken simply to obtain a set of physical and aural goods for the individual, and demonstrate no special regard toward either the artist or the music industry.

However, not all purchases are driven solely by pragmatic motives, and my sample provides many examples of purchases which draw upon notions of the author and, to a lesser extent, the record industry.

**The importance of purchase**

Cavicchi (1998), in a study of the activities of a group of Bruce Springsteen fans, has highlighted the ways in which certain musical purchases can be understood as a method of creating an ongoing, meaningful relationship between the fan and the artist. Analysis of my data revealed that similar practices of relationship building, through purchase, were present in my own sample. However, my research shows that the circumstances in which this form of purchase occurs can vary significantly from context to context. This suggests that the emergence of this form of purchase is based upon a more complicated set of contingencies and negotiations than had been thought hitherto.

Within my sample, many different views were expressed concerning the connection between purchase and the artist(s). In the following, I discuss the views of those who perceived purchase as invoking a direct relationship between the individual and the artist(s). Adam, Jake and Warren, considered below, all chose to purchase music, despite
the fact that each had the opportunity to download. They did this because they believed that obtaining music through other channels would impact negatively upon the artist(s).

If I want CDs copied I'll usually just buy them, I don't think it's like right to copy them sort of thing, it's not fair on the artist.

(Adam, record store sample)

The thing is, it can be very expensive buying music, and you pay can £6 for a dance music 12inch... I don't want to diddle anyone out of their money, I mean it's fair enough, I'm not going to steal music from bands who I like. If I want it, I'll pay for it.

(Jake, record store sample)

I've never downloaded, some of my mates do it, but I don't. No, downloading's wrong isn't it? It's ripping off the artists. I'd rather buy the thing, even though it hits me in the wallet. I'm not into ripping people off.

(Warren, record store sample)

In the above instances, the use of illegitimate channels of music acquisition is clearly understood as a form of dishonest conduct, harmful to the artist(s). In the cases considered here, the reasons given for purchase draw upon a discourse which understands the artist(s) as an individual, or as part of a group of individuals, who deserve to be rewarded for their artistic endeavour. Purchase is, therefore, understood as a fulfillment of the listener's side of a bargain. Indeed, any other method of obtaining music is understood as 'stealing' from the artist, representing a fundamental rupture in the artist/listener relationship. In a sense, purchasing music legitimately creates a moment when the perceived obligation between the individual and the artist(s) is fulfilled. Here, the artist(s) is justly rewarded for his/her role in the production of valued music. In addition, the existence of illegitimate channels of acquisition further serves to
define and heighten the moment, when music fans who could download for free, freely *choose* to pay for what they value.

The existence of these other channels of acquisition, therefore, intensifies the degree to which individuals feel they are supporting the artist ('I'm not into ripping people off') and the degree to which this represents a purely volitional sacrifice on the part of the individual ('it hits me in the wallet'). Significantly, in the cases considered above, the role of the record industry is not mentioned. This indicates that the sense of obligation felt towards the artist(s) did not extend to the record industry, (for example, no concern was expressed about the record company being 'ripped off'). Indeed, the absence of any mention of the record industry in these accounts suggests that Adam, Jake and Warren understand purchase as consisting of a primarily linear and unmediated connection with the artist, rather than one which also involves the record industry.

While Adam, Jake and Warren choose to acquire music only through legitimate means, there were other members of the sample who chose to acquire music only from certain artists in this way, while acquiring music from other artists illegitimately. Andy, who downloaded music extensively, and who estimated his MP3 collection to consist of 6,000 illegally downloaded songs, illustrates one such example of this practice. After telling me about his heavy download practices, Andy revealed that there were some artists whose work he always chose to purchase, despite the fact that it was readily available for download:

*A:* *There's some bands who I always buy. Like Beatles CDs, or Nirvana CDs. Any bootleg or singles I come across which I don't have, I would get. The same with Eminem... it's the same with just a couple of musicians or bands whom I really want to have an entire collection of records of CDs*

G.O: *Why is this?*
A: *Oh, I just want to have the all their stuff. I mean I get it because it's my sign of respect to the musician*  
(Andy, record store sample)

Here, Andy reveals dual motivations for purchasing the work of certain artists. While he states that he purchases all the available output of particular artists, in order to compile a complete collection of their available material (‘I just want to have all their stuff’), such a collection is likely to perform a further function for Andy, namely that of confirming his status as a true fan of these artists. This resonates with my findings in the previous chapter. However, Andy also understands the purchase of the material in terms of the forging of a relationship with the artist (‘I get it because it’s my sign of respect to the musician’). These motivations for purchase are also congruent with those of Rob, considered now:

*Like I said, I download a lot. But I’ve never downloaded any of my favourite bands. I mean, I wouldn’t download any Spiritualized because, well, I’ve followed J Spaceman for years from the Spaceman 3 and Sonic Boom days [J Spaceman is a founding member of these three bands], and, you know, even though the last couple of albums have been less than amazing, I always end up getting them. You know, I feel I ought to support him.*  
(Rob, record store sample)

Like Andy, Rob also purchases music from his ‘favourite’ artists, while downloading the output of other, less valued musicians. Here, Rob reveals that his purchase of *Spiritualized* albums is underpinned by a long history of purchasing music of other bands, previously fronted by J Spaceman. While such a collection of music is likely to serve an identity forming purpose, as an embodied form of cultural capital, the act of purchase itself is clearly understood as an act of support to the artist (‘I feel I ought to support him’).
In both of these instances, the act of purchase functions as a relationship building act between the individual and the artist. In Andy's case, it serves as a method through which he can show 'respect' for the artist, while, in Rob's case, it enables him to 'support' the artist. However, the above examples also illustrate how the act of purchase serves to forge and re-enforce the relationship between individual and artist over time. Rob's current purchase of *Spiritualized* albums is the continuation of a historical pattern of purchases, through which Rob has supported J Spaceman throughout his musical career. The same is true of Andy, who has collected the past output of certain artists, and has a commitment to continue to do so. Moreover, the importance of these purchases, and the status of the relationship between artist and fan, are enhanced by the fact that music by other artists is acquired illegitimately, thus elevating the importance to the individual of *these* purchases, *this* music and *these* artists.

The intensity of the relationship forged between fan and artist through purchase was, in certain cases, dependent upon the relative size and commercial success of the artist in question. For example, Neil stated that he chose not to acquire music through illegitimate channels (although he traded heavily in bootlegged copies of artists work), and, if something were commercially available, he would purchase it. Of particular interest, however, is the way he conceptualises the purchase of music from commercially unsuccessful artists and from small, independent record labels:

*John Peel used to play an artist called Listen With Sarah, her real name is Sarah Nelson, and she does some Electronic stuff, and she produced a few CDs about a year ago and after John's death she made her own record label called Womb Records and she actually made a CD called Are You Sitting Comfortably, which she released through this label, and of course I bought a copy. And she needed to sell I think it was 200 copies to break even, and I think she's actually exceeded that now. Now at that sort level every single CD sale means something to that person. I mean your Coldplays and your U2s and so on, one CD sale doesn't mean anything to them. A bunch of CD sales probably means more to the record label than it does to them personally. But here it's...*
personal, you are actually effectively touching the artist by buying something.
and not only that, you're helping them to create music.
(Neil, Yahoogroup sample)

The above illustrate that, for Neil, as with Andy and Rob, the act of purchase is understood as forming a connection between the individual and the artist. However, what is particularly significant in this example is the way in which the artist's lack of commercial success helps to heighten the sense of intensity of the relationship built up through purchase. The fact that Listen With Sarah is a commercially unsuccessful artist, means that each CD sold will represent a significant proportion of the total sales, thus the relationship between fan and artist is made more intense, as the impact of each sale is felt more keenly by the artist. This idea is clearly articulated by Neil, where he states: 'it's personal, you are actually effectively touching the artist by buying something'. Furthermore, he specifically contrasts the importance of purchase, in this context, to the relative unimportance of purchase to more commercially successful artists, where the record industry is perceived as the main beneficiary. This comment provides insight into Neil's thinking and suggests that, for him, artists can be divided into different categories - those for whom a purchase has a direct, personal benefit, and those through whom a purchase primarily benefits the record industry.

This is significant, as it presents two different conceptualisations of the relationship between the public, the author and capital (as defined by Marshall 2005). When the artist operates on a relatively small scale, the relationship is seen as existing primarily between the fan and the artist; however, as the commercial success of the artist, and the scale of operations, increase, the record industry becomes increasingly relevant. For Neil, in these circumstances, the commercial success of the artist and the intermediary of the record industry come to represent a buffer between the individual and the artist. As the commercial success of the artist increase the individual’s purchase becomes increasingly less significant to the artist, to the point where the individual is no longer able to ‘touch’ the artist through purchase.
Jason, whose views were sought earlier in relation to purely pragmatic purchase of music, engaged in a similar discourse about the artist. As was shown earlier, Jason would attempt to obtain music, even from his favourite bands, through illegitimate channels, regardless of his feelings towards the artist. Yet there were isolated examples of artists whose work he chose to purchase, not for pragmatic reasons, but because he felt a sense of responsibility to them:

Yeah, earlier we were talking about loyalty. I've not really thought about it before, but there are a couple of times when I buy kind of out of sense of loyalty. I bought the last couple of albums by a band called George. I downloaded a couple of tunes by them and really liked their stuff, so I ended up ordering their album. Anyway, when it arrived it was in a hand written envelope and I just thought ‘ahhh’, they must be literally running it from their bedroom or something. So I bought another one when it came out, I mean they can't be making much money.

(Jason, record store sample)

The above suggests that Jason’s purchase of this album was based upon both a desire to support, and a feeling of responsibility toward, the artist, due to the small scale on which the artist was operating.

As I explored earlier, Marshall states that, within copyright law, there is an inherent contradiction between the romantic ideal of the author, creating a work out of love, and the commercial reality of a situation, in which protective rights over the work are afforded to its creator. Thus, there is a dichotomy, a tension, between art and commerce. This insight resonates deeply with my findings. Because the artists considered above are commercially unsuccessful and, in some senses, are viewed as existing ‘outside’ the record industry, it is possible for them to be closely identified with the concept of the Romantic Author, whose work is untainted by commercial concerns. Following logically from this, the lack of commercial success of these artists suggests that they are producing work, not for commercial gain, but for the love of it. In these circumstances purchase
becomes a form of patronage, a way of providing artists with the means to create their work (as Neil stated: 'you’re helping them to create music').

This section has demonstrated that the purchase of music is driven by a variety of motivations. Within my sample, all purchases are underpinned by certain pragmatic motives, based upon the acquisition of desired physical and aural goods. Some purchases were driven solely by such pragmatic motives, whilst others involved reference to the artist. Various purchase strategies were revealed, which were essentially dependent upon particular articulations between the individual and the artist and, to a lesser extent, the record industry. Some members of my sample chose not to obtain any music through illegitimate channels, out of deference to the artist; while others purchased only certain bands or artists, at times drawing upon the idea of the Romantic Author. These latter forms of loyalty based purchase helped forge a sense of a more personal relationship with the artist, extending even to the point where one individual viewed himself as co-creator of the work through purchase. Finally, the existence and use of illegitimate forms of music acquisition served to increase the importance of the relationship between fan and artist, as purchase could be understood as being, in some senses, optional. Or at least, not the only way of obtaining music.

This section has shown how purchase is often strongly influenced and motivated by the concept of the Romantic Author. The next part of this chapter will explore also how discourses of the Romantic Author can be used to justify the acquisition of music through illegitimate means.

**Music acquired through illegitimate channels**

I turn now to an investigation of the negotiations in which members of my sample engaged – and the motivation and justifications they offered – in order to support their choice to acquire music through illegitimate channels. As in the previous section, it is my intention to investigate the ways in which the relationship between the public, the author
and capital are understood, with reference to the decision to acquire music through these means. The examination of these relationships will be based around a discussion of the various justifications for copyright infringement which were identified within the sample. An understanding of these justifications is key to unlocking perceptions of copyright, providing a core-sample of how music users are conceptualising, not only copyright but, also, the relationship between public, author and capital.

**Discomfort and justification**

Many members of the sample expressed some level of guilt, or sense of discomfort, when engaging in the practice of acquiring music through illegitimate channels. Below are some examples of this:

*How do you feel about downloading music in this way?*

*Ah, it's not a great thing to do really.*
(Sam, record store sample)

*I do feel a bit shady about it sometimes.*
(John, Yahoogroup sample)

*I found that some mix albums, when they're there in mp3 there's like a bit of a gap between the tracks and this annoys me so I may want to go for a CD on that, just due to the fact that you just get a better listening experience, because it jars a little when you've got a gap and it reminds you that you're pirating peoples' music and its not nice to think about really.*
(Stefan, record store sample)

The guilt felt by users of illegitimate channels for acquiring music, often drew upon ideas of the artist, and the feeling that, by downloading music, they were cheating or treating
the artist unfairly. However, the data revealed that expressions of guilt or discomfort, over obtaining music illegitimately, were followed quickly by justification for the practice. I identified a wide variety of justifications for copyright infringement, which I shall explore throughout the remainder of this chapter.

The first set of justifications for infringement I define as *ideological justifications*. These justifications are politically motivated and conceptualise the act of copyright infringement as a rebuke to what is perceived to be an unjustly configured record industry. As one might expect, these justifications are based upon a particular configuration of the relationship between the public, the author and capital. Michelle provides an example of this form of justification:

> Yeah, I know it's illegal and all the rest, but if they actually made CDs at a decent price I might be more inclined to buy them, but it's something like £15 for a new CD nowadays, which is way over the odds.

(Michelle, record store sample)

This quotation illustrates how Michelle’s justifications for illegitimately obtaining music are based upon a negative perception of the price structure employed by the record industry. The implication of this statement is that she would purchase more, and download less, if the record industry distributed their goods at a fair price. Jason, considered now, employs a similar form of justification:

> I sometimes feel a bit bad about downloading music, but you know, it’s only really the record industries who are kicking up a fuss, and they make enough money anyway, so I don’t worry too much.

(Jason, record store sample)

Like Michelle, Jason justifies his infringements by focusing on the record industry, arguing that the industry is not financially threatened by illegal downloading. Also, the fact that Jason believes that the record industry ‘make[s] enough money anyway’,
suggests that he, too, perceives music as unfairly priced and, bases his justification for illegitimate downloading upon this perception.

Guy provides one further example of this form of justification:

*The record industry is bringing this on themselves. For years, music has been overpriced which rips off customers and doesn’t give a lot of artists a fair deal, and now the tables are turning. If the record industry took advantage of the internet to put music out at a fair price, but of course not. In fact, they’re trying to make even more money, charging a quid for an mp3 which costs nothing to make, nothing to send, and that’s all you get.*

(Guy, Yahoogroup sample)

Guy’s justifications also rest upon what he perceives to be the unfair pricing structure of the record industry. However, unlike Michelle and Jason, he states that artists also are exploited by the record industry, emphasising that many artists do not get a ‘fair deal’. Furthermore, Guy states that, instead of taking the opportunity to distribute music more cost-effectively, via the internet, in fact, the industry is seeking to increase its revenues. This augments his feelings that the music industry is based upon an inherently unfair business model.

The three justifications considered above, for illegitimately acquiring music, all configure in similar ways the relationship between public, author and capital. Michelle, Jason and Guy each position their infringement of copyright in relation to an idea of an unfairly priced and exploitative record industry. In Michelle’s and Jason’s justifications, the concept of the author is removed, and the practice of illegitimately acquiring music is seen as affecting only the record industry (if it is negatively affected by this at all) and *not* the artist. Guy’s justification encompasses the artist, whom he sees as being exploited by the record industry, together with the consumer.
These justifications for illegitimate acquisitions are in stark contrast to some of the motivations found to underpin purchase, in the previous section. Whereas, often, purchase was shown to be connected to ideas about the artist, here I have illustrated how this emphasis shifts when music users begin to talk about music acquired illegitimately. This suggests that decisions to purchase music, and decisions to illegally download music, are based upon fundamentally different perceptions of the relationship between the public, capital and the author. Furthermore, these perceptions allow users to 'legitimize' their practices, thus allowing them to engage in them with minimal feelings of guilt or discomfort.

I now turn to consider a further set of justifications for copyright infringement, which I refer to as delayed purchase justifications. These justifications refer to copyright infringements made on the basis that the music downloaded might be purchased by the individual at a future date. Dan provides an example of this form of justification:

G.O: Some other people I have spoken to have said that they feel guilty or anxious about downloading music. Is this something that you feel?

D: I do... nahh. Because I know if it's something that I like I know I will I'll support the artists man, I'm not like cheating them out of anything. But if I don't like it then I don't like it and it doesn't really matter. So, I never really feel anxious, I think it's a good thing and I feel it should be given a bit more of a chance, maybe.

(Dan, record store sample)

Here, Dan justifies copyright infringement on the understanding that it may act as a precursor to purchase. However, he sets strict criteria regarding the type of music he subsequently chooses to purchases, which must conform to his musical tastes. The motivations for these subsequent purchases rest upon what he feels is the importance of supporting the artist ('if it's something that I like I know I will, I'll support the artist').
This sense of obligation to support the artist does not extend to music which does not match his musical tastes ('if I don’t like it then I don’t like it and it doesn’t really matter'). This suggests that when Dan illegitimately downloads music, he enters into a self regulated contract, whereby he will purchase music, and thus support the artist, only if that music reaches what he considers to be a minimum aesthetic standard. This provides an insight into the way in which Dan understands the relationship between the individual and the artist: the obligation to purchase music on the part of an individual is dependent upon the standard of the musical output on the part of the artist. Leo, considered now, expressed similar sentiments:

I do, and I feel uncomfortable about it, but the way I justify it to myself is that in the past I’ve recorded plenty off the radio and I’ve been to the library and got CDs and copied the whole thing, and generally that has led to me buying music by an artist who I like enough and I genuinely believe that I haven’t downloaded things that I would have bought. I’ve downloaded things that I wanted to listen to and have kind of liked the idea of, but wouldn’t have gone and paid money for without having the chance to listen to. So I think that’s its just generally my way of sampling stuff and as I said earlier on, I think that if there’s something I’ve downloaded and enough of it is by an artist who I really like, that I would quite happily go out and buy the next one.

(Leo, Yahoogroup sample)

Like Dan, Leo treats downloading as a potential precursor to purchase. Leo talks about the practice of downloading as a form of musical ‘sampling’, understanding it as an extension of previous music sample methods he had used (i.e. recording music from the radio, borrowing CDs from the music library). Indeed, part of his justification for illegitimately downloading music resides in the fact that, previously, his use of these forms of musical sampling had ended in his purchasing music. In this way, he can understand the act of downloading as a means of benefiting the artist, because it results in his buying music which, otherwise, he would not have heard about. As with Dan, the
criteria on which Leo chooses to purchase music, which he has previously downloaded, rests upon the match between the music and his own tastes.

The above suggest that certain members of my sample download music illegally, in what could be described as an ethical manner. By this I mean that, even though the channel used to acquire the music is illegitimate, the intention is to purchase that music, potentially. However, the decision to buy post-download is contingent upon the music’s being of a sufficiently high quality to warrant purchase. Central to this, is a desire to reward the artist for producing good music, which suggests that downloading music in this way also acknowledges the relationship between the individual and the artist.

In the above, both Dan and Leo make a distinction between music that would have been purchased, due to its inherent superior quality, had they been aware of it, and music which would not have been purchased, due to its inferior quality. The only way to decide which group a particular piece of music falls into, however, is to download it.

The above is interesting when related back to Marshall’s (2005) arguments about the Romantic Author. One could argue that, when a piece of music exists on a peer-to-peer service, it more closely represents the romantic view of art and creativity. A digital audio file, on a peer-to-peer network, circulates in a ‘free’ system, and, therefore, could be understood to exist in a decommodified form, thus divorced from commercial concerns. However, even though music is obtained in a ‘free’ system, certain music users still wish to return the music to a commodity form, not on legal, but on moral grounds. In discussions about copyright, the issue of the illegality of downloading was not significant; it was rather the moral dimension, the disruption in the contract between fan and artist, public and author, which caused concern. The main reasons for recommodifying music through purchase was the desire to reward and support the artist.

I turn now to consider one final set of justifications, which apply, not to the act of downloading itself, but to the decision to make music available for others to download through mp3 blogs, an issue which also invokes the question of copyright. I refer to these
as support based justifications, so called because, through the act of posting music, members of my sample often felt that they were, in fact, engaging in an activity that benefited artists. Sean provides one such example:

G.O: How do you feel about the copyright issues involved in posting this music?

S: I am sort of aware of this, and I often think about it, what the justification for it is and so on, so it's not not... I don't think it falls into the categories that I don't care if it's illegal, rather I just sort of disagree with the law and from not getting caught I'm going to continue anyway.

G.O: Do you think that posting music on your site might affect sales?

S: Well, I do think it affects sales, and I think it increases sales [laughs] with quite a lot of confidence. I don't see how blogs like mine, I can't imagine how they'd damage sales, I mean the worst you could possibly imagine would be someone hears a song on my blog then downloads the album somewhere else, but I think it's much more likely that someone hears a song and maybe they do download the album somewhere else, but then if they like it they'll start going to the show or they'll buy the album. It's certainly the pattern that I follow when I'm reading other music blogs.

(Sean, mp3 blog sample)

The above provides insight into the complex set of negotiations Sean enters into when he decides to post music on his mp3 blog. Firstly, although he is aware of the illegality of practice, he continues to post music on the basis that he believes the law to be unjust. His motivations for posting can be viewed, therefore, as a form of ideological justification, as discussed earlier in this chapter. However, Sean also perceives the practices of posting music as actively benefiting the artist by ‘increasing sales’. Sean, therefore, understands the practice of offering music for other to download as benefiting, rather than harming, the artist.
Darren’s justifications for posting music, while similar to Sean’s, also draw upon a discourse of the record industry and the Romantic Author:

I am aware that in legal terms, that it’s legal to share music in the way that I’m doing it because it’s redistribution. Erm, I sort of look at what I’m doing as a service, essentially a large part as a sort of promotion service which, by and large, isn’t really being catered for by the record labels themselves. So I actually think that the people, most of the people running the mp3 blogs are actually doing the artist a favour, particularly a lot of the lesser known ones. I think the record industry is extremely skewed you know, whereby they spend all of there money on, you know, a relatively limited number of big artists and so on, and a lot of the others actually fall buy the wayside, or don’t end up getting the recognition that they might otherwise. Erm, and there’s a hell of a lot stuff that works simply on an underground level, on a club level or whatever it might be. Erm, you know, that isn’t getting any kind of mass exposure. Erm, so I suppose ideally more of that sort of music. There aren’t many things that have been on a major label that I’ve actually posted, maybe a couple of tracks, but on the whole, it’s defiantly more sort of independent releases you know. And you know, when you’re talking about a 7inch with 500 or 1000 12s, I don’t think putting an mp3 up is actually going to affect sales detrimentally. I think it’s actually more likely to make people, if they like it, go out and search for those people further. Perhaps the next 12 that comes out and they’ll see it and be interested. So I think it tends to work on that promotional service level, and I don’t have any problem whatsoever with doing it.

(Darren, mp3 blog sample)

In the above, Darren clearly situates his posting of music in relation to both the artist and the record industry. With regard to the latter, Darren argues that the record industry is configured in such a way as to devote its efforts to promoting a small number of large artists, to the detriment of smaller artists. It is partly for this reason that he chooses to
post music. His posting of music is akin to Sean's, in that it has elements of ideological justification, since his reasons for posting are based around his perception of an unjust record industry. Indeed, it is in relation to this point that Darren conceptualises his posting of music as a form of promotion on behalf of the artists, bringing their music to a wider audience because he sees them as neglected by the record industry. Significantly, because these artists are not supported by the record industry, and, because, in a sense, they exist outside it (precisely the reasons why Darren chooses to ‘promote’ them), they are most closely associated with the notion of the Romantic Author. Therefore, while the act of purchase may be motivated by the desire to help small artists, with reference to a discourse of the Romantic Author, the same reasons can be used to justify the illegitimate posting of music.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the various motivations and negotiations which underpin the decision to acquire music, through either legitimate or illegitimate channels. Such decisions often rest upon certain understandings of the relationship between the individual, the author and the record industry.

The decision to purchase was shown to be motivated by pragmatic reasons, related to acquiring a set of aural and physical goods. However, on occasions, these reasons were augmented by a set of motivations which rested upon the idea of the artist as the Romantic Author. In these cases, purchase became a relationship building act of support and loyalty to the author. The intensity of this relationship was shown to be inversely related to the commercial success enjoyed by the author and, on occasions, less commercially successful artists were purchased where their more successful counterparts were acquired illegitimately.

The decision to acquire music from illegitimate channels was found to be a complexly negotiated area. Some members of my sample used the record industry to justify
infringing copyright, stating that it was exploitative and that it over charged for its goods. Other members of my sample justified infringement on the basis that downloading music was understood as a precursor to purchase. Yet other members of my sample justified copyright infringement on the basis that it acted as promotion for the artist.

The motivations and justifications which have been identified as influencing the decision either to purchase, or to download illegally, are not discrete; rather, they are overlapping and complex. This chapter has revealed various elements which operate to influence these decisions. However, the final decision is unlikely to rest upon any single factor; rather, it is more likely to depend upon a number of factors operating in conjunction.

Marshall (2005) states that, in the rhetorical battles of the Napster Wars, the record industry has based its condemnation of the practice of illegally downloading music upon the figure of the Romantic Author. In practice, however, the record industry’s argument is inherently contradictory, as the figure of the Romantic Author rests upon the separation of art and commerce. In my sample, it appears that individuals can stand on either side of this contradiction, by switching between different perspectives of the relationship between the individual, the author and the record industry, in order to justify a number of apparently contradictory behaviours. For example, on one hand, a concentration upon the figure of the Romantic Author can be used to justify copyright infringement (when infringement is seen as promotion on behalf of the artist who exists ‘outside’ the record industry); whereas, on the other hand, a concentration on the exploitative nature of the record industry can be used to justify infringement, without reference to the author. Whichever way the issue is looked at, copyright infringement becomes a justifiable activity. It is also because of these shifting views on the individual, the Romantic Author and the record industry, that the figure of the Romantic Author can be used both to motivate and to justify the apparently contradictory behaviours of purchase, on one hand, and copyright infringement, on the other.
In this chapter I have illustrated how the technologically afforded increased opportunities for acquiring and sharing music can bring the individual, the author and capital new configurations and new relationships. In the following chapter I investigate how new and existing technologies impact upon the ways in which individuals access music, investigating the implications of this for a wide range of issues.
Chapter six: Playing, listening and engaging with music

Introduction

As Bull (2006) has noted, new music technologies give the listener an unprecedented level of access to music, in terms of the ease and rapidity with which music can be located and selected and the fluidity with which individualised play-lists of music can be ordered and reordered. In this chapter, I wish to explore the various practices which are forming around these new technological possibilities and how they relate to existing practices. This represents a change in focus for the thesis. So far, I have explored how music is acquired and shared, and how these practices are understood; in this chapter, I shall explore how individuals listen to music, and technology’s role within this.

If we accept Adorno’s proposition that, on some level at least, musical sense making is underpinned by different forms of musical structure, then digital audio files, which ‘free’ songs from structural contexts such as albums, beg a series of fundamental questions concerning the role of musical structure in listening. For instance, what happens when structured works, such as symphonies or certain albums of music, are listened to randomly? Is the musical experience altered when individuals structure music for themselves (by self selecting the order of songs, rather than listening to pre-ordered collections of music in a linear manner), and, if so, in what ways? Bull (2006) has provided insight into this area, revealing how ‘users give themselves over to their music collection and the technology’ through iPod use; the consequences of which I will discuss in relation to my findings in this chapter. In exploring the issues around this area, I shall return to Adorno’s concepts of atomised listening and structural listening, using them to explore the impact of existing and emerging music listening practices and how they impact upon musical meaning creation, modes of sociality and issues of identity formation and maintenance around music. Through this exploration, and drawing on Adorno’s ideas, I shall introduce the concept of individuated structured listening and delegated structured listening, which I argue represent a new frame-work for understanding listening in the age of digital audio files.
This chapter also explores the issue of musical experience, and the role that technology plays within this. A consideration of the ways in which music is appreciated by members of my sample, and the criteria by which music is ordered and re-ordered through digital audio file technology, revealed something about the nature of listening and musical sense making in my sample. I argue that this sense making is based around a concept I define as musical flow, which leads to flow based listening. These duel concepts illuminate the underlying syntax of listening, and, as I shall argue, underpin pleasurable listening experiences.

Throughout my analysis in this chapter, I shall also employ Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow. Flow, which I shall describe more fully in the following section, is a theory of optimum experience, and illustrates the criteria necessary for this state to occur. In this chapter I shall illuminate how particular listening encounters within my sample fulfill certain of these criteria. Through this, I shall explore how different listening practices variously may enable, theoretically at least, the emergence of the state of flow.

The album form and the emergence of musical flow

I begin this section by introducing Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory, which I shall employ when investigating listening encounters in this chapter. According to Csikszentmihalyi, flow is a state of optimal experience in which the individual is totally immersed in an activity whose demands equally match the skill level of the individual. According the Csikszentmihalyi, flow can be achieved in any activity, and he has applied elements of flow theory to the experience of music listening, identifying three different levels of complexity for musical experience. The first of these levels is sensory, which requires little, if any, conscious thought; the second level is analogic, where the listener connects elements of the music to things external to the music (such as memories or mental images). However, it is the analytic mode of listening, the third and most complex form, that is of interest to this study. According Csikszentmihalyi, analytic
listening is based around a more complex engagement with the music and bears similarities to Adorno’s concept of structural listening:

In this mode attention shifts to the structural elements of music, instead of the sensory or narrative ones. Listening skills at this level involve the ability to recognize the order underlying the work, and the means by which the harmony was achieved. (111)

It is through this mode of listening that Csikszentmihalyis argues that flow based listening is most likely to emerge. In the contexts of this study, the similarity between Csikszentmihalyis’s analytic mode and Adorno’s structural mode are such that I shall use the terms synonymously.

While Csikszentmihalyis’s three levels of listening are certainly of interest, of more direct use to this study are the conditions Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyis (2005) specify for the emergence of flow:

- Perceived challenges, or opportunities for action, that stretch (neither overmatching nor underutilizing) existing skills; a sense that one is engaging challenges at a level appropriate to one’s capacities
- Clear proximal goals and immediate feedback about the progress that is being made
- Intense and focused concentration on what one is doing in the present moment
- Merging of action and awareness
- Loss of reflective self-copiousness (i.e., loss of awareness of oneself as a social actor)
- A sense that one can control one’s action; that is, a sense that one can in principle deal with the situation because one knows how to respond to whatever happens next
- Distortion of temporal experience (typically, a sense that time has passed faster than normal)
• Experience of the activity as intrinsically rewarding, such that often the end goal is just an excuse for the process

While not all of these conditions were represented in the listening encounters which I document, many were. By exploring how certain of these conditions are met, or otherwise, through listening encounters in my sample, I can examine how different technologies and practices enable flow based experiences to occur.

As I explored in Chapter Two, within his work on classical music, Adorno (1941) identified two separate and largely opposing forms of listening: structural listening and atomised listening. Adorno argued that these different modes of listening engendered and were a result of different levels of engagement with music which, in turn, impacted upon the cognitive state of the listener and his or her ability to think critically. I argue that, on one level at least, these listening concepts are concerned with units of listening. In structural listening, the unit of listening is the entire symphony; whereas, in atomised listening, the symphony is broken down into smaller listening units, such as particular movements, or recurring symphonic motifs.

Within my sample, I identify analogous shifts in listening practices, by which album listening was broken down into listening to individual pieces of music, a fact which has implications for mood maintenance and meaning creation around music, mirroring similar findings made by Bull (2006). However, beyond this, I identify a new mode of listening, which I call *individuated structured listening*, that is afforded by music technologies both new and existing. This concept, which draws upon Adorno’s ideas about the importance of musical structure, shows how, in the age of digital audio files, listeners are ever more involved in the construction of subjective narrative flows of music, and explores some of the consequences of this.

Before I begin to consider the interview evidence in this chapter, I wish to qualify my use of Adorno’s (1941) concept of structural listening. Adorno (1941) argued that structural
listening only occurred with reference to certain specific forms of music, such as symphonic music, which, due to the music's specific properties, engendered and actively demanded this form of listening. In this chapter, I will show how certain listening practices identified within my sample engender forms of structural listening, even though, in most cases, this occurs with reference to forms of music which Adorno would doubtless have dismissed as 'pre-digested' (1990, 307), capable only of engendering regressive listening. However, unlike Adorno, I do not intend to consider the specific properties of the music and there is no musicological element to this study. I wish to explore only the reception of music, the practices which surround it, and the specific impacts that music has upon the individual and the social practices.

Empirically, this section of the chapter considers the listening practices which occur around the use of traditional media, specifically vinyl and CD, which, because of their technological properties, tended to encourage more structural modes of listening than did new technologies. This exploration will enable me to start sketching out the syntax of listening, with reference to my concept of musical flow and flow-based-listening. I shall begin by exploring the way listeners used and understood the album form.

In some respects, the album can be thought of as an enclosed musical 'package', in that it contains a linear set of pre-ordered songs, and as such it represents the most traditionally structured listening encounter present in my sample. Indeed, the musical structuring of the album, through the running order of tracks, forms a sub-textual element of its peritextuality, and helps to inform the meaning of songs as they run from one to the other in a linear way. This is born out by the fact that members of my sample often understood, listened to, and appreciated albums in this linear and structured manner. The influence of technology in these listening encounters was not insignificant, as I shall demonstrate.

Darren illustrates one form of album listening, which can be defined as structural:

*Listening to a whole album's worth, or a whole CDs worth of music, one track after the other in a set way; when I do that I appreciate CDs very much in that way*
[...] I think that's kind of a part of the way the artist has presented his work. They have chosen those tracks for that album, you know they've chosen which, where to actually place a song and so on. And you know that's sometimes the whole sort of listening to an album is very much part of how you appreciate the music. Erm, I think some music you cannot listen to in any other way, you'd just lose it. You won't get the full effect. And to some degree I think the idea of just listening to extracts, or one track or whatever, it might be off a whole piece, or of what is intended to be a whole piece. It can be to the detriment of that, definitely.

(Darren, mp3 blog sample)

Firstly, Darren’s comments about album listening are connected to an idea of the artist, and the fact the artist has written and chosen a set of songs to be played in a particular order. Therefore, it is possible to speculate that this form of listening may engender a sense of a closer relationship to the artist and be connected to a sense of identity as a fan, as one who listens to albums in their entirety. However, Darren’s statements also speak to the idea of units of musical listening, and clearly mirror Adorno’s concept of structural listening. Darren clearly articulates that his appreciation of listening to certain types of music, by album, is bound up with hearing an album in its entirety and in a linear fashion, otherwise he would risk not getting the ‘full effect’ of the work. The way in which he speaks of the practice of ‘listening to extracts’, commenting that this form of listening would impact negatively upon his appreciation of the album as a whole, further reinforces this and carries echoes of Adorno’s concept of atomised listening, and the way in which he believed this was detrimental to musical appreciation. Indeed, Darren clearly conceptualises certain albums as ‘whole’ pieces, suggesting that he considers the album itself as a single unit of listening, which suffers when broken down into its composite parts. However, his comments here suggest that this form of structural album listening is only appropriate for certain types of music.

The idea of the album as a musical whole, or as a single musical unit, was also emphasised by Guy, in the following:
I feel that if I listen to it [the album] from beginning to end then maybe it would offer a bit more, that I'd actually like the music more. I think that's the thing actually, if you listen to it properly like if you sit down and make an effort then you actually get more worth out of it, you enjoy it more.

(Guy, Yahoogroup sample)

Guy’s comments again suggest that album listening can be understood as a form of structural listening. He clearly shows how listening to the album in its entirety, as a complete musical work, has a culmative impact, leading to a more satisfying musical encounter than listening via a more atomised approach (‘I’d actually like the music more’). Further evidence of the existence of structural listening can be found when Guy states that listening to an album ‘properly’ requires him to ‘sit down and make an effort’. Adorno places emphasis upon the fact that structural listening demands highly focused and engaged forms of listening, which bears resemblance to Guy’s comments about listening ‘properly’. This point is further illustrated by Peter’s comments:

I mean there’s some albums which I love and would consider to be my favourite albums, but I’ll only listen to them a couple of times a year or whatever. And when I do listen to them I make the time and space to really listen to them.

(Peter, record store sample)

In this, Peter reveals that listening to music which he values highly is a rare occurrence, to which he orientates himself in a particular way, creating ‘the time and space to really listen to them’. This again illustrates the importance of focus for certain types of album listening.

Peter’s and Guy’s comments here also find resonance in Csikzentmihayli’s (1997) flow theory, which identifies the importance of concentration and focusing as one of the characteristics of a state of flow (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2005). In Guy’s case, the expenditure of a higher than usual degree of focus and effort in the act of listening was identified as a necessary pre-requisite for the emergence of structural album
listening, i.e. focused listening to entire albums. Therefore, the album form, in these circumstances, is a part of the circumstances of listening which enable the flow state to emerge.

However, I wish to go further and to specify what it is about the album form which enables this. In Darren’s and Guy’s cases, certain albums are clearly understood to be more than collections of individual songs, and are seen, rather, as ‘whole’ musical works. When listened to in this way, Darren and Guy both indicated that the individual songs on the album came to have a greater culmative impact than would have been the case had the songs been listened to in their atomised states. This is one of the fundamental aspects of Adorno’s structural listening, which he originally makes with reference to symphonic listening. The fact that a collection of songs has a cumulative impact greater than their individual impact suggests the existence of a form of intra-musical (or, perhaps, intra-song) meaning creation. By this, I mean that the musical context in which a piece of music is heard has influence upon the meaning of that piece of music to the individual, i.e. the meaning of the song is influenced by what follows and precedes it. In Darren’s and Guy’s cases, an album was considered as a musical whole because the songs ‘fitted’ together, that is, the songs followed each other in a congruent and aesthetically logical manner. It is this musical logic, this musical ‘fit’ between songs, which I call musical flow. Building upon this with a related concept, I argue that in Darren’s and Guy’s cases, album listening is typified by what I have defined as flow based listening, i.e. a listening encounter structured around multiple songs tied together by musical flow. Adorno stated that structural listening required listeners to engage with the entire musical work, from beginning to end, to fully appreciate the significance of each musical element. This is an act which demands significant levels of focus and concentration. My data suggests that the same form of listening was also present amongst members of my sample when listening to certain albums. In a similar vein to Adorno’s original theorising on structural listening, my data also suggests that understanding and appreciating the musical flows, which make up flow-based-listening, requires a focused and sustained effort on the part of the listener, who must listen to the entire musical work (the album) for the intra-
musical meaning to emerge. And it is this focus and concentration which creates the circumstances for the emergence of a state of flow.

Although manifest in a wide variety of forms, instances of flow-based-listening were widespread throughout my sample and represented one of the underlying criteria for the emergence of pleasurable, focused listening encounters. Musical flow and flow-based-listening will be fundamental concepts which I shall use to explore further listening practices uncovered in my sample. It is with these conceptual tools in mind that I begin to consider the influence of technology upon different modes of listening.

**Use of traditional media: Structural and atomised listening**

In this section, I shall consider how members of my sample used traditional media, specifically the CD and the record player, and illustrate the role this technology plays in the emergence of different forms of listening. This exploration will take place in reference to the concept of musical flow and how it is pursued and sustained over different technologies. In doing so, I illustrate further the centrality of musical flow to listening encounters.

To begin with the use of the record player, I found that the particular technological properties of this device afforded listening encounters which differed in certain regards to those achieved through CD listening. One aspect of this difference was the fact that skipping or rearranging the order of musical tracks on a record player is a particularly cumbersome task. As a result, when members of my sample listened to albums on vinyl, they chose to listen to those albums in their entirety, a fact which proved to have a number of consequences for listeners' engagement with music. This is illustrated by Sam's comments regarding vinyl listening:

> It's kind of annoying the way you can't jump songs without a bloody great hassle, but you know in a way it's got it's advantages, because sometimes you appreciate
the good songs more, it's like if there's a bit of an average song first it, you know, provides a build up to really good song and you can start to get a bit excited about hearing the good tune.

(Sam, record store sample)

In the above, Sam's toleration of what he considers to be an average song in fact leads him to a greater appreciation of a song upon which he places more value upon. This is due to the fact that the 'average song' operates a 'build up' to the following song, providing a sense of anticipation and excitement. Such a finding illustrates that the meaning of a particular song can be influenced by the songs which precede and follow it, a finding considered earlier. In this instance, the 'average song' was recast as a 'build-up' song, rather than being viewed simply as a song in its own right. Similarly, the 'really good song' was approached with a heightened sense of anticipation because of the 'average song' which preceded it. This example further illustrates the emergence of intra-musical meaning creation arising from flow-based-listening encounters. Sam's comments reveal that the way a song is received and understood does not depend solely upon the piece of music itself, but that its reception and the way in which it is understood depend, in part, upon the way in which it is framed musically.

Further implications of the technologically 'fixed' nature of vinyl, for listening, were exemplified by John:

Some songs you don't get straight away and if it was on CD I know I'd just skip them and probably never listen to them, except by accident. But when it's a record you just end up listening to them all. And, you know, a lot of the time you end up liking those songs you didn't get at first, and it's sometimes those songs which need a bit more effort which are actually most rewarding when you actually 'get' them.

(John, record store sample)

In the above, John reveals how the inconveniences involved with skipping or rearranging the order of songs on vinyl, resulted in him listening to the entire album of music,
including songs he would otherwise have skipped. Consequent to this, John was exposed to music which he did not find immediately accessible or appealing and which he would not have intentionally listened to had the album been on CD. Significantly, this 'forced' engagement with such pieces of music, led John to invest extra degrees of effort into listening to these songs ('those songs need a bit more effort'), which in turn led to deeper, more rewarding listening experience ('those songs' are 'most rewarding when you actually 'get' them').

To put this in Adornian terms, the songs which John spoke about were not 'pre-digested'. They required effort and concentration on his part, as a listener, in order to fully appreciate them. Furthermore, this listening encounter can also be considered in relation to Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory. John's comments about the extra effort required to appreciate certain songs suggest that, in some respects, these songs push him, or challenge his skills as a listener. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2005) states that one of the criteria for the emergence of flow is a balance between an individual's level of ability and challenge of the task, a fact which certainly has resonance for the listening encounter John describes. In this example, the technological structuring of the listening encounter was such that it fostered both structural forms of listening and, theoretically at least, satisfied one of the criteria for the emergence of a state of flow.

Next, I shall investigate user experiences of CD listening, which were, in certain respects, markedly different to the experiences of vinyl listening, recorded above. The differences in these experiences rest largely upon the different technological affordances offered by each medium. As I have demonstrated, the record player offers little in the way of song rearrangement function; however, the CD player offers two automated methods of achieving this: shuffle and skip.

Many members of my sample had experimented with the shuffle function when playing CDs, but none had found it to be a satisfying method of listening to music. The reasons for this are exemplified in the following:
No, I don't use the shuffle option. I've tried it once or twice but I can't see the point. I mean the songs all come out in the wrong order, it messes up the flow of the album.

(Peter, record store sample)

Peter’s feelings about shuffle play, and the reasons why he found it to be an unsatisfying listening encounter, are clearly based around an understanding of the album as possessing an inherent and linear narrative ‘flow’ of songs. This is made clear when he speaks of the songs being playing ‘in the wrong order’ through shuffle play. Peter’s comments therefore clearly exemplify the existence of musical flow and its importance to pleasurable listening encounters. Peter’s dissatisfaction with shuffle play arises from the fact that it interrupts flow based listening.

John, considered now, reveals similar feelings:

John: Shuffle play? Yeah, the CD player has it but I’ve only ever used it once I think.

GO: How did you find listening through shuffle?

John: I didn’t like it, it broke up the album too much, because an album’s like... a whole thing isn’t it, and when you get the last track first it kind of defeats the object.

(John, Yahoogroup sample)

John had only used the shuffle function once, an experience which he had found to be unsatisfying. Like Peter, John spoke of shuffle play breaking up the album, an idea which was based upon a clearly articulated notion of the album as a unified artistic form, as a ‘whole thing’. For both Peter and John, dissatisfaction with shuffle play rests upon the ways in which it breaks up the album as a single and unified unit of listening, and the way in which this interrupts structural modes of listening (‘when you get the last track first it kind of defeats the object’). It also shows that the manner in which songs are ordered, the way in which they ‘flow’, as Peter puts it, has great significance for the
appreciation of music. However, there is a further, more widely used, function of CD players which users employed to change the order in which songs were played.

Many members of my sample had used the skip function on their CD players to 'skip over' and remove certain songs when listening to CD albums. The following example from Sam provides one illustration of this:

Yeah, I often skip tracks on CD. You know, there's so many albums with four or five good songs, and I often just skip through the songs which I don't like.

(Sam, record store sample)

In this example, Sam uses the skip function to 'fast-forward' through the album to songs which he values; at the same time avoiding the songs which he does not appreciate. The same activity was also conducted by John:

A lot of the time when I'm listening it's just flick, flick, flick listen, flick a couple more then listen. There's a lot of dross and, what do you call it... fillers. Yeah, I just flick through the fillers.

(John, Yahoogroup sample)

Here, John's approach to listening is based very much around the appreciation of individual songs, rather than any sense of listening to the album as a 'whole' or complete work. The songs which he does not value are considered to be 'fillers', songs which exist to bulk out the album, but do not hold high levels of musical value in themselves. Peter provides a further example of the use of the skip function on CD players:

There's this album by The Aloof, and it's unlike anything I've every heard before. It's one good song, one bad song nearly all the way through, literally. It's so weird, it's like they've taken a very good album and a very bad album and literally spliced them together. So when I listen to it I have hover round the CD player at the end of
every song to skip to the next one, because I don't want to lose the sense of that last song and have it ruined by the next one.

(Peter, record store sample)

While Peter's use of the skip function mirrors that of Sam's and John's, Peter's example provides insight not only into the reasons why he used the function (i.e., to 'filter out' certain songs), but also into the consequences of not using this function. In the case of The Aloof album to which he refers, Peter states that hearing a 'bad' song after hearing a 'good' one, would impact negatively upon his enjoyment of the 'good' song. This is made clear when he states 'I don't want to lose the sense of that last song and have it ruined by the next one'. This example again reveals the importance of musical flow, highlighting the significance of the ordering of songs, and the importance of maintaining elements of congruence between songs for the listening experience to be a satisfying one. For Peter, in order for the listening encounter to be satisfying, songs must flow in such an order that one song is followed by another which 'fits', which in some way complements the preceding one, otherwise the sense of the last song, or, we might say, the mood created by the last song, is destroyed. This suggests that the mood maintaining and shifting aspects of music listening, as identified by DeNora and Bull, arise not only from the specific song being played, but also through the intra-musical relationship between songs. Creating the 'correct' order of songs required Peter to use the skip function. In this example, therefore, the specific technological affordances of the CD player facilitated the emergence of flow-based-listening.

In the three examples given above, listening is based around the appreciation of individual, though sometimes interconnected, songs, and not albums in their entirety. These examples indicate a very different approach to listening than has been considered thus far in the chapter, and they are more closely in line with Adorno's concept of atomised listening, (i.e. listening to extracted elements) than they are to structural listening (i.e. listening to complete musical structures as they unfold). For Sam, John and Peter, in these examples at least, the unit of listening was not the entire album, but rather individual album songs, which were arranged into subjective musical narratives. In
Peter's example especially, this musical narrative was based upon a subjective understanding of musical flow, leading to a flow-based-listening encounter. This type of listening, and this engagement with music, is afforded by a particular technological property of the compact disk medium, i.e. the skip function.

Finally, I shall consider DJing, the last playing practice associated with traditional music media that I intend to explore. As with the examples of song skipping considered above, this practice also revolves around a form of atomised listening. However, atomisation in this case, in fact, was found to lead to highly structured and engaged forms of listening. I shall begin this exploration of DJing by investigating the practice in terms of Csikszentmihalyis's flow theory. DJing fulfills a number of the criteria for the emergence of flow experience, as the following statements from Mathew and Marianna illuminate:

G.O: Do you feel you get more out of the music in this way [by DJing]?

M: Yeah, oh definitely, it's so much more fun, because it means that you're kind of interacting with the music in a way. Because I'd say I've got about 110 records, and it's very unlikely that I've mixed every one of those records into the other one, another one, I still haven't done all the combinations yet. So the sound every time is different, and you can choose what and when to bring the next record in and take it out, it's completely up to you. So you're as such making the music yourself, or adding to it. Plus it also takes a lot of skills to do it right.
(Mathew, record store sample)

and,

G.O: So, what do you get out of mixing that you don't get out of listening to a CD?

Mar: I don't know, it's the thrill. It's quite hard to mix; I think it looks easier than it is. And when you get it right, I mean it's like when you're doing anything, like you're composing something, when you get it absolutely right, it's just the thrill you
know. And you choose the tracks you want so it's definitely something you like, and to beat match and to, a good mix is like at the right time when something is fading and you're just putting that one on and taking it off, and it's such a thrill. If you watch a DJ you'll see how they all enjoy themselves enormously because it is fun and it is hard and in a way you're making music, it's not your music but you're creating something there, and you have your own style and you choose your tracks and when you people listening to you and its fantastic when people sort of go 'oh my god, that track' and they start dancing or 'that's such a good mix there' it's the thrill I think, like anything else I guess.

(Marianna, record store sample)

These statements indicate that the practice of DJing fulfils a number of the criteria for the emergence of flow, as defined by Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyis (2005). Both Mathew and Marianna reference the difficulties and the skills involved with the task, an aspect of DJing which finds resonance with flow theory. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyis states that a fundamental condition for the emergence of flow is a balance between the challenges of the task in hand and the skill level of the individual. As the comments above illustrate, DJing is an activity which demands an umbrella of abilities, from the motor skills necessary successfully to mix two songs (including 'beat matching' and cross fading), to the musical skills and knowledge of genre necessary to plan how the mix will progress from song to song. The balancing of these different tasks is likely to require a significant amount of focus and concentration, a further condition of flow. Furthermore, the practice of DJing is an activity which places the individual in control of the choice of music, and 'a sense of personal control over the situation or activity' (Csikszentmihalyis, 2005, 11) is a further aspect of flow experience.

Turning now to consider DJing in terms of musical flow, I found that both Mathew and Marianna emphasises the centrality of choice to the act of DJing, and it is through this choice that they are able to exercise their own sense of musical flow when selecting music. This is made particularly clear in Marianna's statements, in which she links her method of selecting music to a sense of identity, feeling that these musically flow based
choice represent her ‘style’ (‘you have your own style and you choose the tracks’). Musical flow was also implicated in the creative aspects which both Mathew and Marianna associated with the act of DJing. Indeed, both felt that that their musical choices were at least quasi-compositional in nature, and by combining individual songs they were able to bring about new compositions. In Mathew’s case, he felt that he was ‘making the music [himself], or at least adding to it’, and that when DJing the ‘sound every time is different’. In Marianna’s case, she likened DJing to ‘composing something’ and stated that ‘it’s not your music, but you’re creating something’. The statements of both these interviewees can be understood with reference to the concept of structural listening and the notion of intra-musical meaning creation. Adorno argued that the compositional structure of certain symphonic works was such that individual parts of the piece only gained their full meaning and aesthetic value when heard in context of the entire musical work. In light of this, Mathew and Marianna’s combination of individual musical elements while DJing does have a strongly compositional element to it, because, through these musical flows, new intra-musical meaning is created. Rather than a sequence of individual pieces of music, the DJ ‘set’ can be understood as a single culmative, structural unit of listening and composition. Very significantly, the structure of the DJ set is not imposed, as structure would be imposed during symphonic or linear album listening, rather it is defined by the individual. Both Mathew and Marianna took individual songs and combined them in such a way as to create new narrative-based musical structures. I define this compositional form of listening as individuated structured listening. This is a form of compositional listening which has similarities to the creation of ‘mix tapes’ which Willis (1990) states are underpinned by a hidden creativity. I argue that individuated structured listening is a form of listening which has proliferated with the use of digital audio file technologies, as I shall explore in the following section.
New music listening technologies: flow and individuated structured listening

The technologies considered in the previous section are limited in terms of the access to music which they enable. As the ease of access to music extends from vinyl to CD to DJ decks, so does the range of playing practices, types of listening and the meaning of that music to the individual. The technologies I shall consider in this section extend this control over music still further, allowing for the creation of self defined play-list, greatly increased opportunities for random listening, and instant access to any part of the collection. My findings indicate that these technological affordances lead to new forms of listening and engagement with music. In this section I will explore the impacts of these changing methods of music consumption by investigating how listeners use random play and playlists.

Random play, choice and flow-based listening

One of the distinguishing features of the digital audio file as a musical format is the rapidity and ease with which the order of musical works can be configured and reconfigured, as Bull (2006) illustrates with reference to iPod users. Whereas traditional media require physical storage, handling and loading into or onto devices in order to be played, digital audio files can be accessed and arranged at the click of a button. My findings suggest that this aspect of the digital audio file format enables a very specific engagement with music, one not possible through traditional technologies of music reproduction.

New music technologies extended greatly the possibilities for random listening, allowing the listener to access their entire collection on random, rather than affording only the ability to listen to an individual album, as is the case with the CD or record player. A large number of music users in the study were currently employing, or had in the past employed, this method of listening to music. A major theme which arose when users talked about random play centered upon the way in which random play eroded the
concept of the album as a coherent and unified set of songs chosen, and in some cases originally written, to be played in a particular order.

Stefan provides an example of this. In the following, Stefan describes how listening to two albums he was not familiar with by the Drum and Bass artist Goldie on random play (i.e. as individual songs rather than as two separate albums) affected the way in which he received and was able then to relate to those songs.

That's another thing, I can't really differentiate between them, because I've got like two Goldie albums, because this guy gave them to me on a CD of MP3s and, I was like 'that's cool, I'll have that definitely copy it onto my iRiver' [mp3 player]. And I think because it's been on random that I've listened to it, I haven't listened to it all the way through and I've tried listening to the other one, and I listen to it and I can't really pick which Goldie track is from Timeless and which is from Saturn Returns, and that's a bit of a problem.

(Stefan, record store sample)

This quotation highlights one of the consequences of using random play, drawing attention to the way in which it can break up the album as a coherent and recognisable body of music. For Stefan, the fact that he listened to the two Goldie albums on random meant that the songs lost their setting and context as part of a wider body of music. Track four no longer followed track three, track one was no longer the opening track and track ten no longer the closing one etc. As a consequence of this the songs, and indeed the albums, both lost something of their musical distinctiveness and identity ('I can't really pick which Goldie track is from Timeless and which is from Saturn Returns'). Random play, in this case, clearly impacted upon the way in which Stefan understood the songs (i.e. no longer as part of an album, but as individual somewhat free floating entities). Without this wider album context to define the individual songs he found them hard to place. The fact that Stefan described this situation as 'a bit of a problem' suggests that there was something in this situation which he found unsatisfactory, and which impaired his musical enjoyment. This is one example of what I refer to as musical
decontextualisation, i.e. the stripping away of music context, which occurs when a song is listened to outside its original, and in some ways intended, musical environment (in this case, the album from which it was taken).

This finding can be fruitfully explored with reference to Genette’s (1997) concept of peritextuality, discussed in Chapter Two. To recap, Genette states that the meaning of a text is supplemented by various material and rhetorical elements which help to fix its meaning and reception. From this perspective, the song ordering of an album can be viewed as a sub-textual feature of peritextuality, which, through running order and mutual framing, helps to anchor the meaning of any particular song. In the above instance, the random juxtaposition of songs, which occurred in random play, disrupted this element of peritextuality, thereby interrupting the intra-musical meaning creation which occurs in linear album listening.

The decontextualisation, which occurs in random play, was also found to have further consequences for the music listening experience. In the following, Stefan explains how his dissatisfaction with the manner in which music is ordered, via random play, had resulted in his all but stopping listening to music in this mode:

_I don’t like hearing stuff on random. If I want to hear something, then I want to hear something in a particular style which I want to hear. Like if it’s in the morning I’ll want something big and happy and dancey or whatever then I’d stick that on. But it wouldn’t be, I’d have it on random and just take whatever’s coming. I actually seem to get quite annoyed with that because you can’t seem to get into any sort of swing of anything. If you’re listening to an album then I feel you can._

(Stefan, record store sample)

The above clearly indicates that Stefan places a high degree of importance upon his own choice when it comes to listening to music, something which random play removes. Furthermore, the quotation reveals the strategic ways with which he selects music, keeping it in tune with his current mood and circumstances. As noted in Chapter Two,
both DeNora and Bull observe very similar behaviors around music choice, as listeners select music based upon desired or actual mood and environmental factors.

However, through random play Stefan effectively hands musical control over to the computer, interrupting the process of musical self configuration. Stefan’s dissatisfaction with the listening encounter, described above, arises from the fact that pieces of music, and configurations of tunes, arising randomly may be ‘unsuitable’ or ‘incorrect’ for his current mood. Furthermore, pieces of music being played at random may lead to inappropriate or jarring musical juxtapositions, leaving Stefan with a sense that he can’t get ‘into the swing’ of the music, a fact which can be related back to the concept of flow-based-listening. Stefan’s dissatisfaction with the random listening encounter arises because it interrupts flow-based-listening, in that he can find no inherent, recognisable musical logic behind the ordering of songs. This finding reveals that the existence and importance of flow-based-listening, as the underlying syntax of listening, can be revealed as much by its absence as by its presence.

This latter point is further exemplified later in the interview, in a description which clearly represents flow-based-listening, as Stefan juxtaposes the disruption to listening he experience, when he listening on random, with the sense of musical cohesion he finds, when listening to music as an album:

_I find it just nicer when you've got a set of songs which were designed to be played one after another like an album it's works a lot better than when it's just sort of shoved together and you get something happy and you get something sad then you get something fast and you get something slow._

(Stefan, record store sample)

With comments which chime with discussions about listening considered in the previous section, Stefan describes how the album not only frames songs in a recognisable context, but also couches that music in a wider aesthetic environment of songs. This illustrates that, for Stefan, the album represents an internal sense making structure for music. This
structure arises from the flow-based ordering of songs, where songs are ‘designed to be played one after another’ and are not ‘shoved together’ in such a way that the style of music changes too quickly or dramatically for him to find enjoyable.

Many of the points highlighted above can be considered in relation to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) theory of flow. This consideration centers upon the issue of musical choice, and the role of individual judgment and deliberation within this. DeNora states that music choice operates as a form of aesthetic reflexivity through which individuals musically configures themselves with reference to particular moods or modes of agency (mirroring observations made also by Bull (2006, 2000). In the above example, Stefan’s musical choice was based upon knowledge of his own moods and the music necessary to access and manipulate them, i.e. in the morning Stefan chooses to listen to music which is ‘big and happy and dancey’. It does not seem unreasonable to assume that Stefan chooses to listen to this music in order to raise energy levels for the forthcoming day. In making this choice, there is, necessarily, a level of deliberation over what music to play, and what music is appropriate and suitable to the situation, and what music is not, even if this deliberation is undertaken at an unconscious or semi conscious level. Clearly, this issue of musical choice is also one of musical control, which allows Stefan to manage the musical environment and consequently, in this case at least, control over his musical self-configuration.

This finding gains wider significance when applied to Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) flow theory, which states that a sense of control over the situation is one of the basic criteria for the emergence of the state of flow (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2005). While it is unclear from Stefan’s comments whether or not he achieved a flow state, while listening to music which he actively chose, his control over this experience, manifested in his active choice of music, at least provides one of the main criteria for the possible emergence of flow. This particular aspect of musical choice and control is removed through random listening, contributing, for Stefan at least, to an unsatisfactory listening encounter.
While the above reveals that Stefan found random play unsatisfactory because it disrupts flow-based-listening, for many other users random play was a frequently utilised and pleasurable mode of listening. Indeed, for others, the unexpected nature of musical pairing was seen as one of the main attractions of this form of listening, as the following quotations exemplify:

*It really appeals the fact that I could have every piece of music I’ve ever heard on something, and then let it go on random, so I never know what I’m going to get. I don’t know, I really like that.*

(Mark, record store sample)

*That was something that I definitely thought was quite interesting [about listening to music randomly] because of the way different tracks would just sort of come up if you were in your main library you could be listening to anything next to anything. And, I think that’s just a kind of very interesting a approach to kind of listening to music*  

(Darren, mp3 blog sample)

Despite the fact that Mark and Darren do not choose the sequence in which they listen to music on random, they nevertheless gain a great deal of satisfaction from the ways in which songs are ordered in this mode of listening. Musical flow in these instances is, therefore, based around an appreciation of juxtaposition between potentially very diverse styles of music (‘you could be listening to anything next to anything’; ‘I never know what I’m going to get’). In both cases, it is the appeal of the unexpected which makes random listening pleasurable. The fact that one can never be entirely sure which piece of music will be heard next to which other piece of music is seen by Mark and Darren as being a positive circumstance, rather than something which will disturb their listening pleasure or interrupt their ‘musical thread’. In fact, this random stream of music constitutes the ‘musical thread’, and as such, it forms the basis of a different form of flow-based-listening to the one by which Stefan appreciates music. These findings directly reflect those of Bull (2006), who observes that iPod users often appreciate the juxtaposition of
songs achieved through shuffle play, which make ‘the listening experience one of discovery and surprise’ (139).

Another significant feature of random play is that, when engaging in this form of listening, the listener hands the responsibility for musical choice over to the computer. This represents a significant shift from the types of listening encounters I have considered thus far. In these cases, the configuration and structuring of musical experience is undertaken by the computer and not the individual. In defining the form of listening I have considered above, I employ Latour’s (1998) concept of delegation, which refers to a circumstance when an individual hands over responsibility for some action to a technological device. I, therefore, refer to this form of random listening as delegated structural listening, since the responsibility for musical choice is handed over to a computer.

Further examples of random listening within my sample reveal an additional implication for this mode of listening, one which suggests the emergence of a new framework for considering the relationship between music, listener and technology. In exploring this, I return once more to DeNora and Bull, who both state that listeners often use music either to reflect or transport their own mood. However, through random play, certain members of my sample were able to actively discover aspects of their own mood through listening. The following two quotations provide examples of this process:

GO: If you were listening to it on random and one of those songs that you’re not too keen on came on, what would you do?

B: I would tend to click and let it choose another random song for me. I often do that many times until I find the song I’m actually looking for.

G.O: Right. Is there any aspect that when you’re listening to random, is that because you don’t necessarily know what you want to listen to?
B: I think that could be that. Or it could be that I know what I want to listen to, I just don't know what it is, there's a certain thing that sounds like the logical progression from the last song I listen to I just can't think what it is so I let chaos find it for me. And often something comes along, and it's just 'yeah, that's what I waiting for'.

(Ben, record sample)

and,

*Sometimes I still have it on [random] because I don't know necessarily what I'm looking for.*

(Sean, MP3 blog sample)

In the above, Ben describes how he ‘often’ skips through the songs which arise when listening on random, until he locates one which he wishes to listen to, a finding which Bull (2006) also made of members of his study. Because the lead-up to finding a particular song had been motivated by a somewhat vague, or at least imprecise, sense of what he wanted to listen to (‘I know what I want to listen to, I just don’t know what it is’), before he found it, he was unaware that that this was the song he had been searching for. Random listening (albeit with a degree of human agency, manifested through the song skipping) therefore aids Ben in the process of finding the precise type of music which he wishes to listen to at the particular time, transforming a vague sense into a definite aspect of self-knowledge (this is the music I want to listen to). Given the relationship between mood and music, as defined by DeNora and Bull, it seems reasonable to conjecture that finding the song which fits his mood may also be implicated in the very definition of that mood, a form of musical naming of mood. DeNora (2000) states that music works as a form of ‘introjection’, revealing the state of the self to the self (62). In this case, use of random listening aids this task of introjection, helping Ben to find the correct ‘fit’ between music and mood, thereby reflecting that mood back to him in a form which he can recognise. In this way Ben is led musically to name, and musically to understand, his own mood through a process of musical extrojection. This experience of listening on
random bears strong similarities to Sean’s, also considered above. Sean sometimes uses random play when he does not know what type of music he wishes to listen to, or, put another way, what type of music he is ‘in the mood for’. Applying the same line of logic that I used with Ben’s use of random, I argue that random play, in helping Sean locate the music which ‘fits’ his mood, leads him, also, to a greater understanding of his own mood.

These two examples of the use of random play have implications for the issue of musical choice, and the role of human and technological agency in this area. DeNora (2000) shows how listeners skillfully draw upon detailed musical repertoires, when selecting music to fit their existing moods, as part of the musical configuration of the self. In the above instance, the task of selecting music is partially delegated to the computer, thus drawing technology into this process of musical self configuration. Furthermore, the direction of fit between music and mood is reversed through this mode of listening. DeNora (2000) shows how knowledge of mood comes first and music is chosen accordingly; in the above, music is selected by a technological device (although with varying degrees of human agency) which then leads the listener to a better understanding of their own mood. To clarify these points, DeNora has found how music is actively chosen to transport or reflect a known mood; in the cases considered above, music is randomly chosen to help define a mood. This represents a significant development in the relationship between music, listener and technology. This finding has deep resonance with Bull’s (2006) work on iPod users. Here, Bull reveals how ‘users give themselves over to their music collection and the technology’ (138) through the use of the shuffle function, illustrating the role of the iPod itself in mood creation and maintenance. This is well exemplified with reference to a Gerard, a member of his study who used the iPod during car journeys. Here, Bull illustrates how Gerard was able to configure his memory through the range of subjective musical choices he made through this device, drawing on particular playlists to guide and reflect his mood. However, Gerard also chose sometimes to listen to music on shuffle mode, a function which ‘transported’ him to particular points in his own personal history through the nostalgic associations he had with certain pieces of music which were randomly selected from his ‘never been played’ playlist (140). Here,
Bull reveals how technology is implicated in musical choice and also how this choice, whether this be of human and technological agency, serves to configure Gerard's mood.

I now turn to consider one final method of listening, one which also involves random modes of listening.

**Play-lists**

This section considers how members of my sample constructed and listened to music by play-list, the final type of playing practice which will be explored in this chapter. As with the previous forms of listening which I have considered, the motivations underlying play-list use were found to revolve around the pursuit of various forms of flow-based-listening.

Dan provides my first example of play-list usage:

*Yeah, basically, because I've got, you get albums and they're not consistent all the way through so I take the best tunes that I like, my personal favourites and just make like compilations and stuff and just have it like as mp3s on the computer in playlists.*

(Dan, record store sample)

Here, Dan uses playlists to create his own 'best of' compilations, arranging playlists around his favourite songs from albums. This is achieved through a two-stage process where songs are first decontextualised from their album context before being recontextualised within the playlist. Seen in Adornian terms, playlisting, in this case, involves the atomisation of the album form (i.e. a musical whole is split into its composite musical parts), followed by the self-determined, structured recontextualitation within the playlist. In this case, the creation of play-lists, therefore, represents a form of individuated structured listening, similar to that of DJing, considered in the previous section. Furthermore, through his arrangement of valued elements of musically
‘inconsistent’ albums into consistent flows of valued songs in the playlist, Dan was able to achieve flow-based-listening. However, not all members of the sample used play-lists in this manner, as Darren indicates:

I've got some play-lists whereby I've simply split the library up into more manageable areas, you know, ones like slightly more loud or sort of chilled out stuff. So you know if I want that sort of music and I don't want anything too upbeat or anything, then I can just sort of go into that and I'll still play it randomly

(Darren, MP3 blog sample)

Unlike Dan, Darren uses playlists to break his collection into pre-determined thematic chunks, rather than to ‘cherry pick’ his favourite songs from various albums. In constructing playlists, Darren selects pieces of music in keeping with some common themes (‘slightly more loud or sort of chilled out stuff’), chosen on an understanding of his emotional needs as a listener. This form of playlisting is, therefore, closely connected to the issue of mood and its maintenance through music as identified by DeNora and Bull. Indeed, Bull himself explores the practice of playlist construction, revealing how individuals create and use thematic playlists, as I shall explore. Through playlisting, Darren is able to create regulated musical environments to match his current moods, whilst ensuring the creation of a flow-based-listening encounter. However, because this music is listened to on a random setting, playlisting in Darren’s case does not represent individuated structured listening. Neither, however, is it strictly a form of random listening, as there is high degree of human agency involved in pre-selecting the music to be played on random. This is rather **semi-delegated structured listening**. Another example of this form of playlist based listening is provided by Stefan.

I've compiled a few play-lists, but they're very broad brush strokes. They're like happy party music if I've got people round coz I don't want any sort of weird stuff coming on half way through, but then I would have it on random.

(Stefan, record store sample)
Like Darren, Stefan uses playlists to divide music into broad thematic areas, before listening to them on a random setting. Considering the fact that Stefan had previously expressed his discontent with random play, it seems significant that he should choose to listen in this manner. Earlier in this chapter, I considered how Stefan’s discontent with random play arose because of the ways in which it interrupted flow-based-listening. In the above instance, the fact that all the songs being selected randomly are drawn from a pre-selected and musically coherent source means that random play no longer interrupts flow-based-listening. This is exemplified when he says ‘I don’t want any weird stuff coming on half-way through’, suggesting that, by musically vetting the music beforehand via the play list, he can ensure that aesthetically unpleasing pairings will be eliminated, while at the same time ensuring the absence of tracks in opposition to this mood. The play-list, as a method of listening, also allows Stefan the opportunity to regain some of the aesthetic autonomy which he felt was lost through complete random play and to impose some of his own agency over the random choice of music. In this way, Stefan is able to achieve flow-based-listening through random play. Bull (2006) also notes similar practices in his study of iPod users, where he finds that users listen to playlists on shuffle modes ‘in a form of “mediated spontaneity” in which they can micro-manage their experience precisely through the use of the iPod’ (138).

The social circumstances in which Stefan chose to listen to music in this manner are also significant, i.e. social gatherings. In such instances, the music is being backgrounded and this obviates the need to follow an aesthetic musical thread. The play-list allows for the maintenance of aesthetic mood without the necessity of the closely attending to the choice of individual songs or albums.

In both of these cases of semi-delegated structured listening, the structuring/ordering of the music is delegated to the computer, whilst control over the broad thematic area of music is retained by the listener. This form of listening, therefore, enables the listener to maintain thematic control over the musical environment, allowing him or her the opportunity to match music to mood or to the requirements of a social occasion, whilst maintaining flow-based-listening.
Listening contexts: audio visual modes of listening

The previous section considered how different technologically afforded playing practices influenced the listening experience. This section considers some wider contextual elements of listening, and some of the material cultures surrounding musical encounters, illustrating the impact that they, too, have upon the listening experience.

I begin by exploring how certain members of my sample orientated themselves to the musical encounter. For example, Jason stated the following regarding his practices of album listening:

*If I want to listen to an album of music, and listen to it, then either I turn all the lights off and sit there and sit in completely pitch black. If I’m maybe sort of, if I want to have, if someone’s maybe sent me something and said hey, take a listen to this, then I would listen to it and put the visuals on, and then watch the visuals and listen to the music, because I would be able to do that and concentrate on the music but then the whole sort of sitting there with the lights off is a more sort of long term thing, you’d do that with an album, not with a song. This is also something that I tend to do on my own, when I want to really concentrate on the music you know.*

(Jason, record store sample)

Jason’s comments are typical of some of the ways in which listeners created environments suited to forms of focused listening. Almost exclusively in my sample, very focused listening – whether to albums or otherwise – was conducted in solitary environments such as bedrooms, or living-rooms when no-one else was present in the house. This ‘solitariness’ is suggestive of DeNora’s (2003, 2000) and Bull’s (2000) notion of music as an area concerned with the relationship to the self. DeNora’s close
reading of Lucy’s listening habits, reviewed in Chapter Two, and Bull’s work on personal
stereos and iPods (both technologies for privatized listening experiences) suggest that this
self-referencing form of listening needs to be conducted in solitude, or at least privitised
audio spaces. As well as withdrawing from the social world during focused listening,
Jason also sought to shut out sensory input unrelated to the music, by turning off the
lights and sitting in darkness. When he included other sensory input, it was in the form of
computer generated visualizations, employed in order to enhance the listening experience.

I have already argued that focused listening tends to be a solitary activity because of the
identity related issues bound up with it, but there may also be another aspect to, and
explanation for, solitary listening. I wish to highlight this secondary aspect of solitary
listening by posing the question: if activities such as focused film watching are conducted
in company and, in some cases, enhanced by this, why is it not the case for focused
listening? The answer to this may lie in two apparently anomalous instances of focused
listening I identified in my sample, which help provide insight into the nature of recorded
music, its social uses and difference between audio and visual culture.

Within my sample, Julia provides the only example of focused listening which occurred
in a social environment. This example came to light when I asked her to tell me about
instances when she had listened to music in a foregrounded and focused manner. She
responded in the following manner:

J: I can remember the one Christmas holiday; Corey [her son] must have been
about three, perhaps not as old as that, perhaps about two. And we managed to sit
down Christmas night, it was the first time we had eaten at about five o’clock which
turned out to be absolutely the right time, and I remember sitting down watching. I
think it was Swan Lake on TV and just, really enjoying that, and really enjoying
listening to that. But I suppose here there was visual input. And a lot of the music
that I like now is often music which has actually come through a film, like The
Piano [scored by Michael Nyman]. And if I listen to music, I like to have visuals. I
never just sit and listen to it.
In the above, Julie reveals that she experienced a very focused and enjoyable listening encounter whilst in a social environment, a fact which is in tension with the experience of other members of the sample, who tended to engage in focused listening in solitude. Significantly however, and a fact which Julie herself flags up as relevant, there was a visual element involved in this encounter (i.e. the Swan Lake television broadcast). This, raises a number of questions: why should a visual element make any difference to such an encounter; why do most focused listening encounters in my sample occur in solitude (and what makes Julia’s example different), and why is focused listening to music without a visual element ‘not something that you do’ in social environments? I argue that the reasons for all of these can be found within the debates considered in Chapter Two, specifically those related to the impact of sound recording upon the nature of sound. As noted in Chapter Two, Schaeffer (1969) argued that, because of the bifurcation of sound from original sound source engendered by sound recording, recorded music encouraged acousmatic listening. This form of listening leads the listener to concentrate specifically upon the sound itself, encouraging more focused forms of listening. Because with recorded music the original sound source, and the visual spectacle associated with this, have been removed from the listening environment, the visual elements of listening are subsumed into, and are very much secondary to, the experience of listening. Listening therefore becomes an unfixed phenomenon; the sound source is removed and all that remains is a free floating sonic ‘object’. In the scenario Julia describes, acousmatic listening gave way to focused listening with a visual focal point, a fact which changed the listening encounter profoundly. The television screen acted as a focal point for listening,
providing the music surrogate visuality, a sound source beyond the speakers from which the sound originated. This, of course, represents a very different listening encounter to that of a family sitting in a room simply listening to music through a stereo. Because acousmatic listening has no clear centre of focus, the focal point is the sound itself, an ephemeral and physically intangible medium, which provides a less obvious focal point than vision in social situations. It is, perhaps, for these reasons that Julia states ‘it’d have been a bit strange to sit round and listen to music out of the stereo’. The visual element of the Swan Lake broadcast, therefore, enabled a social encounter, and a social form of listening.

If visual elements are important to focused listening in social environments, they are also important in solitary focused listening environments. The relationship between audio only and audio visual modes of listening was also highlighted by Zeb, who stated that he never sat and listened to music in a focused way, because he felt it an unproductive waste of time to do so. However, he noted one exception to this, which rested with the occasions on when he watched/listened to the art-film Koyaanisqatsi, which Zeb describes as a ‘very long classical music video’. This film features very little in the way of traditional narrative, and is based around the juxtaposition of images of nature and industry, set to music specifically composed for the film by Philip Glass. While Zeb would not simply sit and listen to music, he would sit and watch/listen to Koyaanisqatsi for the following reasons:

Z: If it’s just music, then I can’t sit and listen, I get twitchy, I feel like I’m wasting time or something. But with Koyaanisqatsi it’s different, I mean it’s not just listening, it’s watching too, there’s something more - I don’t know, it’s a strange one. I just feel I’m doing something when I’m watching it, but when I’m listening to music I feel I’ve got to be doing something because it’s just a waste of time otherwise.

G.O: And how would you feel about just listening to the soundtrack to the film, on CD or whatever. Would you get the same out of the music then?
Z: No, I think I would definitely enjoy the music more by watching the film. I mean, because Koyaanisqatsi has been planned, and it's very artistically done and it's obviously had a lot of thought put into it. But, you know, I probably couldn't watch MTV for two hours non-stop, but I can watch, you know, Koyaanisqatsi.

(Zeb, Yahoogroup sample)

The above reveals the different manners in which Zeb conceptualises listening and viewing. For Zeb, an unaccompanied act of listening is perceived as wasted time, because whilst listening he feels he is not doing something. In order to rectify this situation, Zeb, as revealed elsewhere in his interview, elects to perform concurrent activities whilst listening, such as tidying the house or reading. In this way, listening becomes backgrounded, at least to an extent. However, because the act of watching (and listening) does count as 'doing something', he can sit and watch the film, thereby leading him to a more focused and engaged interaction with music.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the various ways in which technology structures the listening encounter, and some of the consequences of this for musical experience and the link to issues of identity. In this exploration, which has encompassed traditional and new music technologies, I have illustrated how such listening encounters are guided by the concept of musical flow and the pursuit of flow-based-listening. With the CD player and record player, flow-based-listening was achieved through structural album listening, or through song skipping; with record decks, flow-based-listening was achieved through highly individuated and reflexive forms of listening.

New technologies have extended the listening possibilities open to users, and my analysis has revealed that, as a consequence, the range of flow-based-listening opportunities has increased. To view these developments in Adornian terms, I argue that various forms of
random play and playlisting have extended the atomisation of music, as songs are increasingly played outside their album contexts. However, in a way unforeseen (and arguably unforeseeable) by Adorno, this in fact leads to new forms of structural listening. In the case of random listening, atomisation was seen to have two effects. Firstly, and depending on the type of music, it decontextualised the music from its original musical setting. This process of musical decontextualisation can lead to situations where individual tracks lose something of their identity as part of larger musical work, thus interfering with the music's peritextual elements. However, random play also offers the opportunity for musical recontextualisations, in terms of either aesthetically congruent play-lists, or random juxtapositions. Depending upon the individual listener's sense of musical flow, these random juxtapositions can be welcome, presenting the user with new and interesting musical mixes; or, conversely, they can be unwelcome, presenting aesthetically disorientating juxtapositions, which prevent the user from following a coherent musical thread. Furthermore, these random selections of music may also provide a way for the user to reach an understanding of his or her own mood, and what he or she wishes to listen to. In this way, I demonstrate how the technological base of music listening actually becomes implicated in the mood maintenance and identity forming properties of music, identified by DeNora (2003, 2000) and Bull (2006, 2000). Indeed, Bull (2006) himself makes similar observations of iPod usage, finding that, through the shuffle function, users are 'transported' into different moods (140).

In the case of playlisting and DJing, atomised listening also operated in another, more structural, way. In playlists and DJ set lists, even though the individual songs are atomised through musical decontextualisation (or are simply individual songs in their own right as is more often the case with DJing), they are recontextualised (or contextualised) within the playlist and set list, a fact which allows new forms of structural listening to emerge. I have defined these forms of listening as individuated structured listening, and argue that they are self determined orderings of music sequenced around the underlying logic of musical flow. Furthermore, individuated structured listening is a creative form of listening, which has implications for the maintenance of mood and identity and allows the exercise of aesthetic reflexivity.
In many ways, individuated structured listening is a less ‘patterned and pre-digested’ (Adorno, 1990, 307) form of listening than conventional forms of structural listening. In the case of the former type of listening, the listeners actively *chooses* what to listen to, and creates his or her own narrative flows of music based upon subjective understandings of musical flow. While Adorno (1941, 1990) argued that structural listening is a highly engaged form of listening, it is nevertheless based upon music that is rigorously patterned, entirely pre-structured. Adorno argues that this encourages, in certain contexts, engaged and sustained modes of listening, which foster critical thinking. However, it is also a form of listening which is entirely passive in terms of music choice. Even if the music is not predigested, as Adorno (1990) has it, it is predetermined.

In the final analysis, individuated structured listening is a creative process of music choice and recontextualisation, which make aesthetically reflexive demands on the listener that are not present to the same degree in structural listening.

Finally, and to conclude an analytical theme which has run throughout this chapter, I wish to discuss Adorno’s theories of listening with reference to Csikszentmihalyis’s (1990) concept of flow. Before doing this, however, I shall first recap upon the various ways in which the listening practices I have considered within this chapter variously satisfy Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyis (2005) conditions for the emergence of flow. Firstly, the practices of structural album listening and DJing were found to demand concentrated and focused listening on the part of the user, thereby satisfying the following aspect of flow: ‘intense and focused concentration on what one is doing in the present moment attention’ (90). Secondly, the practice of DJing and playlisting allow listeners high levels of control over their music experiences, thereby satisfying the following: ‘a personal sense of control over the situation or activity’. Finally, the act of DJing required the engagement of a wide variety of skills on the part of the listener, thereby satisfying the following: ‘a balance between ability level and challenge’.
Before I apply elements of flow theory to Adorno's thinking on music, I wish first to explore a difficulty which surrounds my use of Adorno's concept of structural listening, one which I acknowledged near the beginning of this chapter. Adorno argued that structural listening occurred only with reference to serious symphonic pieces and certain avant-garde works as a result of complex structural elements involved with these pieces. However, in my sample, I identify many of the conditions of structural listening (engaged and focused listening over a sustained period of time; intra-musical meaning creation) arising around types of music which Adorno would have been likely to have dismissed as pre-digested and capable of encouraging only regressive forms of listening. How can this be reconciled; why are members of my sample experiencing structural listening if the music they are listening to is 'pre-digested' and formulaic, thus unable to make demands on the listener equal to structural listening? I argue that this apparent paradox can be resolved with reference to flow theory.

Let us assume that the outcome of structural listening for Adorno was the flow based state. Indeed, there are many compelling points supporting such an assumption. The flow state and structural listening both demand high levels of focus from the individual, and both concern 'optimal' forms of experiences. Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyis's concept of analytic listening, considered earlier, is, in some ways, virtually synonymous with Adorno's concept of structural listening. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyis (2005) state that one of the fundamental conditions for the emergence of flow is the correct balance between the challenges of the task and skills of the listener. If the task is either too easy or too difficult, the individual will either become too bored or too anxious and the state of flow will not emerge.

Because of his lack of engagement with empirical research, I argue that it was Adorno himself who was the listener in his analysis, and it was with reference to his own musical experiences that he formed his theories. Indeed, without the benefit of empirical research, how could this be otherwise? Adorno was a classically trained musician and, as such, he had the required musical knowledge to engage with music of the avant-garde, and serious symphonic pieces, and to fully appreciate and understand them. Seen in terms of
flow, this means that Adorno’s abilities as a listener matched the demands of the musical text, meaning that Adorno was able to enter into a state of flow when listening, a state which enabled him to think critically. In the cases of structural listening which occur in my sample, the demands of the music are likewise matching the skills of the listeners. Granted, different forms of music and different sets of skills may be being demanded, but the outcome, focused and engaged forms of structural listening, is still the same.

This chapter has considered how different technologies afford different engagements with music, and how this impacts upon meaning creation around music. In the next chapter, I concentrate upon the various technologies of music storage and reproduction themselves, exploring how they are understood and valued by members of my sample.
Chapter 7: Collecting, touching and understanding music

Introduction

This chapter investigates the issue of musical format and considers the ways in which various members of my sample understood and interacted with different formats, and the impact these formats had upon the musical experience. This investigation will be undertaken on three main fronts, which will form the basis of this chapter. In the first main section, an examination is made of the ways in which sample members variously perceived and valued new and traditional media. Here investigation reveals that understandings of format often drew upon discourses of 'the authentic' and 'the inauthentic', notions which impact significantly upon the ways in which formats are valued. The second main section examines the meaning and importance which are ascribed to the tangibility of traditional media, and how the intangibility of digital files is managed and understood. This section also considers issues surrounding the sonic embodiment of music, illuminating the discourses of realism which surround digital and analogue sound sources, and reflects, too, upon the manner in which these issues impact upon musical appreciation and questions of identity. The final section, in which the importance of musical format is explored, relates to the practice of music collection. Here I explore the various aspects of this practice and reveal its impact upon identity formation and maintenance. The analysis undertaken within this chapter will allow me further to explore the relationship between music and its material base, which is one the main research questions of my study.

Original copies and copied originals: format, identity and notions of authenticity

My analysis in this chapter commences with an investigation into the differing understandings which members of my sample had of digital audio files, on one hand, and traditional media (CD and vinyl) on the other. My data suggest that such differences in perception drew upon discourses of the authentic and the inauthentic, of original and copy. Through discussion of these issues, I shall illuminate how the wide spread use of the digital audio file is changing the role of 'original copies' within music collections,
and the implications which this has for the social life of the object, and the relationship between collection and identity.

When one downloads a digital audio file from a peer-to-peer network, the information surrounding this download is strictly limited, often only to a file name and a file size. For Dan, considered now, this lack of information impacted upon how he viewed digital audio files in themselves, and in relation to other elements of his collection:

Yeah, I see them in a totally different way, because there’s no, there’s no visuals with it. With vinyl, with CD, you’ve got all the fucking artwork, you can find out who wrote the songs. You just get whole package, and you don’t get that with MP3. You just got song and song artist, who wrote it. Most of the time it’s wrong, it’s not even the right artist. So it’s like you have no sort of regard for it.

(Dan, record store sample)

Dan’s comments bring to light a number of important issues regarding the ways in which digital audio files are viewed by members of my sample. A key distinction which Dan made between the digital audio file format and CD and vinyl rests upon the digital audio file’s lack of certain aesthetic and informational aspects, which accompany purchased elements of the collection. These elements, and Dan’s dissatisfaction, can be seen in terms of Genette’s (1997) concept of peritextuality. As discussed in previous chapters, peritextuality refers to those extra-musical elements, such as album cover artwork, linear notes or lyric sheets, which, imbued in the very materiality of traditional formats, help fix and anchor musical meaning. In Dan’s case, it is the disruption of peritextuality which is at the heart of his complaint, and the disruptions are manifold.

Therefore, I argue that Dan’s dissatisfaction with the mp3 format is based upon two broad, and overlapping, forms of peritextual deficit which distinguish the digital audio format from traditional media. The first of these surrounds issues of confidence and trust, relating, in this case, to the name of the artist and the piece of music. Dan states that textual information contained in mp3 files, specifically the file name (which may contain
the name of the artist and song title), is often inaccurate. Such uncertainty over the name and, by extension, musical origin of the piece may interfere with Dan’s ability to contextualise and categorise the music, explaining his dissatisfaction with the mp3 format.

If inaccurate song information impairs Dan’s ability to satisfactorily categorise music, so too does the mp3’s lack of aesthetic properties. Genette (1997) argues that visual elements of traditional media, such as cover art and record labels, supplement meaning creation around music, helping to fix and anchor music’s meaning through a series of peritextual cues. To pick up on Dan’s example, album cover artwork is often abundant in signifiers, indicating the genre and stylistic content of the music contained within. The lack of these peritextual cues associated with mp3s interferes with Dan’s ability to create meaning around music, and impacts upon how he sees the format. Furthermore, Frith (1988) argues that musical knowledge can be operationalised as cultural capital, suggesting that the uncertainty and lack of contextualising information surrounding mp3s may undermine Dan’s ability to access and use these forms of musical cultural capital.

Taken as a whole, the peritextual deficits of mp3s that Dan highlights lead him to view this format ‘in a totally different way’ to other elements of his collection, one which, ultimately, he ‘has little regard for’. Furthermore, Daniel’s comments about traditional media providing ‘the whole package’, suggest that music, simply of itself, is only one element of this package, one part of a wider aesthetic experience.

The above also provides insight into the relationship between music and its material base, revealing how the physicality of traditional media, with all of their associated artwork and informational cues, serve to anchor the meaning of music and contextualise it within a wider universe of musical and genre associations. Simply put, the material helps define the musical.

When I asked Sean, to whom I now turn, whether he made any distinctions between digital audio files and traditional media he, too, referenced the notion of confidence. However, the criteria by which Sean understood confidence differed significantly from
Dan’s, and drew upon a different set of discourses, more closely related to ideas of authenticity and inauthenticity:

_There is sort of an aesthetic difference in my head. It’s the reason, one of the reasons I buy a CD when I like it. I don’t think it actually has to do with holding the CD, like being able to touch the artwork etc, or even the sound quality, because a high quality bit rate on mp3 is going to be identical on most pairs of headphones and most stereos, however it’s sort of the confidence. I like the idea when I get a CD that it is the full quality, even if I don’t hear the difference, there’s a possibility that I’d hear the difference. And this is just sort of the real deal, it’s got no weirdnesses about it, it’s sort of as it was intended, and it’s sort of this ephemeral aspect to it, and I wouldn’t say ‘as the sound was intended to sound’ because who knows what equipment they listened to it on and blah blah blah, but it still feels that it’s sort of genuine in a way that appeals to me. It would feel like a copy otherwise._

(Sean, mp3 blog sample)

In a similar way to Dan, Sean makes a clear distinction between his CDs and his mp3s. Unlike Dan, however, this distinction does not rest upon the tactile or visual nature of traditional media (‘I don’t think it actually has to do with holding the CD, like being able to touch the artwork’), but is, rather, associated with a very clear notion of musical authenticity, which arises from a particular understanding of the concept of the ‘original’. These issues are partly, but not entirely, associated with ideas of sound quality. Regarding the issue of sound quality, Sean states that, even though he is cognisant of the fact that he is extremely unlikely to perceive a difference between the mp3 file and the original in terms of sound quality, the very fact that he might hear a difference remains an issue of great significance to him, and part of the reason for which he values CDs. To put it another way, he believes that he won’t hear a difference, but he wants to know that he won’t hear a difference. In some respects, this perspective reflects the discourses of realism which have surrounded record music, as discussed in Chapter Two. However, unlike the discourses of realism, discussed by Katz (2005), Sean’s appreciation of the
sonic properties of CDs do not rest upon the fact that they hold up an objective sonic mirror to reality, because he acknowledges that this, in effect, cannot exist, as the original sonic properties of the music will be dependent upon the technology through which it is played (‘I wouldn’t say ‘as the sound was intended to sound’...). Therefore, Sean’s appreciation of the sonic properties of CDs is less to do with providing a true reflection of sonic reality, and more to do with providing a true reflection of an authentic sonic idea, or perhaps, a sonic ideal.

So while Sean’s understandings of sound quality draw partly upon a discourse of realism, they also run to a deeper, parallel discourse about authenticity. This parallel discourse has little to do with perceptible differences in sound between copy and original, but, rather, it relates to the idea that CD sound is fundamentally authentic, in a way that mp3 sound is not. It is this sense of authenticity which gives Sean ‘a sort of confidence’ in CDs, a confidence that the music is ‘the real deal’ and that it has ‘no weirdness about it’.

However, although a digital audio file was seen as an inferior form to an original copy, it nevertheless had value for members of my sample, albeit a value of a different nature. In pursuing an examination of the ways in which digital audio files were valued by members of my sample. Further distinctions between original and copy were drawn out.

I therefore now turn to consider the ways in which digital audio files were valued by members of my sample, a discussion draws out further distinctions between original and copy, and how they are differently valued by members of my sample.

Digital audio files were often valued primarily in term of their convenience, a fact which led to associated changes in the value and status of the original within the collection. Mark provides one of many examples of this within my sample:

I often find if I’m listening to an album a lot, I’ll often download it so I can listen to on the computer, and just keep the record so I don’t destroy it. I mean it’s just convenient than having to put a CD or record on just to listen to one track or
whatever. So I guess buying records is more for a collection, rather than for something I listen to all the time.

(Mark, record store sample)

The above quotation reveals that Mark will download mp3s of music, which he already possesses, in order to have that music in a more accessible and convenient form. However, he reveals a second reason for this action, i.e. in order to preserve the original record from wear and tear (‘and just keep the record so I don’t destroy it’). These twin reasons for backing up, or resourcing backups from the internet, was also apparent in Malcolm’s motivations for converting his vinyl collection to mp3 format, and Jack’s for backing up his CD collection:

*I do that for convenience. Erm, yes, I do it for convenience and to some extent because you can play mp3s more often and never wear them out, and that’s part of the reason.*

(Malcolm, record store sample)

*I tend to backup any CD which I’m listening to a lot of onto my computer and just listen to it from there. I mean I don’t tend to really put CDs on that much anymore, because I’ve got them all backed up and I listen to it that way.*

(Jack, Yahoogroup sample)

The above quotations are illustrative of the fact that the rise in use and self production of digital audio files has led to something of a shift in the nature of music collection for members of my sample. This shift is due to the intrinsic convenience of digital audio files, especially when compared to traditional media. For members of my sample who had digitised their collections, or backed them up from the internet, in terms of actual use, the digital audio file very often superceded the original CD or piece of vinyl. This development can be explored with reference to Belk’s (1995) work on collection, considered in Chapter Two. Belk argues that one of the fundamental traits common to all forms of collection is the fact that collected items become removed and divorced from
their original use value, coming instead to exist primarily as parts of a collection. Pearce (1992) describes this aspect of collecting as ‘non-utilitarian gathering’ (159), and it is exemplified by such practices as stamp or used beer can collecting. Whilst I would argue that Belk’s work considers collection from only one perspective, and, therefore, adequately describes only one form of collection (for example, such a definition of collection would not encompass a DVD collection which was used as well as prized), his ideas are useful. Because, in the wake of increased digital audio file usage, CD and vinyl are being used less often, and, in many cases, not at all, such elements of the music collection are moving to resemble more closely Belk’s models of collecting, i.e. items are collected not to be used but only to be collected. This is reflected in Malcolm’s comments about wanting to reduce ‘wear and tear’ on his vinyl collection, suggesting that he wishes to maintain its good condition, which, although important for issues of sound quality, is also a key aspect of collecting. Therefore, the increased use of digital audio files in the domestic environment has led to a transfer of use value from traditional music formats to digital audio files; from the original to the copy. As a result, the traditional media come to hold greater degrees of symbolic and fetishised meaning and are considered more as objects for collecting, than as active repositories for music. This point is summarised in the above, when Mark states ‘I guess buying records is more for a collection, rather than for something I listen to all the time’. However, other, new, forms of value are placed upon traditional media, which I shall consider later in this chapter.

**Digital audio files and trust**

Previous work on music collecting, also considered in Chapter Two, has emphasised the links between collecting and identity, revealing how music collections operate as indices of identity, through which owners reflect aspects of themselves to others and to themselves. For example, Katz (2005) states that ‘record collecting represents a relationship with music that helps us, in some part small or large, to articulate and, indeed, shape who we are’ (11). Considering this research, it seems reasonable to argue that the symbolic function that traditional media increasingly fulfill is related to these identity related aspects of collecting, i.e. because traditional media are being used less for
listening, they are being valued more exclusively as indices of identity. However, are the same identity forming aspects of music collecting also present in collections of digital audio files? Brown and Sellen’s (2006) research certainly points to the negative, finding that, because of their inferior states as ‘copies’, digital audio files have little impact upon identity. While my findings mirror theirs, I wish to argue that there is a further reason why digital audio files do not, and cannot, fulfill the identity-related aspects of traditional music collections. This reason, once again, relates to the ways in which digital audio files are understood. A discussion of this topic spotlights the various ways in which members of my sample related to both the physical world and the virtual/electronic world.

As already revealed, members of my sample saw digital audio files as inferior to original hard copies, because of issues relating to both peritextual deficits and to perception of authenticity. However, another reason why digital audio files were seen as inferior to original hard-copies rested upon the very nature of these digital formats, i.e. as intangible data residing upon electronic devices. Tom’s comments, considered now, reveal how this aspect of digital audio files was understood by members of my sample:

As I said, I’ve got quite a lot of music in mp3 format from downloads, but if my house burnt down I’d save my record collection. I love my record collection I’d be extremely upset if I lost that, but I don’t think I could really get upset about computer files being lost. And at the end of the day that’s all that mp3s are. Only, I mean I’ve suffered wipe-outs of data before but, you’ve just got to get over it really. I mean my collection, I’d be a bit gutted if I lost that. But you can’t compare a digital music file, because you can’t compare a computer file for a 12 inch piece of plastic on your shelf really at the end of the day.

(Tom, mp3 blogger)

This quotation casts light on the distinctions which Tom makes between traditional media and digital audio files, and the reasons underlying these distinctions. Tom’s comments clearly reveal that he understands the mp3 format to be, in a very real sense, impermanent, unstable and somewhat ephemeral. This understanding is based upon the fact that an mp3
exists as data on a computer hard-drive, a storage method which he believes to be untrustworthy. Indeed, there is something of a tone of resignation, when he states ‘I’ve suffered data wipe-outs before, but you just have to get over it’, indicating that he feels that data loss is, if not an inevitability, at least an eventuality he has to be prepared for.

When referring to the 12 inch record (‘you can’t compare a computer file for a 12 inch piece of plastic on your shelf’), Tom is juxtaposing ideas of the permanence of this format with the impermanence of digital audio files. These comments suggest that a record is something in which he can invest himself, because he can physically see it, physically store it on his shelf, whereas the same is not true of the digital audio file, which he cannot physically see and which he fears may vanish without warning. These feelings are further emphasised when, later on in the interview, he states that ‘at the end of the day the hard-drive may cave in, so I don’t really classify it as part of my collection’.

This sense of the impermanence of digital audio formats was echoed by Frank, in the following:

I download music at home from subscription services and if I liked the album, even though I pay for the subscription, I would go out and buy the CD. I did with a band called The National the other week, and I went out and got the CD version of it. Mainly because, you get all these excessive people backing up their CD collections into digital format but I think it’s the other way round, because the life span of a computer isn’t going to be the same life span of, say, a CD. So I find that a bit bemusing, people who do that to be honest.

(Frank, Yahoogroup sample)

Although the digital audio file cannot physically degrade in the same way as a CD, it cannot become physically scratched or ‘broken’, Frank perceives the digital audio format to be unstable in nature. As with Tom, this sense of instability arises as a consequence of the technology on which the file is stored. Perceptions of the durability, or otherwise, of the digital audio file, therefore, are intrinsically linked to perceptions of the reliability and durability of the computers, hard drives and flash memories on which they reside. Indeed,
Frank’s feelings about the impermanence of digital audio files are such that he chooses to purchase CDs to back up his purchased mp3 collection (‘if I liked the album, even though I pay for the subscription, I would go out and buy the CD’). This allows him to have access to music, which he values highly, in a form which he feels will be a permanent addition to his collection.

At this point, it is rewarding to consider Tom’s and Frank’s comments in relation to existing work on music collection. In his research in the collecting practices of Bruce Springsteen fans, Cavicchi (1998) argues that the practice of collecting, and the music collection itself, come to be implicated in many identity forming and maintenance roles. Cavicchi’s research reveals how Springsteen fans used their collections to mark different life stages, confirm their identities as fans, and form ‘coherent narratives of self over time’ (156). Similar links between music collecting and identity are made by Adorno (1927):

What the gramophone listener actually wants to hear is himself, and the artist merely offers him a substitute for the sounding image of his own person, which he would like to safeguard as a possession. The only reason that he accords the record such value is because he himself could also be just as well preserved. Most of the time records are virtual photographs of their owners, flattering photographs (274).

Here, in a very similar way to Cavicchi (1998), Adorno (1927) is arguing that music collectors invest elements of themselves in their collections as a way of preserving aspects of their own personality over time. By safeguarding the materiality of the record, the collector is also able to preserve and protect elements of his or her own personality. Within both Cavicchi’s and Adorno’s work, the permanence of the collection, and, crucially, the importance of this permanence to identity forming and maintenance, is emphasised. However, in relation to the digital audio file, Tom, Frank and the majority of the other members of my sample, who used this format, all emphasised the lack of permanence associated with digital audio files. This suggests that the same identity
forming and maintaining properties of traditional music collections are not possible with digital audio file collections. To clarify: how can one invest identity in an article which may vanish at any point and without warning? If music collection is about building up an on-going index of identity over time, as the literature suggests, then the fact that digital audio files do not share this property is made clear in Tom’s comments, considered earlier: ‘at the end of the day, the hard-drive may cave in, so I don’t really classify it as part of my collection’.

Brown and Sellen (2006) found that, because of their lack of capacity for physical display, and their status as copy rather than original, digital audio files were understood to be an ‘inferior’ form of music, unable to be used for fan identity or cultural capital. My findings about perceptions of permanence regarding digital audio files, and the implication of this for identity, illuminate a hitherto unexplored area of the differences between new and traditional music media.

I now consider one further, related, consequence of the impermanence of digital audio files, one which illuminates a further way in which traditional media are valued. Many members of my sample stated that they kept original hard-copies of music, despite the fact that they tended to rely on digital audio files for actual listening, in order to have a source for further copies, should their digital collections be destroyed by technical failures. Stefan provides one such example:

G.O: For all the music on your iRiver [mp3 player] and PC that you don’t listen to the CDs anymore, would you ever think about parting with them, now that you don’t listen to them anymore?

S: No, because I'd be scared about hard disk failure or something going wrong with them. I think I would certainly keep them in case I needed to make more copies of them.
Earlier, I discussed how the increasing use of digital audio, files for music listening, has changed the ways in which traditional media are used and valued. I argued that traditional media had shifted away from being objects of listening, toward being more symbolic and fetishised objects. However, this finding shows that, despite the decline in their active use, new forms of value which come to reside in traditional media, i.e. as permanent and original copies, from which to create further copies if necessary.

This evolution in use introduces a significant new element into the life cycle of traditional media, i.e. that of replication. The interactions between new and traditional media, which I have traced in this section, represent a significant change in the social life of the object, and the way in which the musical object is valued. Before the widespread use of the digital audio file, typically traditional media would have been the sole repository of music within the domestic environment, and valued and used accordingly. My findings indicate that, in some cases, this situation has altered. For many members of my sample, traditional media is bought, ripped (i.e. converted to digital audio files) and then stored, rather than being bought and used as the main source of the music. This indicates that there has been a shift of use value from traditional to new media; from original to copy. However, this also has implications for the ways in which traditional media are valued. While traditional media have always been valued, at least in part, for their symbolic status (as material embodiments of tastes and biography (Adorno, 1927; Cavicchi, 1998; Hodgson, 2002)), my findings suggest that this symbolic value has become increasingly central to their meaning and role within the collection. Additionally, another form of meaning is revealed. Traditional media are increasingly understood as ‘master’ sources of copies, should digital audio files become corrupted or be destroyed, and, as such, part of their new role in the collection is that of security measure against hardware failure. This latter point further reinforces another central finding in this section, i.e. that traditional media are understood and trusted as ‘authentic’ and original while digital audio files are understood as unstable and inferior. In the following part of this chapter, I shall illuminate further why this is so.
Authenticity, identity and the sonic and material embodiment of music

This section continues to investigate the importance of materiality to the ways in which format is understood and valued by members of my sample. Here, I argue that the specific tangibility, and the affordances it confers upon the format, influence how the format is understood and the degree to which the individual feels ‘connected’ to the music being played. This exploration provides an opportunity to examine in greater depth an area of research already considered earlier in the chapter (namely, the relationship between format and identity) and to open up the debate to include the sonic properties of different formats, an area of research within the field which, hitherto, has not been investigate empirically. By virtue of this examination the various ontological understandings about different sound sources, among members of my sample, became manifest, as did the ways in which these understandings impacted upon a range of issues.

However, I begin by concentrating upon tangibility, an issue which has previously been investigated by Brown and Sellen (2006). Brown and Sellen found that tangibility was an important element of music collecting, in that it provided a means through which music could be physically displayed, thereby allowing individuals to manipulate their collections as forms of cultural capital, an issue which also had implications for fandom and identity. In this regard, my findings were in line with those of Brown and Sellen, and there were many examples within my sample in which the materiality of collections was valued in terms of their displayability. Furthermore, and further mirroring Brown and Sellen’s findings, the issue of tangibility also provided another reason why hard-copy originals were understood as originals, and were more highly valued as such, and why digital audio files were understood as copies and were seen as inferior. However, rather than rehearse Brown and Sellen’s findings through my own data, I wish to explore elements of tangibility which they have not considered. I shall begin this endeavour with a discussion of the significance and meaning of tangibility to the vinyl format. The following quotations from Dan and Mat help to illustrate some of the ways in which the tangibility of this format was valued by users:
G.O: Do you feel differently about vinyl than you do about other formats?

D: Yeah, defiantly, because it's real man. You can feel the music. When I'm mixing I can feel the songs going into each other and its part of you.
(Dan, record store sample)

The beauty of vinyl is that it allows you to interact with the music in a very direct way. I mean you can touch it and speed it up and slow it down by hand.
(Matt, record store sample)

The above illuminates how the specific tangibility of the vinyl format affords both Dan and Matt particular tactile relationships with music. In Dan's case, he feels that this tangibility allows him to physically touch the music, stating that he can 'feel the songs going into each other' whilst mixing. There is also a suggestion that Dan's use of vinyl has consequence for his sense of identity, for he comments that, when mixing, the music becomes 'part of you'. This comment indicates that the tangibility of the vinyl format, which affords the practice of mixing, enables him to identify with music to the point where he feels no distinction between himself and the music.

In a similar way to Dan, for Matt the tangibility of vinyl enables him to experience the music in a tactile fashion, which permits him to manipulate and 'interact' with the music on a 'direct' level. Interestingly, however, Matt was one of two members of my sample who, as well as DJing vinyl, also had experience of DJing mp3s. A discussion of the distinctions which Matt and Dan drew between these two different DJing practices sheds further light on the importance of tangibility to musical experience.

After he had talked me through the technical aspects of DJing with digital audio files, I asked Matt whether he would have taken up conventional DJing had the technology of mp3 DJing been available to him when he first learned to DJ. He replied in the follow manner:
M: Yeah, I still would have got into decks, because it's a whole different, because there you're hands on, and this is taking away all of your, almost taking away all of your fun from actually mixing the records.

G.O: Do you think this [software] could ever replace decks?

M: Erm, no, because there's something, when you're mixing a record its just so much nicer to have your hands, hands on basically, and this is taking away the skills, so there's things as well that you can't do with this that you can with vinyl. It just doesn't feel real when it's on mp3.

(Matt, record store sample)

In the above, Matt draws attention to the differences between vinyl and mp3 DJing, stating that, because mp3 DJing does not afford a physical 'hands on' manipulation of the music (instead relying on mouse movements), it removes 'the skill' from the process of mixing. However, the lack of tangibility surrounding mp3 DJing has further consequences for the ways in which Matt understands each practice. In the above, Matt juxtaposes the tangibility of vinyl, through terms such as 'hands on', with what he considers to be the lack of 'realness' associated with mp3s. For Matt, therefore, the more mediated practice of mp3 DJing, which prevented him from physical manipulating the music, was considered to be a less 'real' practice (significantly Dan, considered earlier, had described vinyl DJing as 'real'). Similar feelings about the mediated nature of mp3 DJing were expressed by Mark:

Mixing with the decks would be a bit more human maybe, because it's all using your hands, you're touching the music basically with your hands, as opposed to like with a laptop or whatever, it's going to be a bit more, I don't know... the computer is going to play more of a part in it.

(Mark, record store sample)
While Mark uses a similar vocabulary to Dan and Matt regarding the tactility of vinyl DJing ('it's all using your hands, you're touching the music basically with your hands'), like Matt, he also draws attention to the role of the computer in the practice of mp3 DJing. Whereas Matt felt that the more automated nature of this practice removed the skill from the process of DJing, Mark felt, that in mp3 DJing, the computer was drawn into the act of DJing itself. As a consequence of the computer playing 'more of a part' in it, the need for tactile 'hands on' manipulation of the music was removed, in turn dispensing with the physical element of DJing and impacting upon the perceived 'realness' of the practice. This more highly mediated practice of mp3 DJing therefore served to 'distance' Mark, and also Matt, from the music, by removing the tactile relationship which they enjoyed, and which they felt brought them into a closer relationship to the music and made the practice 'real'.

It is worth pausing here to consider, conceptually, how Dan's, Matt's and Mark's musical encounters are constructed in these cases. In all of the above quotations, my interviewees drew clear divisions between the 'realness' the traditional DJing and the mediated, or abstract, nature of mp3 DJing. The criteria upon which these divisions were drawn rested upon the highly tactile nature of one practice versus the highly mediated nature of the other. The close physical contact with the vinyl format, required by traditional DJing, made the musical encounter 'real' to my interviewees. In other words, this sensory aspect of DJing served to confirm the realness of traditional DJing, through a process which I refer to as sensory authentification. Sensory authentification, a concept which recurs throughout this chapter, illustrates the importance of the multi-sensory relationships of members of my sample with musical formats, and the implications of these relationships for issues such as the levels of trust which users placed upon those formats, as well as for perceptions of authenticity and 'realness'.

In the above cases, however, there was another factor operating in tandem with sensory authentification. In the same way that sensory authentification assured users of the 'realness' of the practice of traditional DJing, the reduced sensory contact of mp3 DJing led users to understand the process as 'unreal'. Furthermore, users also expressed how the
tactile richness of traditional DJing brought them into a very close relationship with music, a closeness which was not present in mp3 DJing. In short, a technological aspect of music’s reproduction replaced an otherwise valued aspect of the music encounter, serving to ‘distance’ the individual from the music being played. This is an example of a process which I refer to as technological distancing, a concept which helps to explain why certain musical formats are understood as inauthentic, unreal and untrustworthy. Indeed, the duel concepts of sensory authentification and technological distancing can be applied to discussions recorded in the previous section, specifically those dealing with the different perceptions the users had of traditional and new music formats. Here, I demonstrated that members of my sample valued traditional media, which they understood as original and authentic, more highly than digital audio files, which they saw as inferior copies. Original copies of music tended to excite feelings of trust which were bound up with an idea of authenticity, whereas the digital audio file was understood as an unstable and untrustworthy format. However, this sense of instability can be seen also in terms of technological distancing. The highly abstract nature of digital audio files offers a very low level of sensory authentification; files cannot be physically seen or handled in the same way as traditional media. The highly mediated nature of digital audio files technologically distances the individual from the music, leading to, or, perhaps, augmenting the pre-existing low levels of trust in the reliability and authenticity of the format. The opposite is true of traditional media, which offer very high levels of sensory authentification, in that they can be physically seen, stored and handled. The quotation from Tom, referenced earlier in this chapter, suggests that these processes of sensory authentification and technological distancing may be at work in the construction of meaning around music format: ‘you can’t compare a computer file to a 12 inch piece of plastic on your shelf’.

Now, I wish to consider further examples of technological distancing and sensory authentification in my sample. The following quotation from Neil, in which he talks about his bi-monthly internet radio broadcast, describes a set of listening encounters where these dual processes were in operation:
Well the vinyl is I suppose a nostalgia thing. And it's also the visibility of it, I mean sometimes a CD track, ok I can time it, I don't tend to believe the times written that are written on the CD tracks so I'll stick it in the CD player and see how long it lasts and work out where are the cue in and cue out points, but you know you've got the time written down in front of you, but when you're waiting for it to finish to do a seg or a link, and I'm talking in the context of the shows which is not necessarily the question, but you know that it's going to finish at 3.19 and that's the point when you're going to do what you're going to do. On vinyl, you know, you see the stylus going towards the end of the track you're playing and there's a, I don't know, there's a certain, people sometimes say warmth, but I'm not quite sure why, but it does seem a suitable word to use, and a certain nostalgia with it.

(Neil, Yahoogroup sample)

In the above, Neil refers to three separate, and, by him, separately valued, methods of gauging the length of songs across difference formats. The first of these relates to song times recorded on the CD casing, in which he places little faith, preferring instead to verify these times via the CD player display. This second method of song length gauging, therefore, offers a degree of sensory authentification, in that he is physically able to see the length of the song in minutes and seconds, albeit in a highly mediated form. The final form of song length gauging occurs on vinyl, through which Neil is able to physically see the progress of the song by following the progress of the needle on the vinyl and, on this basis, confidently estimate when it is due to end. This was an element of the musical encounter which Neil valued, referring to the 'warmth' of the practice.

Of the three different methods of gauging song length, it is clear that vinyl offered Neil the highest level of sensory authentification, enabling him physically to see the song etched into the vinyl. In contrast, however, the CD track times recorded on the CD case offered no direct form of sensory authentification, and as such were not trusted by Neil. True, Neil could physically read these times, but he had no way of directly authenticating
them. This is why Neil put the CD into the CD player when working out cue points for his radio broadcast; in order to verify their length by this device. While the CD player provided a very accurate reading of the song lengths, it did so in a highly mediated manner, via a numerical display. Indeed, unmediated gauging of song length in the context of CD listening is impossible: the side of the CD containing the musical data is never visible when playing, and even if it were, it does not contain information which can be recognised by the human eye. Furthermore, and in contrast, gauging the length of a song visually, through vinyl, required a high degree of skill on Neil’s part. Gauging song length in this way requires the use of tacit knowledge, and is part of the art of DJing. So, while the CD offers an extremely precise method of gauging songs, it removes the skill and valued experience of estimating song length visually. The different visual and technological aspects of CD and vinyl, therefore, afford different forms, and different technological distances, of interaction with music.

So far in this section, I have concentrated on the material embodiment of music, illuminating how it impacts upon the ways in which music is understood and interacted with. I now change focus to consider the sonic embodiment of music, discussing how this it differently determined by various formats. Through this I shall illuminate the impact which sound source and sound quality has upon users understandings of format, and the degree to which they felt ‘connected’ the music event.

Katz (2005), reviewed in Chapter Two, draws attention to the number of different ways in which recorded sound has been considered and presented, both in academic work and through advertising campaigns. Central to these debates is the following question: does recorded sound represent an accurate ‘mirror’ of the original sound, or not. My findings reveal that such ‘discourses of realism’, as Katz (2005) describes them, also reverberate around everyday instances of everyday music use, influencing how music, and format, are perceived.

The following quotation from Matt, is illustrative of this point:
You’ve got the whole argument about digital, like digital technology, and analogue, and people saying that, you know erm, with tracks being digital you don’t get the same kind of ‘umph’ behind the sound as you did with vinyl, because all the distortion is taken away from the signal, once you really get into it.

And where do you stand on that?

I prefer the sound of vinyl goods, the old analogue sound, with all of the erm, the frequencies in, rather that bits of it taken away, the noise being taken away. I don’t think it sounds, I think it sound much better through vinyl, than it ever could through a CD.

(Matt, record store sample)

In the above, Matt states that he finds the sound quality of CDs to be inferior to that of vinyl, clearly locating his stance within an ongoing debate surrounding digital and analogue sound sources. Here, Matt’s comments show that he considers the digital sound signal to be lacking in the sonic richness associated with the analogue sound, which he describes as having more ‘umph’. Indeed, Matt’s perception of this former type of music is underpinned by the notion that, through the process of digitization, aspects of the original sound source are removed, using the phrases ‘taken away’ in relation to digital sound on two occasions. These comments can be related to the discourses of realism considered by Katz (2004). Matt’s preference for analogue sound is underpinned by an understanding that, as a sound signal, it does not have information or frequencies removed from it (unlike the digital sound source), and, therefore, provides a more authentic representation of the original sound source. Furthermore, for Matt, his appreciation of the analogue sound signal has implications for his identity as a listener. This is evident when he states that distinguishing between analogue and digital sound signals is only possible ‘once you really get into it’, suggesting that his appreciation of the analogue signal defines him as a serious listener, or at least one who is able to make such subtle acoustic distinctions.
Similar feelings regarding analogue and digital sound sources were also shared by Dan:

D: But, vinyl, the sound quality is just amazing. It's just like, 'rahhh'.

G.O: So, does the analogue/digital debate apply here?

D: Yeah, I have big debates about that with people. Analogue does have a nicer sound, a more real sound, but digital is fast coming up man. You just can't tell the difference sometimes. But it depends how into music you are, like I like to think I can tell the difference between the two. Yeah, yeah, I tell you what, listening to CDs, I don't know it just sounds 2D. It just sounds like one linear thing, but with vinyl and plus you've got all the crackling with it, and all that sort of background noise, it just creates an atmosphere, and it's nice man.

(Dan, record store sample)

Through his preference for the analogue sound Dan, like Matt, is making claims about his identity as a listener. This is clear from his statements regarding the skills involved in discerning the difference between analogue and digital, stating that it 'depends how into music you are, like I like to think I can tell the difference between the two'. Dan also shares similar feelings to Matt regarding the sonic nature of digital sound, stating that it 'sound 2D', suggesting that something, a third sonic dimension perhaps, has been removed through digitisation. Dan contrasts this with the 'more real sound' of analogue. Also significant here is Dan's appreciation of what could be considered as 'imperfections' of the vinyl format, i.e. the 'crackling' and 'background noise' which are often present in vinyl playback, which he feels create a favourable 'atmosphere'. However, this 'noise' was not part of the original music when it was produced or recorded, but rather arises from the vinyl format itself. This presents a paradox: vinyl offers an authentic reflection of the original sound source (it has 'a more real sound');
however, elements of the playing process, and the specific materiality of the format, interfere with this by introducing elements of noise into music reproduction.

Dan’s and Matt’s discussion of analogue and digital sound sources can also be viewed conceptually in terms of technological distancing and sensory authenticication. A common theme running through the views expressed by many interviewees on analogue and digital technologies was the sense that something is missing from digital sound sources and that, through the process of digitisation, elements of the original sonic event had been removed. For these members of my sample, the process of digitisation serves to distance the listener from the original sonic event, by reproducing only certain elements of it. For these members of my sample digital is not ‘real’, or at least not as real as analogue. In contrast however, analogue sound is understood as presenting a more ‘real’ and more authentic representation of the original sound source. While this is something which is understood intellectually, it is also something which can be discerned sonically: members of my sample claim that they are able to hear the fuller, richer nature of analogue sound. The ‘realness’ of this sound source is therefore authenticated. As Rob, a member of the record store sample, stated, when contrasting CD and vinyl sound quality: ‘I love the sound of vinyl, it’s big and full and rich; it’s a truer representation of the sound I think’. However, even though analogue was perceived as providing a fuller, richer and more ‘real’ sound, it was also subject to a number of ‘imperfections’ in terms of noise originating from the vinyl format itself.

The significance of this ‘background noise’ can be explained with reference to Adorno’s (1938) concept of the hear-stripe, which appears in his as yet unpublished essay entitled ‘Memorandum: Music in Radio’. Leppet (2002) describes how, in this paper, Adorno argues that the technological interference of radio broadcasts provides a hear-stripe, i.e. a constant background noise onto which the music is ‘projected’. Elsewhere, DeMarinis (1997) directly quotes Adorno, revealing how Adorno likens the hear-stripe of radio broadcasts to the background noise of film:

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The delicate buzz during a film of recorded silence whose purpose it is to subliminally confirm the presence of a reproduction underway, thereby establishing the minimum existence of some type of presence. (DeMarinis, quoting Adorno)

The background noise of vinyl acts in the same way as the hear-stripe in film or in radio broadcasting, in that it confirms that a reproduction is underway. Significantly, however, this background noise confirms that the reproduction underway is an authentic reproduction. This is so because digital sound sources do not have background noise; indeed, one of the ‘triumphs’ of digital recording is the removal of noise from the sonic signal (Mowitt, 1987). The background noise of vinyl, therefore, confirms the analogical ‘realness’ of the recording. Paradoxically, however, this background noise interferes with the authentic representation of the original sound (one of the reasons why the analogue embodiment of sound was valued). The background noise therefore serves to confirm the ‘realness’ of the recording method, rather than providing a truly authentic representation of the original sound.

However, not all members of my sample perceived the relationship between analogue and digital sound in this way. For instance Neil, who earlier in the interview had expressed his fondness of the analogue form, stated the following:

G.O: You were saying how you like the idea of analogue, do you think there’s any kind of sound quality issue? Because a lot of the people I’ve spoken to, spoke about a warmth to the sound with vinyl, is that something that you find?

N: No, I think warmth is probably not real, the warmth is a perception. But I think it’s largely, as much as I like vinyl, I think it’s largely bollocks really. If you were to play a good quality vinyl copy of something through a good quality amp and speakers, and then you play the same but on a CD, I’m sure you couldn’t tell the difference. I think that CDs can be cleaner because if you get some surface scratches then they get compensated for, it’s part of the algorithm
of the CD player, whereas with vinyl, if you get some scratches then you hear them. But no, I think it's a nostalgic thing when people say it's warmer, I don't think it is to be honest.

(Neil, Yahoogroup sample)

Here, Neil comments reveal that he believes that there is no significant difference between analogue and digital sound, stating that, on high quality audio equipment, the difference between the two would be imperceptible. Indeed, Neil believes that, because of the specific materiality of each format, the sound may in fact be less clear on vinyl. I have included Neil’s comments here to illustrate the fact that understandings of different formats, and their sonic properties, were not uniform within my sample.

So far in this chapter, I have considered data which illustrate the influence of the sonic and material embodiment of music upon the way in which format is understood, valued and used and the connection which the listener has with the music and the musical event itself. The next section of this chapter enquires into a further aspect of the embodiment of music, i.e. the music collection.

**Aspects of the self: identity and the music collection.**

In this section, I shall explore the ways in which members of my sample used the music collection as a source of identity formation and maintenance. This investigation builds upon research conducted by Cavicchi (1998), whose study of Bruce Springsteen fans revealed that, through collection of Springsteen music and memorabilia, they were able to gain an ongoing sense of identity. I relate these findings to my analysis of the music collections of members of my sample in order to argue that the collection operates not only as a resource for an ongoing sense of identity, as Cavicchi argues, but that it operates also a resource for imagined future identity. In support of this claim, I suggest that the music collection should not be viewed as a uniform entity, serving singular purposes, but should be seen, rather, as a series of sub collections, each providing
different resources for identity formation and maintenance. Such a perspective extends current understandings of the meaning and significance of music collections, which have tended to view the collection as a singular and static conglomeration of musical objects. I shall argue that different elements of the music collection can be understood to represent the past, present and imagined future identities of their owners. Furthermore, my analysis reveals that the potential of the music collection, as a resource for identity, does not reside only in the music, but also within the very materiality of the collection.

**Permanent and transitory collection**

In Chapter Two, I considered existing literature on the practice of music collecting. This literature emphasised the identity forming and maintaining aspects of the practice, revealing that, through their collections, listeners were able to communicate important information about the self to self, and also about the self to others. This work, however, viewed the music collection as a uniform entity, and did not allow for different elements of the collection, nor consider how such elements might be differently viewed and valued. In contrast, my data revealed that music collections are not simple, nor uniform, but rather contain a number of different, and differently valued, elements. Furthermore, my findings also revealed that the music collection tends to be dynamic in nature; musical items enter or leave the collection on regular or intermittent basises. Studying the ebbs and flows of music, into and from the collection, provides many insights into the ways in which elements of the music collection are used for identity formation and maintenance.

In my interviews, I asked members of my sample to tell me about the ways in which music entered and left their collections. Through these discussions, I was able to identify a practice which I refer to as the *musical purge* which was common to many, but not all, members of my sample. The musical purge refers to the often semi cyclical removal of items from the music collection. These purges were often initiated by issues surrounding the physical size of the collection (in terms of either room space or hard disk space), or financial issues, or a combination of both.
In the following, Darren provides an example of such musical purging

D: If I had never got rid of a piece of vinyl I'd have a hell of a lot of it. I have sort of sold various collections, including CDs as well, I had a hell of a lot of ambient music and early Fax [a German Record label specialising in ambient and electronic music] stuff that I've sold on. It hasn't done me any favours financially, but you know.

G.O: So what would the criteria of selling things be?

D: Erm, the criteria generally was needed the money unfortunately. And there were times when basically I think what happened was that I'd be very much into, and I'd get very much into some music, so I'd sort of buy a lot. Then over a period of time, you sort of realise half of it wasn't actually that good in the first place, I mean it's ok, and it works perhaps in a club context but you're not going to listen to it at home or something. So I've sort of got rid of stuff on that basis. Erm, and yeah, I would also get tired of stuff having sort of really immersed myself into it, I'd sort of felt that I've really listened to it, you know, really appreciated it, and I can let a lot of it go now. And there are only some pieces that really really mean something, you know, so I sort of keep them back.
(Darren, mp3 blogger)

In the above, Darren reveals that the reasons behind his purging of the collection tend to be financial. However, the difference between the music he chooses to sell and the music he chooses to keep is significant. Darren stated that he tends to sell music which is no longer important to him. The jettisoning of this type of music from his collection, therefore, represents the removal of elements of the collection which were important to him at a certain time, but which are no longer so. Significantly, Darren makes a distinction between this type of music, which he would be willing to part with for financial reasons, and those pieces of music which he intends to keep because they 'really really mean something' to him. A consideration of this allows me to make a distinction
between two broadly different elements of the music collection to which I shall refer as the transient collection and the permanent collection. This distinction can be developed with reference to Cavicchi’s (1998) work on Bruce Springsteen fans. Cavicchi draws attention to the ways in which fandom and collecting operate as a method of on-going identity creation (or, as Cavichhi puts it, as a way of ‘constituting the self’ (150)) providing the fan with a sense of continuous identity over time:

In particular, fandom shapes and maintains a continuous self by acting as a map or overlay with which to mark the passage of time and organize one’s perception of oneself in it. This process is especially evident in both the activities of collecting and listening. (150).

Cavicchi goes on to reveal how the practice of collection is implicated in this process of identity maintenance over time, finding that ‘fans tend to embody and signify their past in lasting objects through collecting’ (1998, 152). This form of collecting identified by Cavicchi, therefore, has strong continuities with my concept of permanent collection. Darren keeps certain records in his collection on a permanent basis because they ‘really really mean something to him’, suggesting that these records have become important objects to him, implicated in the processes of identity maintenance over time identified by Cavicchi. This is in contrast to the manner in which he considers music from transitory elements of his collection. Here, he had ‘really immersed’ himself in this music during a particular period of time, but after that period of time had expired, and he had ‘really appreciated’ that music, he felt he could let it leave his collection. These two different aspects of the collection highlight two different ways of valuing music, and two different relationships between music and identity. Permanent aspects of the collection act as an embodiment of either past, or past and present musical tastes. In the former case, records act as a form of embodied biography, representing musical tastes from certain life points. In the latter case, records embody musical tastes which have continued from the past to the present. Permanent collection, therefore, relates to those pieces of music which are important to an ongoing sense of identity and biography, music which represents aspects of the self that are considered to be permanent or that the collector wishes to
remember, and as such are kept on a permanent basis. In contrast, transient elements of the collection represent tastes which are more short-lived, to which no major form of identification is attached. Taste in this type of music is therefore, in a very real sense, only a transient aspect of the self. Because of the lack of deep identification with this music, and because it does not represent a permanent or important biographical aspect of the self, it is jettisoned from the collection during musical purges. Indeed, it is through the process of the musical purge that permanent and transitory collection can be differentiated.

I now turn to the consideration of another type of music collecting revealed among my sample which, though not uniformly practiced, nevertheless provides important insights into the relationship between music and its material base. Here, I refer to elements of the collection which were being stored, typically in lofts or similar areas; which were played rarely, in ever, and which were never displayed in the domestic environment. Such elements, which I refer to as redundant collection, usually consisted of pieces of vinyl that were unplayed because the owner lacked the equipment which made playing possible.

In describing her assortment of vinyl, which she stored in loft space, Julia provided an example of redundant collection, typical within my sample. She spoke with great fondness about this element of her collection, commenting on how she received pleasure from viewing and sorting through her old vinyl records, although she no longer had the apparatus on which to play them:

_A:_ I love my vinyl; it goes back to my first T Rex album which I got in 1971. I've got all the record I ever bought up in the loft.

_I:_ Do you ever use it any more?

_A:_ No, I don't listen to it, but I do like to go through it sometimes, it takes me back you know. I can remember the time when that music was out and what I used to do when I listened to it.
Julia’s vinyl collection provides a chronology of her musical tastes which provides her with a form of objectified biography (‘it goes right back to my first T Rex album’). Significantly, however, through manipulation of these vinyl artifacts, Julia is able to recreate internally a sense of the times and places where she first listened to the music contained on this format (‘it takes me back you know’). It is fruitful to consider these findings in the light of those of DeNora (2000) and Bull (2006) on the relationship between music and memory. DeNora’s exploration of this relationship reveals that music is deeply implicated in memory creation and memory recall. She argues that, in certain circumstances, memories are not simply paired with music, but that music in fact becomes part of the original event.

The creation of that ‘moment’ as a heightened moment was due in part to the alchemy of respondents’ perceived or sensed ‘rightness’ or resonance between the situation, the social relationship, the setting, the music, and themselves as emerging aesthetic agents with feelings, desires, moods such that the music was the mood, and the mood, the music (2000, 67).

DeNora claims that through this link between music and situated experience, replaying music is a way of replaying a past event in real time, illustrating this with examples from her sample, where listening to certain pieces of music often triggered memories. DeNora (2006) succinctly sums up this relationship elsewhere, when she states: ‘what is remembered was both made ‘of’ music at time A, and remembered ‘through’ music at time B’ (26). Bull (2006) also highlights the link between music and memory, illustrating how a member of his study of iPod listeners used the device either to control memory
through his choice of songs, or allow the iPod to perform this task, through shuffle play (140-141).

Processes of memory recall similar to those detailed by DeNora and Bull were apparent in Julia’s interactions with her music collection, as described above. Crucially, however, in Julia’s case, memories were not triggered directly by music, but, rather, were principally triggered with reference to the physical repository of music, i.e. the ‘dormant’ records in her collection. Assuming that DeNora is correct when she states that certain memories are “made ‘of’ music”, and that this is why music acts so effectively as a referent for memories, then the above example reveals much about the relationship between music, material and memory. For Julia, handling and viewing her old vinyl triggered memories connected, not to the objects themselves, but to the music contained on those objects (‘I can remember the time when that music was out and what I used to do when I listened to it’). In this way, the object stands in for the music, providing a material focus through which the music and, in turn, the past events connected to that music, can be remembered, replayed. Thus, while DeNora illustrates the way in which past events are remembered through music, my findings reveal that music and past events can be remembered through the object. This insight uncovers hitherto unconsidered aspects of the relationship between music and materiality. Here, the object stands in for music to such a degree that seeing the object evokes the same effects as listening to the music (Julia’s comments about the object ‘taking her back’ are very similar to the comments made by members of DeNora’s sample regarding listening). I argue then, that, because the music cannot be played physically, something of the meaning of the music (i.e. its link with memory) is transferred onto the object. This indicates that the meaning of the materiality in redundant collection is directly informed by the music stored upon it. In this very specific way, the object and the music effectively merge into one another; the music signifies the object, the object signifies the music. In redundant collection, therefore, even though the music is unplayed, and often unplayable, the materiality of the collection still has significant and active roles to play in the process of memory recall and identity maintenance. In its silence, the object speaks.
I now turn to consider one final element of the collection, which I refer to as stockpiled collection. Unlike redundant collection, which concerns memories and the past, this form of collection concerns possible future listening and identity. In essence, stockpiled collection refers to pieces of music which have been acquired, but have yet to be listened to. While every piece of music passes through stockpiled collection to a smaller or greater extent, I use the term principally to describe music where significant amounts of time pass between acquisition and listening. Indeed, in some cases, members of my sample possessed items of stockpiled collection which have never been listened to.

Peter, who approximated that he listened to only one third of his 5,000 piece collection, provides an example of stockpiled collection in my sample:

Well the beauty of having a collection, its just like whatever I want, whatever I'm in the mood for, and it's sort of like the luxury of my hobby, good music that I can play; whatever I want, whenever I want. So I keep accumulating music which I've heard of or think that I'd like or just interests me in some way. Trouble is I buy so much that I can't find time to listen to a lot of it, but I know that it's there if I need it

(Peter, record store sample)

Peter’s patterns of music acquisition, i.e. to purchase more music than he has the time to listen to, have led him to accumulate a backlog of unlistened to pieces of music. As a consequence, vast amounts of his collection (over three thousand pieces according to his estimate) are not actively listened to, but are rather stockpiled for future listening. Attali (2003) also notes this aspect of collecting:

Stockpiling thus becomes a substitute, not a preliminary condition, for use. People buy more records than they can listen to. They stockpile what they want to find the time to hear. (101) [emphasis in the original].

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Here, Attali is suggesting that the act of collecting has eclipsed the act of listening, meaning that the collection takes on an aspirational quality, representing time which the listener wishes to create for listening. While I agree with this diagnosis, I build upon it to argue that stockpiled collection also has further symbolic value, representing imagined or anticipated future musical tastes and, as such, also represents imagined or anticipated future aspects of the self ('I keep accumulating music which I've heard of or think that I'd like'). In this way, stockpiled collection complements permanent collection, which represents past and present tastes. However, stockpiled collection also serves another purpose. Elsewhere in the interview, Peter stated that he no longer listened to music based radio broadcasts, because any music which he wished to listen to, he already owned. For Peter, his collection therefore offers him a way of achieving aesthetic self sufficiency ('it's sort of like the luxury of my hobby, good music that I can play; whatever I want, whenever I want').

The illumination of permanent, transitory and stockpiled elements of the collection, in my findings, extends current understandings of the music collection, which have tended to view the collection as a singular and static conglomeration of objects. In contrast, my work reveals the collection to be a multifaceted entity, illustrating the rich biographical associations, as well as the identity forming properties, bound up with these different aspects of the collection.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has considered issues related to musical format and music collecting, exploring how listeners understand different musical formats and how they interact with their collections. The conclusions which emerge from these data reveal the wide range of influences that musical format has upon the listener and the listening experience, influencing not only how music is understood, but also how it is valued and appreciated. This builds upon the work of DeNora (2003, 2000), to illustrate that musical meaning is not just constituted with reference to textual, contextual and subjective factors, but that it
is also influenced by the technological architecture through which that music recreated. In concluding this chapter, I shall review the most significant of these effects.

The move from traditional music media to digital audio files heralds a fundamental change in the physicality of format. Whereas CD and vinyl formats contain music in a tangible, objectified form, which can be touched, held and physically stored, digital audio files do not, of themselves, have an immediate physical reality. It is this difference, more than any other, which underpinned the divergences user understandings of various musical formats. On one front, the materiality of traditional media, in terms of graphic and textual information, provides a series of peritextual cues for the listener, grounding the music into a wider universe of genre and artist association. In the case of digital audio files, many peritextual cues were unavailable, and those that were available were often inaccurate, facts which impacted upon the value and trust which users placed upon this format. Furthermore, digital audio files, because of their status as disembodied data, were understood, and valued, as an unstable and somewhat ephemeral format. In contrast, the physicality of traditional media was understood as permanent and was valued as a collectable medium (mirroring findings by Brown and Sellen (2006)). The tactility of various formats also afforded different types and orders of interaction with music, impacting upon the degree to which listeners felt connected to music, and the intensity of their musical experience.

Another significant factor in the construction of meaning around different musical formats was the issue of acoustic embodiment and sound quality. Analogue and digital sound sources were understood differently by certain members of my sample, a fact which had implications for the perceived ‘realness’ and authenticity of each.

My analysis in this chapter reveals that users’ views of traditional and new music media tended to be based around a series of polarities: authentic/inauthentic, real/unreal, trust/distrust, permanent/ephemeral. I argue that these dichotomous views can be explained with reference to my dual concepts of sensory authentification and technological distancing. Traditional media, i.e. CD and vinyl, each offer high levels of
sensory authentification, and so were most often understood as being 'real' and authentic. For example, the practice of vinyl DJing was understood to be 'real' because it was experienced in a direct and sensory manner (i.e. through touch). This, and other related findings, suggests that the more direct the sensory contact and interaction users have with the music and the format, the more real it seems to them. In contrast, however, mp3 DJing was a highly mediated practice, which required music to be manipulated through an abstract interface (i.e. the mouse and keyboard). Not only did the practice of mp3 DJing offer low levels of sensory authentification, it also introduced a significant level of mediation to the task of DJing, serving to 'distance' the individual from the musical event. This process illustrates technological distancing, a concept which explains why, as practices and musical formats becomes increasingly mediated and abstract, they also become increasingly 'unreal' and inauthentic.

My analysis in this chapter also focused upon the practice of music collection, illustrating how conglomerations of musical objects performed identity forming and maintaining roles. This investigation provided further insight into the importance of the tangibility of traditional media, revealing the close link between music, materiality and memory.

These reflections on the influence of format reveal that music appreciation is about more than simply listening to music. My findings reveal that music appreciation is, in fact, a layered and multi-sensory experience, encompassing sight and touch as well as listening. Furthermore, these extra-sensory aspects of music appreciation influence the degree to which the listener feels connected to the musical event, and the ways in which he or she constructs meaning around music. I therefore argue that musical appreciation has a synesthetic element to it. It is perhaps due to this aspect of listening that the digital audio format is understood as inferior, unreal, untrustworthy. Music is not just experienced sonically, but also visually and through tactile contact, aspects of appreciation which digital audio files cannot, of themselves, satisfy.

This leads me to sketch out some answers to a question raised at the beginning of this thesis, i.e. what is the relationship between music and its material base. Or to put it
another way: why does matter... matter? My findings reveal that the materiality of traditional media provide peritextual cues to the listener, influencing the ways in which music is understood and received. In this way, materiality influences the meaning of music and the ways in which it is received. However, this process also works in reverse, i.e. the music also influences the meaning of the material. This can be seen throughout the process of collecting, where material goods are valued because of the music contained within them. This is most clearly shown with reference to redundant collection, where the meaning of music is transferred onto the materiality of the format. Music and material are therefore mutually constitutive.

This relationship between music and material will be explored further in the following chapter, which will offers a synthesis of the arguments contained within my thesis so far, drawing them together to offer some overall conclusions regarding the relationship between music, music use and technology.
Chapter eight - Discussion: The Music-Listener-Technology Dynamic

In the previous four chapters, I have explored the profound impact and centrality of technology to the listening experience, the construction of meaning around music and to the social uses to which music is put. This chapter offers both a review and a theoretical synthesis of the ideas presented in these chapters, weaving them together to provide a wider series of insights into the relationship between music, music use and technology. I begin this process by considering and consolidating the key themes of each analysis chapter in sequence, relating them back to the research questions, which I announced at the beginning of my thesis:

- What music related practices are emerging around new technologies of music reproduction, storage and transmission, and how do these relate to, and co-exist alongside, established practices?

- What impact do emerging and existing music related practices have upon issues of sociality and identity formation surrounding music use?

- How are different musical formats understood, valued and used by listeners?

- How does consideration of these questions help illuminate the relationships between music and its material and technological base?

In Chapter four, I investigated issues surrounding the acquisition and sharing of music in each of my three field sites, an investigation which spotlighted several aspects of the relationship between music and the musical object, illustrating the various ways in which users placed value within this nexus. Various processes of value assignment were uncovered, which have bearing not only upon music and the object, but also upon music and identity, and upon music and forms of sociality. Discussion of these processes allowed me to construct an overall taxonomy of music and musical object based value systems.
To consider first the relationship between music and the object, my findings revealed a variety of ways in which value was placed upon the object, the music, or both. This was clearly visible from discussion of notions of value surrounding rare and potentially collectable music, which uncovered fundamental differences of value assignment across my sample.

One of the major sources of musical value I uncovered in my research was that musical rarity, which I found to arise from two primary, often overlapping, foundations: financial and symbolic.

Financial value derived from the fact that rare records often had high potential resale value, and in this way the music, and the musical object, was valued as a form of investment. However, rare music was also involved in a form of symbolic value, where value was derived from music as a form of cultural capital as well as a resource for identity formation. These two notions represent one set of non-exclusive poles of value, and users existed somewhere between these poles. The position of users within these poles was often discernable from the ways in which they chose to mobilise the cultural capital resident in their music collections. Some members of my sample valued the collection in terms of a set of rare objects which, in turn, contained music which was also rare. At times, this led to clear decisions not to digitise and share their music as audio files. This type of user placed a particular value upon the musical object which was not always shared by all members of the sample. This is not to suggest that these users did not appreciate deeply the music which they chose to collect, but rather that this appreciation was also tied up with an awareness of the musical object as the sole source and the exclusively owned objectification of this music. This type of object valuation contrasted with the attitude of other users who chose to post rare music on mp3 blogs and to share it on the Yahoogroup, in spite of the negative impact this might have upon the financial value of the original artifact. In this way, posting and sharing music operated as a public mobilisation of cultural capital, and this mobilisation operated as a form of self presentation, and was shown to have consequences for identity. However, within this
sample, there were those who still valued the object as a collectable and financially valuable form, believing that digitizing their collections would not harm the financial value of the original hardcopy. For this later group, value placement was therefore clearly bifurcated, with separate forms of value being placed upon the object and the music.

Discussion of the ways in which users shared music via the internet served to reveal another form of value, more closely tied to the notion of community and sociality. This form of value drew upon a notion of reciprocity, whereby music was shared out of a sense of responsibility and gratitude, forming the bedrock to modes of sociality and community building online. Music here was valued as a form of currency, freely given and received in the overt gift economy of the Yahoogroup, and the less obvious gift economy of mp3 blogs. Within this, and especially in the case of mp3 blogs, music was shared not only out of a sense of responsibility to other music users, but also out of a sense of responsibility to the artist, whereby users saw the act of (re)distributing music as a form of unofficial promotion on behalf of the artist.

A consideration of the above reveals the different ways in which music was valued and mobilised within my sample, illuminating some fundamental cleavages between the different aspects of music which were valued. Near the heart of value allocation lies the musical object, which, at one pole, is valued as the sole and owned embodiment of music (especially in the case of rare music), and, at the other, is valued primarily as a source for further copies of music. Once music is replicated, into either digital or hard-copy, and is shared by the user, it then begins to circulate in a different economy, with different notions of value. This leads to the conclusion that the musical object can be valued as part of the music; can be valued quite separately from the music, or can be seen as completely irrelevant to the music, depending upon the particular orientation of the user.

Musical format can be seen as operating throughout the above, as it is the format in which music is instantiated which affords the different music related activities which I have considered. For example, it is only through the technology of the digital audio format, and associated internet based resources, that music can be shared between one
and many in such a direct way. Thus, the insights from this chapter address my second research question, revealing how recent technological advancements have afforded the opening of new social spaces around the music of sharing, enabling new social uses and meanings for music. However, format is also significant for other reasons, and my findings reveal how, through the scarcity of rare music, value, both financial and symbolic, is locked within the object. My findings further reveal how the replication of the music, resident within that object, allows the dual symbolic meanings associated with musical taste - i.e. as cultural capital and resources for identity formation - to be mobilised in the public and semi-public spaces of the Yahoogroup and mp3 blogs.

In this chapter I constructed a typology of musical value, encompassing both the music itself and the musical object. Firstly, music and the musical object can be valued for symbolic reasons, either as an element of identity formation or as a form of cultural capital. Secondly, and relating primarily to the musical object, music can be valued for financial reasons, often as a form of investment. Thirdly, both music and the musical object can be valued in terms of their rarity, a form of value which potentially straddles both symbolic and financial value. Finally, music and the musical object can be understood to have a communal value, whereby music is valued as a way of enriching electronically mediated sharing networks. These different orders of music related value are non exclusive, and were often found to co-exist in complicated ways amongst members of my sample.

**Chapter Five** considered the complexly negotiated area of copyright infringement, on the one hand, and respect for copyright on the other. Decisions regarding these issues were found to rest upon various and shifting notion of the Romantic Author and the music industry.

My findings revealed that the acquisition of music through purchase (i.e. upholding copyright) was motivated, at least partially and at times exclusively, by utilitarian reasons

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Music is of course often valued by the individual for its 'intrinsic' musical worth. However, as this is a question of the individual's musical taste, I include it within symbolic value as it is bound up with issues of identity and may also operates as a form of cultural capital.

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connected to obtaining a set of acoustic and physical goods. However, there were often other co-existent reasons for purchase, related to understandings of the Romantic Author. While purchase was often motivated by a desire to support the artist, at times this desire was revealed to be connected to the size and commercial success of the artist in question, a consideration which also drew upon a notion of the record industry. My data revealed that music purchased from small and striving artists was sometimes understood as a method of supporting the artist, while the output of more commercially successful artists were acquired through means which infringed upon copyright. The justification for infringement in these cases was based upon a negative view of the record industry and a belief that such infringement was harmful only to the record industry and not the artist. While motivations for purchase were found to be based, at times, upon the desire to support striving artists, this reason was also used as a justification for copyright infringement.

This was most clearly seen amongst mp3 bloggers, who often posted music from obscure and striving bands and artists, justifying these copyright infringements on the basis that they were providing a form of unofficial promotion on behalf of these artists. Further forms of justification for copyright infringement were based upon the downloading of music which was no longer commercially available and downloading music as a sampling method and a precursor to possible purchase.

The findings in this chapter key into the third of my research questions, as they illuminate some of the different ways in which value is assigned to music and the musical format on which it resides. Significantly, my data revealed that the act of purchase itself is valued, and can be understood as a relationship building transaction between artist and fan. This shows how recent changes in technology - which have made purchase only one of a number of ways of obtaining music – have recast the relationship between the music industry, the artist and the individual. To add to the typology of value surrounding music, my findings in this chapter revealed that the act of purchase is valued either for pragmatic reasons (i.e. as a method of acquiring material and musical goods), or for supportive reasons (i.e. as a method of supporting the artist (dependent upon the
commercial success of the artist and their relationship to the music industry)). Equally, the act of sharing music via digital audio files and hard-copy can also be valued for supportive reasons (depending again upon the commercial success of the artist and their relationship to the music industry) and for pragmatic reasons (as a way to ‘try before you buy’). However, sharing music may also be valued for ideological reasons (when it is seen as a rebuke to the record industry).

My data revealed that complicated ethical considerations about copyright are undertaken by users, and as such my findings key into current legal, economic and academic debates which are raging over intellectual property (Vaidhyanathan, 2001). The moment when use of digital audio files as a means of sharing music over the internet became a mainstream phenomenon marked a fundamental change for the record industry, suddenly it had lost control of its product. To a certain extent, this rebel element has now been assimilated by the music industry, and through such services as iTunes and Napster, mp3s are beginning to generate income for music content producers and license holders.

However, despite the music industry’s increasingly desperate attempts to create scarcity in the midst of abundance, through technologies such as digital rights management, the mp3 and related audio compression formats are still being traded and shared in massive numbers. Whilst there are many arguments surrounding the rights and wrongs of copyright (for discussion see Vaidhyanathan, 2001) these are largely outside the scope of the present study. However, my findings, like those of Marshall (2005) and Lessig (1999), reveal that the simplistic, and somewhat demonised, image of audio ‘pirates’ constructed by organization such as the British Phonographic Institution do not sit easily with the members of my sample who infringed upon copyright, nor the complex ethical judgments they engaged in.

In Chapter Six, I went onto investigate the ways in which different technological devices (including both the musical format and devices on which to play them) afforded particular interactions with music, which in turn served to structure a variety of listening encounters. The investigations I undertook in this chapter enabled me to address the first
two of my research questions, demonstrating how emerging listening practices intersect with existing ones; and how these listening practices impact upon issue of identity and the social uses to which music is put.

The moment of music listening is the area around which DeNora (2003, 2000) constructs the majority of her socio-musical analysis, and, as such, it is within this Chapter Six of my thesis that I can most clearly situate my work in relation to DeNora’s. Here, I investigated playing practices and how they were structured technologically, discussing the impact upon user’s modes of listening. Within this discussion, I investigated the practices of song skipping, DJing, random play and play-listing, all of which I argued led to forms of what Adorno refers to as atomised listening (i.e. listening to individual elements of music rather than entire musical works). However, at the same time in which songs were being atomised through processes of musical decontextualisation, they were also, to a greater or lesser extent, concurrently being recontextualised into linear musical narratives through these practices. By examining the criteria by which these recontextualisations were formed, as well investigating listening practices surrounding the album, I developed the concept of musical flow, which I argue represents the underlying syntax of listening. In essence, musical flow refers to the musical ‘fit’ between songs, the way in which users found songs to ‘flow’ from the one to the next in congruent and aesthetically logical manners. I also identified the concept of flow-based-listening, referring to musical encounters underpinned by musical flow. Although manifest in a wide variety of forms, instances of flow-based-listening were widespread throughout my sample and represented one of the underlying criteria for the emergence of pleasurable, focused listening encounters. In some cases flow-based-listening was achieved through structural forms of album listening. However, flow-based-listening was also pursued through more reflexive forms of song choice, variously enabled through technologies of music reproduction, which I refer to modes of individuated structured listening.

I showed how this form of listening had implications for mood maintenance, identity and DeNora’s concept of music as a ‘technology of the self’. In her thesis, DeNora draws
upon theories of identity and the concept of ‘aesthetic reflexivity’, stating that in late modernity there has been a rise of ‘aestheticization as a strategy for preserving identity and social boundaries under anonymous and often crowded conditions of existence’ (51). DeNora explores how music operates in this respect, allowing listeners to shift mood and energy levels ‘as perceived situations dictate, or as part of ‘care for the self’” (53). Especially in relation to music and memory, DeNora argues that identity is created through a presentation not only of self to others, but also of self to self. Music therefore becomes a way of saying ‘I am here’ or rather, ‘I am, hear’. It is within these self presentations that DeNora locates music’s identity forming properties, also arguing that identity is reaffirmed through real time listening encounters. DeNora’s arguments about the relationship between music, music choice and mood find many parallels in Bull’s studies of Walkman and, more recently, iPod usage. In his research, Bull (2000) also highlights the ways in which music is used as a means to reflect or transport mood, a process which he refers to as ‘the management of cognitive contingency’ (43). Bull provides many examples of the ways in which music listening through personal stereos enables listeners to ‘kickstart’ (46) required moods, control thoughts, manage the gaze and regain control over time, amongst other things.

My findings reveal technology’s role in these potentially identity forming and reinforcing musical choices. For example, traditional technologies such as CD and vinyl (in relation to which many of DeNora’s findings arise) afford the user only relatively limited, linear and potentially time consuming options when it comes to choosing the order and combination in which music can be listened to. Digital audio file technologies, in contrast, allow not only for the composition of play-lists, but also for real time, moment to moment, mood forming and mood setting choices to be made. Digital technologies, therefore, extend the ease and fluidity with which musical flows can be created extending the possibility for the management of aesthetic reflexivity and the work of music related identity creation and reaffirmation. These findings are also in-line with Bull’s (2006), who finds that iPod users often create playlists to suit a variety of different moods and occasions, often choosing to flick through these playlists in order to find music to suit their current moods, through a form of ‘mediated spontaneity’ (138).
Beyond this, however, my findings also revealed how technology itself was drawn into these processes in very specific and intimate ways. Both DeNora and Bull draw attention to the depth of knowledge and expertise which music users employ in making musical choices, and how these choices allowed them both to reflect or transport their current moods. My findings reveals, that in the case of random listening, technology itself becomes implicated in the choice of music, through a process of delegation, whereby users were led to a better understandings of their own mood. Random play therefore draws technology itself into the mood-setting, mood-matching and mood-shifting which occurs through music listening. Therefore, technology does not simply structure the listening experience, but is also actively drawn into the very selection of music and, as such, the management of aesthetic reflexivity through music. Again, these findings are in line with Bull’s (2006) who found that, through use of the shuffle function, iPod users were transported emotionally and often unexpectedly while listening.

In Chapter Seven, I considered the ways in which the technologies of music reproduction themselves (both the formats and the devices on which to play them) were understood and valued by members of my sample. This discussion enabled me to address issues related to all four of my research questions. However, the key themes from this chapter which I wish to develop here relate most closely final of these research questions, i.e. issues which help explain the relationship between music and its material base.

In the first instance, I found that the materiality of physical music formats helped to anchor and fix the meaning of the music contained upon them through a series of peritextual cues. However, materiality was also important because it afforded high degrees of sensory authentification, thereby making physical formats, and the practices associated with them, seem more ‘real’, authentic and trustworthy than digital audio formats, which were understood as inferior, copies and untrustworthy. Furthermore, in the practice of DJing, materiality also afforded high degrees of tactile manipulation of the record during playback, a fact which increased the degree to which listeners felt connected to the music being played and the music event itself. Finally, perceptions about
the permanence of material formats made them more valued as a form of collecting music, as they were able to provide enduring and embodied indexes of identity through the music collection.

I am now ready to draw together my findings to offer a new concept regarding the specific impact which technology has upon music. This concept will further explain the relationship between music and materiality, but will also offer a new way of understanding the mutually constructive dynamic which exists between music and technology. My departure point in this will be a consideration of one final aspect of substantive findings.

Many members of my sample made clear conceptual distinctions between analogue and digital sound sources. Whilst these distinctions resonated with ideas about the authenticity of analogue and the mediated nature of digital, they were also often tied up with notions of sound quality, what the music sounded like, whether this was felt by the individual to be perceptible or not. This provides the first point in the development of my new concept. These acoustic embodiments of music clearly arise from properties innate to the particular technologies of sound reproduction under use. The acoustic embodiment of music is therefore determined by the technology through which the music is being played. However, this extends beyond the issue of analogue and digital signals to the very set up and nature of the technology through which the music is being played. The quality of speakers (or otherwise), the graphic equaliser settings, the crackle of vinyl, the hiss of tape, all of these things also form a very real part of the technological reproduction of music.

DeNora has shown that the meaning of music does not exist ‘out there’, is not resident in the text, unambiguously to be read, but rather arises from textual, contextual and subjective factors. I wish to take this idea further: recorded music itself does not exist ‘out there’.
Music, its tones, tinctures, volume and fidelity, is formed by the specific technological architecture in place at the moment of reproduction. In fact, music is not reproduced; it is in fact recreated every time it is played. The actual ‘authentic’ music exists nowhere, because the technology through which it is played co-creates that music, bringing it to its acoustic embodiment. This is best explored through metaphor.

We can think of musical format as a form of musical notation. Notation is not the music, it is rather a textual repository of the music, containing all the information necessary for the music to be played. Format exists very much in this way. However, not only does format carry the music, it also writes some of that music. The mp3 bit-rate, the slight warp of the piece of vinyl, the perfectly crisp digital encoding of the CD also forms part of the final nature of the music. If format is notation, then it must be read in order for the music to be played, and this is where the particular technology which the music is being played upon gains relevance. The metaphor can be extended, for, in the same way that the nature of a particular performance of music will depend upon the musician and the instrument, so the acoustic embodiment of the music will depend upon the technology employed to play it. The metaphor, therefore, stands. The format stands for the notation; the technology for the musician and the instrument on which he or she is playing, and the sound quality for the performance. It is perhaps no coincidence that these technologies are known as players of particular formats (CD player, record player, mp3 player).

This is the first stage of a concept which I refer to as the music-listener-technology dynamic. The second stage illustrates how technology not only determines the acoustic embodiment of music, but also informs how that music is received and understood. This is illustrated in findings in Chapter Seven, considered above, which show how the meaning of music is influenced by its material embodiment. Here, I considered how the physicality of traditional media, with all of their associated artwork and informational cues, served to anchor the meaning of music and contextualising it into a wider universe of musical and genre associations. Simply put, the material helps define the musical. However, the music-listener-technology dynamic is mutually constitutive, so while technology helps to form the acoustic embodiment and meaning of music, so too does
music inform the meanings of the technology. This can be seen in the case of music collection, but especially so in the case of redundant collection, where the meanings of the music were transferred onto the material object. In this way, the music also forms the meaning of the material on which is recorded.

There is now one final element to add to this mutually constitutive music-listener-technology dynamic: the role of the listener. DeNora (2000) illustrated how music does not, of itself, have an ‘innate’ meaning, but that meaning arises from the interplay of textual, contextual and subjective factors through a form of ‘human music interaction’ (33). In her theories, the role of the listener is therefore central to the creation of musical meaning. My findings also echo this, but my substantive focus differs from DeNora’s. Where DeNora (2003, 2000) illustrates how musical meaning arise through the listener’s articulation of music with other things (social encounters, personal history etc), I illustrate primarily the importance of the role of technology in this same process of meaning creation. The two-fold role of the listener in the music-listener-technology dynamic is therefore thus. In the case of individuated structured listening, the listener’s technology afforded choices of music enable the creation of new musical meanings. Here, the listener decontextualises and recontextualises music into new narrative flows of music, thereby creating new forms of intra-musical meaning. Thus, the choices of music made by the listener play a very real part in meaning creation around music. This is one aspect of the two-fold role of the listener within the music-listener-technology dynamic, the other is as follows. Earlier, I stated that it is the specific properties of the technology upon which the music is played that determine the acoustic embodiment of recorded music. While this is true, technologies of music reproduction all offer the user further avenues for manipulating the sound of music, to a greater or less extent. Therefore, it is the listener who, through functions such as volume control and graphic equalisation, co-creates the final sonic embodiment of music. However, here also the relationship is co-creative, for just as the listener configures the music acoustically through these function, so too does the music configure the listener emotionally, or at least has the potential to.
The various relationship between music, technology and the listener which I have explored in this thesis, and synthesised in music-listener-technology dynamic, finds resonance in Adorno’s (1927) description of the record player:

The turntable... is comparable to the potter’s wheel: a tone-mass is formed upon them both, and for each the material is pre-existing. But the finished tone/clay container that is produced in this matter remains empty. It only filled by the hearer (275).

While the music technology-dynamic-illustrates how music and technology produce one another, and the role of the listener in this, the relationship between music and technology is also implicated, to a greater or less extent, with every music related practice I have considered in this thesis and summarised in this discussion. Throughout the course of this study, I demonstrated how the affordances of specific technological embodiment of music have significantly impacted upon issues ranging from the relationship between music and identity, to the social uses to which music is put, both within and without the domestic environment. DeNora (2006) highlights the need for research into the relationship between music and technology, stating that

These [...] questions [...] call for ethnographic, applied and action-based investigations and the future of socio-musical-technical research [...] is an area which promises much for our understandings of the musical bases of being... (32).

In this thesis, I hope, in some small way, to have answered this call.
Chapter 9: Reprise

There is virtually no aspect of listening, nor music related practice, that is not affected by technology. The way people acquire, share, store, dispose of, listen to, experience and understand music, and all the social aspects associated with this, are bound up with the technological mode of music's reproduction. This is the conclusion which I have pursued and illustrated throughout the course of this thesis.

However, technology is never static, and we should always expect it to change. As music technologies continue to emerge and evolve we should therefore expect the relationships which listeners have to music, and their music collections (in whatever form these might take) also to change. How will listening continue to evolve? Will there come a time when it changes in ways more fundamental than it has already? Edison captured sound to object, digital audio files released sound from object, in one sense at least. As digital audio files become more common place, perhaps the long held relationship between music and materiality will fade, decrease in importance, become a technological memory to be marveled at in museums ('did people ever really listen to music like that?'). Yet for now, at least, the importance of the object clearly lingers.

Indeed, recent reports suggest a resurgence of interest in the material aspects of music appreciation, as sales of vinyl singles in the year 2004-2005 have exceeded one million for the first time in seven years (British Phonographic Institute, 2006). Might this mark the beginning of a return to object based music collections? Only time will tell.

I wish to end this thesis with some final, and purely personal, reflections on the subject of music and musical experience.

In this thesis I have attempted to unpick the different aspects of musical experience, illustrating here the role of technology and its influences upon the social and identity related uses to which it is put. This drew and builds upon a wide body of literature which
considered the issue of musical experience from a wide range of angles, exploring and helping explain its multi-faceted nature. However, even when considering the insights afforded by this literature, and the outputs of my own small contribution to this field, I feel there is still something unexplained, perhaps unexplainable, at work within music.

The tone, rhythm and pitch of music enter through the ear of the listener, who then takes this information, processing it in conjunction with his or her own subjective position and the social and technological contexts he or she finds themselves in, to produce sometimes profound and transcendent moments of experience. There is alchemy at work here. While I do not feel that musical experience is ‘utterly obscure’ as Adorno once put it, and although sociology has gone a long way to demystifying this experience, I feel that music’s inner heart might always remain secret. Secret, but never silent. And it is at this point that sociological enquiry ceases, and listening succeeds.
Bibliography


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Appendix A

Sample Structure – record store

Record store

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Place of interview</th>
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<td>Home</td>
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</tr>
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*recruited at home visit
### Sample structure - Yahoogroup

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### Sample structure - Mp3 bloggers

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<th>Place/method of interview</th>
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</table>
APPENDIX B

Interview guide

Social and personal aspects of music use
Begin all interviews by asking interviewees about their music use throughout a typical day.

Issues to probe: What tasks is music performed in conjunction with? What devices are used for listening? How are these devices used? How do interviewees feel about these devices?

Format and the collection
Ask interviewees to me through their record collections. What different musical formats are in their collection?

Issues to probe: Do you have a preferred musical format? Why is this your preferred musical format? Are there any musical format which you don't like? Why don't you like them? Are there sound quality issues? Request to see prized parts of the collection. Why are these parts prized?

Music acquisition practices
When did you the interviewee last acquire music? Through what means? What is the interviewees 'usual' method of acquiring music?

Issues to probe: how do you interviewees feel about buying/downloading music? Are there any legal/ethical/practical issues here? What, if any, services are used to download music? How are these services experienced?
Questions specific to each sample group:

**Record store** – how often do you visit the record store? is there anything you like/dislike about the store? Why do you choose to shop at this store?

**Yahoogroup** – how did you find out about/get involved with the Yahoogroup? How are you involved with the Yahoogroup? Why did you join the Yahoogroup? Do you share or trade music over the yahoogroup?

**Mp3 bloggers** – how did you get involved with mp3 blogging? What do you get out of mp3 blogging? How do you decide what music to post?