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# You should have been there, man: Live music, DIY content and online communities

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**Abstract**
In terms of technological change and participatory media, the phenomenon of taking and sharing videos of live music events offers an insightful case study for discussing the individual production of online content and interpersonal interactions on social media sites. We use interviews with YouTube users who post videos of live music events to investigate motivations for the capture of personal video recordings, the protocols for sharing of videos, and the roles videos play in online fan activities. Analysis of interviews identifies key motivations for capture and sharing, and exposes tensions between short- and long-term goals of these activities. Further, the results expose differences in attitudes, motivations and practices between mainstream and 'indie' concert goers. These findings have implications for understanding participation on social media sites, as well as broader issues of online communities, fan cultures and individual production of media.

**Keywords**
fan culture, live music, online communities, social media, YouTube

## Introduction

If the enduring image of concert-going in the 1960s was enthusiastic attendees waving their lighters in approval of an acoustic guitar set, in the 2000s, the prevalent view of live music could very well be a sea of music lovers with their mobile phones raised to capture video for rapid uploading to a variety of social media sites. The infusion of personal technology at events like concerts points to a number of tensions related to the use of

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technology in social settings, with purposes that span the personal/private and the social/public. This research seeks to understand motivations for and practices of taking and sharing videos of live music events. We explore this topic in the context of technological practices in everyday life, personal information, media production and online community. At the crux of these forces and concerns are issues of how people participate in online communities, and the contingent economies of media, time and interpersonal interactions.

Our particular focus is the phenomenon of taking videos of live music events and posting them on YouTube as an exemplar of live event capture and social media use. Deriving from boyd and Ellison's (2007) definition of social networking sites, social media can be defined by two important characteristics: first, the posting of lasting content in public settings, and second, the visible and durable identity and recognized contribution by authors (Naaman, 2009). On YouTube, users upload videos to a personal channel, controlling the organization, description and access for their content. The channel represents a user's personal media library, and allows other YouTube users to find and interact with content. YouTube thus enables multiple purposes for contributors, including personal archiving (Cha et al., 2007), identity formation and signaling (Donath, 2008), as well as social interaction (Lange, 2007) and information sharing (Huberman et al., 2009). We view the particular instance of live music videos posted on YouTube as an entry point into still-unfolding theoretical discussions on significant changes in content production, and related debates as to the socio-cultural impacts of these alterations.

After reviewing relevant literature and theory on social media and the individual creation of content, we outline the research objectives for this work, and provide details on the methodological approach for interviews. We then present key findings from analysis of the interviews, and discuss theoretical implications of this research as related to online fan communities, user motivations and sharing economies. We argue that do-it-yourself (DIY) YouTube videos generate tension between increased labor in the moment of attending concerts balanced by an archival artifact for later reference; are valued as a replication not only of the music recorded, but of the experience of attending shows; and offer a point of connection within fan communities.

## Background

This section draws on research related to social media to frame behavior of YouTube users in terms of motivations for participation. After reviewing some of the previous studies on YouTube users, more theoretical works are used to consider and analyze issues of agency and production, community and interpersonal interactions around media.

### *Prior research*

Of the more design-oriented work on YouTube and social media sites, the most relevant studies to this project emphasize motivations for participation and use of applications from an everyday or leisure perspective. Haridakis and Hanson (2009) used quantitative

methods to examine psychological features that are predictive indicators of watching and producing YouTube videos. Biel and Gatica-Perez (2009) also examined participation, focusing on the use of roles (director, comedian, guru, musician and reporter) that YouTube allows users to adopt and their effect on production. Similarly interested in production of content, Huberman et al. (2009) used quantitative analysis of contributions within the YouTube community, arguing that attention drives content contribution. Taking a mixed-methods approach, Rotman et al. (2009) combined content analysis of YouTube video blogs and structural analysis of user networks to examine the concept of community as fostered on YouTube. Their work showed that although users' sense of community constitutes an important facet of producing and using content, the actual relationships traced through structural analysis are somewhat random in nature. Shared by all these studies is an interest in looking at motivations for using social media sites, where psychological measures, profile metrics and upload contributions were used to suggest explanations for behavior. To gain a more in-depth and nuanced perspective on this behavior, however, it becomes necessary to talk to individual users about their use of social media sites in particular contexts. In turn, the experiences of producing DIY content can be interpreted through theoretical constructs emerging from discussions of shifts in the technological and social production of media.

## *Theoretical frameworks*

Our work builds on an extensive line of research that considers the significance of incorporating technology and media into practices of everyday life, online social interaction, and the maintenance of social ties. This discussion of theory begins with work that focuses on the ways in which participation in online communities affects critical constructions of labor. We then discuss scholarship that focuses on the political, legal, and social implications of technological change in the creation of media content. These theories feed into our analysis of DIY versus professional content, constructs of authorship and agency, and the social interactions taking place in online communities.

*New media and alterations of labor.* For critical theorists, shifts in access to the creation of content are alternately a source of excitement and of complication. Representing the former, Jenkins (2006) has explored participatory media in fan culture, seeing a radical reworking of access for everyday people to create content. This follows a larger turn in cultural studies theory that sees media consumption as an active process of decoding messages (Hall, 1980) and as a way of problematizing a construction of mass audiences (Williams, 1961). While the opening up of the means of media production is invigorating in Jenkins' interpretation, for Terranova (2000), the digital economy is one that has expanded so rapidly precisely because it has exploited the free labor of individual subjects. Terranova used the example of open source applications to critique the reinscription of individual productions of technology within capitalist structures of profit and control. While Terranova's critique engaged debates of authorship over media content, Cover (2006) has argued that digital environments promoting interactivity – such as YouTube – have 'fostered a greater capacity and a greater interest by audiences to change, alter and manipulate a text or a textual narrative to seek co-participation in authorship

and to thus redefine the traditional author-text-audience relationship' (p. 140). For Cover, alterations in access to tools of media creation center on refiguring the construct of authorship, entailing considerations of labor, ownership and control. These facets relate to van Dijck's (2009) discussion of agency, which in the context of media refers to the extent of personal control over the creation of content. van Dijck argued that it is critical to think of agency in a complex, multi-faceted way that takes into account media content, social context and technological affordances. Thus the production of videos of live music events on YouTube by fans should not only be seen as a cultural phenomenon interesting for its technological newness, but also because this technology carries with it implications for how we construct notions of participation, labor, authorship and agency. These tensions shape our research interest in understanding how individual YouTube users think of and describe the work that goes into taking and sharing videos of live music within online communities.

*Gift economies and interpersonal play.* The proliferation of DIY content has also inspired debate on the interpersonal interactions tied to social media applications. Less pessimistically than Terranova's (2000) reading of gift economies as exploitative, Currah (2007) has interpreted resource sharing as being generated by the marketplace's inability to keep pace with demand for personalized media, where the individual production of media and information can be thought of as a gift exchange. Lessig (2008) engaged similar themes in his discussion of gifts as part of economies in which media technology allows individuals to create and share their work in exclusively non-monetary ways (p. 147). The constructs of gift and sharing economies describe the social contours of sites like YouTube, where users post content in order to share, without expectations of tangible compensation.

In terms of social media's socio-cultural implications, Donath (2008) interpreted online interaction through the lens of signal theory. Donath argued that the time devoted to sharing and interacting with content online is interpreted as signaling a commitment to the maintenance of social relationships. For YouTube users, mechanisms of signaling (for example, posting content and commenting on videos) operate as expressions of care and interest in a person or a topic. Following this theme of the interpersonal importance of social media use, Lange's (2007) investigation of social interactions that take place around YouTube videos used the notion of media circuits to explain the dynamics fostered by participation in online venues. Within this analysis, YouTube videos form part of a chain of technology-riddled correspondence, in which social ties are alternately established, reinforced or broken through collective interaction with objects like videos. In fan communities, Lange's approach provides a framework for understanding the value of access to and interaction with online videos of live music.

Common to these theories is an interest in the ability of individual users to create and interact with media in new and constantly evolving ways. We view Jenkins' (2006) discussion of convergence as a starting point for interpreting YouTube videos in terms of DIY politics of production and community, and as part of emerging changes in concepts of authorship and agency. In terms of the interpersonal import of these media, following Lange (2007), videos of live music serve as media circuits within a fan community, in which users use YouTube-specific tools to signal various social messages (Donath,

2008). At the same time, the provision of videos as resources of enjoyment for other users positions these channels as part of a gift economy (Lessig, 2008), where participants devote time and energy to creating sets of media artifacts to be used by others, without expectations of direct compensation. We return to these theories throughout our analysis of interviews with YouTube users who posted content from live music events, grounding these theoretical conceptions in the narratives of participants' experiences taking and sharing videos from live music events.

## Research agenda

The research agenda that follows from these theoretical constructs addresses issues of motivation and participation on social media sites in the particular context of concerts. To understand these activities and how they relate to the theories laid out above, we use in-depth interviews with YouTube users, looking to gain insight into daily practices of technology and media in personal and social contexts. Informed by the theoretical work discussed above, key questions guiding this research include:

- What are the motivations for recording videos at concerts and sharing them online?
- What are the practices used to take and share videos from live music events on YouTube?
- What roles do these videos and the people who produce them play in online communities?

Answering these questions will produce social, legal and theoretical insights for the implications of paradigm shifts emphasizing individual (as opposed to corporate or institutional) contributions of media. In addition, addressing these research questions will help determine how both musicians and fans can take advantage of the emergent technologies to build relationships, promote shared interests and maintain online communities.

## Methodology

This project takes a qualitative approach to developing an in-depth understanding of the stakeholders, motivations and community functions of DIY media. To locate participants for interviews, researchers searched on YouTube for videos posted from a set of specific concerts in the New York Metropolitan area during spring 2010: a Muse concert in Madison Square Garden (a large stadium in Manhattan), and a set of indie concerts[1] at two small venues (Cake Shop in Manhattan's Lower East Side, and Maxwell's in Hoboken, New Jersey). These venues were chosen as representative of mainstream and independent rock shows, where the difference in venue size was intended to help determine behavioral discrepancies in motivations for taking videos, fan culture and technological protocols. Grouping participants in this way allows us to identify tendencies among fans who attend large venues (typically featuring well-known, mainstream bands) versus small venues (typically featuring less well-known, independent bands); in using

content from both large and small venues to locate participants, we sought to address differences in the experience of taking videos at huge arenas versus intimate concert halls, as well as investigating any differences in the value or popularity on YouTube of videos taken at large versus small venues. In this sense, the distinction of mainstream versus indie fans is less about a genre of music and more about the popularity of the bands, as indicated by the size of the venues selected.

After identifying a set of YouTube videos for these shows, e-mails were sent to users soliciting their participation. In total, 55 YouTube members were contacted, of which ten agreed to participate for a response rate of 18 percent. By using YouTube to identify and contact participants, our recruiting strategy reflects an interest in studying not just concert goers and not just social media users, but people who attend shows, take videos and upload them to YouTube. The ten interviews conducted included five participants from the indie shows and five from the Muse concert. The participant details are listed in Table 1, split by those who represent the indie shows (the top five rows, pseudonyms beginning with the letters A–E) and the mainstream show (the bottom five rows, with names beginning with letters F–J). Interviews varied in length from 60 to 90 minutes, were semi-structured, and covered participants' musical interests, recent concert attendance and general experiences taking videos at shows. Interviews were conducted in spring and summer of 2010, with six (three of them mainstream users) taking place face to face, and four (two mainstream) via online chat. The same interview protocol was followed in both face-to-face and virtual interviews. Informed by ethnographic interview methods that utilize media objects as part of the interview process (Spradley, 1979), participants were asked to discuss specific YouTube videos they had posted to their channels, and to describe the process of taking and posting the videos online. Additionally, participants were asked to contrast experiences at shows where they had opted not to take videos, to discuss reactions of crowd members to the process of recording live shows, and to describe motivations for filming concerts in general as well as decisions to film specific moments of a show. Interviews were transcribed and individually coded. Taking a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss, 1990), emergent themes were extracted and analyzed to identify similarities across and differences between videos from mainstream and underground shows. We used a constant comparison method (p. 73) to develop themes that are described at length in the next session. Quotes from participant interviews are used to illustrate these themes, and Table two shows references to each theme from participants. Thus, quotes are used throughout the findings section to provide a grounded depth to our analysis, and the table indicates breadth across our sample.

## Findings

This section is organized around several major themes that surfaced from the interviews. We first discuss the experience of taking videos at shows and then attitudes towards DIY videos, particularly in comparison to professional videos. Next, we discuss motivations for taking videos at live music events and relationships between YouTube users, other fans and bands. Finally, we discuss themes of ownership and authenticity related to media content.

**Table 1.** Participant details.

| Participant | Age | Sex | Years on YouTube | # of videos uploaded (approx.) | Total # of views for videos (approx.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A**aron | 24 | M | 3 | 50 | 48,000 |
| **B**ina | 35 | F | 3 | 200 | 63,000 |
| **C**raig | 29 | M | 3 | 20 | 77,000 |
| **D**an | 46 | M | 3 | 650 | 370,000 |
| **E**ric | 29 | M | 1 | 5 | 700 |
| **F**rances | 24 | M | 4 | 20 | 17,000 |
| **G**ina | 18 | F | 3 | 30 | 2,500 |
| **H**eidi | 18 | F | 4 | 30 | 215,000 |
| **I**saac | 24 | M | 3 | 40 | 12,000 |
| **J**acky | 42 | F | 3 | 600 | 4,680,000 |

*Note*: Pseudonyms used and figures rounded to ensure confidentiality. Participants A through E (also noted by the name initial), are from the indie shows, and the latter participants are from the mainstream show.

## *Experience of taking videos*

Practices of video recording during live music concerts have a direct effect on how music fans experience concerts. In this section, we provide descriptions of the phenomenological experience of attending shows in terms of media, technology, fan culture and music itself.

*'That tiny little rectangular digital box'.* A point of general agreement among participants was that as a process, recording reduces enjoyment of the show. Heidi stated that when taking videos, 'the show ends up passing me by in a whirl, I don't really get to sing along or enjoy the music. And then I forget it all really fast.' Aaron provided a similar description in his assertion that

> I'd rather enjoy the scene and the music than worry about documenting it … watching something thru an LCD screen removes you completely … from the moment. Your mind is focused on all that happens within that tiny little rectangular digital box, instead of the surroundings.

Participants offered differing viewpoints on the presence of *other* video-takers at concerts. For Eric, seeing others recording in the audience effectively negated the need for him to tape: 'If my friend is filming, I'm putting [my camera] down, I'm enjoying the show. There's no need for [my video].' On the other hand, Bina found herself wanting to encourage others to record, describing a stigma attached to recording at shows, which she felt could be reduced if people were less apologetic about video recording. These comments suggest that the experience of recording leads to a sense of personal removal from the show, and that crowd interaction can play a role in determining what people capture. These descriptions also point to the ways that recording at a show can characterize a person as being a particular kind of fan. It should also be noted that the experience of videotaping at larger venues was reported to be different from smaller venues: indie

fans pointed to reduced security and more intimate settings as advantages of indie shows, while mainstream fans mentioned the more elaborate staging and larger fan bases as impetuses for recording at mainstream shows.

*Developing routines and using intuition.* Related to these descriptions of how videotaping affects the experience of a concert, participants described different tactics of managing enjoyment of shows while taking videos, which in some cases were quite regulated. Craig referred to his recording habits specifically as a 'routine' that he consistently follows, explaining that 'I usually like to video tape the first song and if I can hear the first notes of a favorite song of mine I try to video tape that song live as well.' An incredibly dedicated filmer, Jacky remarked that if she could, she would record the entirety of every show she attends. (Jacky listed battery life and venue security as obstacles to constant taping at shows.) Frances also reported a fairly rigid approach to capturing video, explaining that she only aims to record one song per show, her 'personal favorite' from each band, operating under the assumption that these songs will be 'the ones that I think other people would be interested in seeing' on YouTube. Isaac reported a similar strategy, explaining, 'I basically record the songs I love the most, exclude the songs that I think are just okay.' Decisions about what to record are thus informed both by personal preferences and (related) assumptions about what will be of interest to YouTube viewers.

In contrast to the fastidiousness described above, Dan described himself as being casual in terms of making decisions about what to capture ('bits and pieces, not the entire show') but stated that he prefers to record at least some portion of every show he attends, because he 'hate[s] to go to an event and not record anything.' Heidi went a bit further, asserting that not being able to bring cameras to shows 'physically hurt' her and jokingly referring to her habits as 'OCD' (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) in nature. In a similar way, Bina attends a show with the intention of recording a significant portion of it, typically the first song, then taking a break 'to take in the scene' and then making sure to record any favorite songs, or in the case of a band she has captured previously, songs that she has not already recorded. Eric was perhaps the least regimented in his description of choosing specific moments to capture, referring to it as a matter of 'intuition.' These habits were individual in nature, and did not seem to correlate with indie versus mainstream show attendance. As a whole, these habitual practices can be thought of as coping strategies for mitigating a dislike of the experience of recording with motivations for capturing and sharing video.

## *Less cold, more quality*

Given these points of convergence and divergence among show goers about the experience of taking videos, we now address factors that determine a video's quality or appeal to YouTube users. When asked to discuss their habits as far as searching for videos, several interviewees expressed a preference for DIY recordings over professionally shot videos. For Aaron, this stemmed from a perspective that 'the best videos are the ones where the band would have no idea they're being filmed, they're so one-tracked about performing to their fans that someone could throw a million dollars on stage and they'd keep performing.' In this view, DIY videos are presumed to be less of an interference for

the band, where the reduced intrusion provides a more authentic documentation of the performance without the distractions of highly visible acts of recording. Craig expressed a viewpoint echoed by Bina and Dan, saying that: 'a professionally taken video can … seem robotic. Where a DIY video seems as if I could've been the person taking that video.' Similarly, Eric referred to DIY videos as 'more real and will remind you of standing there. It's less cold or artificial.' This viewpoint was expressed solely by indie show goers, perhaps because individually taken videos are more in keeping with a DIY ethic that encourages personal control over production (Rivett, 1999), or possibly because there are simply fewer professional videos as an alternative to DIY videos for less-popular bands. Given that participants are all themselves DIY filmers, the preference for DIY videos is perhaps an intuitive one. However, these comments do point to explanations for the success of some DIY videos in terms of viewership and the role that they play as media artifacts on social media sites.

## *Motivations*

Motivations for recording and sharing were raised repeatedly during interviews, both to gain a richer perspective and to allow responses to develop in the course of discussion. Themes that emerged from these inquiries about motivation included memory, as well as motivations related to relationships with fans and bands.

*YouTube and media(ted) memory.* One of the most common ways of explaining the purpose of videos was to describe them as memory aids. Dan explained that 'if I have a recording of [a show], I can remember what happened, or I can pinpoint and detail it' and Craig specifically referred to videos as a 'journal' of shows he's seen. Frances provided a similar description, referring to her videos as a 'memento or keepsake.' Isaac expressed a concurring viewpoint, saying that taking videos is 'kind of a scrapbooking thing for me. I've been to a lot of concerts over the years. A lot of them were really amazing but I didn't have a camera with me to … remind me of how awesome that night was.' Videos are here constructed as lasting documentations of ephemeral experiences, as well as memory aids providing proof of attendance. Heidi was perhaps the most emphatic in describing the use of videos specifically in terms of memory, referring to the purpose of her videos as being 'to remember the show for the rest of my life.' Heidi succinctly expressed the tradeoff between reduced enjoyment of being at the show and the satisfaction of having a document of the event in her assessment that 'while video can sometimes replace your few memories of a show, it can also enhance them, because you wouldn't have remembered certain, specific bits, like moves [a performer] did or things he said.' Analysis of interviews thus revealed a kind of paradox: although recording diminishes the immediate experience of watching a performance, it provides a much-valued artifact of documentation after the show. Illustrating this tension, Bina described the conflicted experience of videotaping at shows:

> I definitely feel much more detached when I'm recording versus when I'm not recording. It's kind of like a double-edged sword because I love the fact that I'm there, recording this, being like, I can't wait to put this on YouTube for the rest of the world to see. But on the other side of

> that, I'm watching the show just through this screen. And sometimes you forget to break away and actually look at the stage or look around you.

In this way, videos from concerts represent a short-term loss (resulting from a detached experience of the show) and long-term gain (in the form of a keepsake of the show).

*Relationship with fans.* Although using videos as personal memory aids begins to explain the action of video capture, the decision to put them on YouTube requires additional analysis, exposing other motivations for capture. Participants discussed putting their personal videos on public display largely in terms of community and fan culture. Heidi, for example, occasionally goes to great lengths to produce what she called 'fanvids,' which involve a great deal of time and energy spent editing multiple videos into a single pastiche. Asked about her reasons for this level of effort, she explained, 'I'm doing it for myself, but I also wanted to do it so everyone else who was at the show … could still remember it.' Eric related an experience that demonstrates the formation of relationships between fans and YouTube posters through videos. He described attending a show where the band performed a cover that struck him as 'very special.' Not having recorded during that event, Eric found himself eagerly awaiting the emergence of a recording online, and went so far as to reach out to another YouTube poster who had uploaded videos from the show, although not that particular song. When the video went up, Eric was immediately notified, and he decided to promote the video by posting it to Twitter. Anticipation of a video thus became a point of connection between previously unacquainted users as well as one's established online friends. For Bina, connections to other fans of a band have taken place on the level of metadata: having posted videos of a band's performance without song titles, Bina said that 'I would get comments from people who would name the songs for me. They would be like, 'Oh, I know that song' and then they would tell me the names.' In this case, user interaction can be viewed as a kind of collaborative archiving, where a more complete documentation of an event is fostered through collective contributions centered on a video.

In addition to using YouTube as a point of connection between fans, online band forums played a significant role in fan communities, and were referenced by most of the mainstream participants. Gina, Heidi and Isaac all described posting YouTube links in band forums to point fans to videos of recently attended shows, and Jacky commented that although she rarely posted videos to forums, she did use them to connect with fans at out-of-state shows. Gina described typical interaction on fan forums related to media in the following way: 'It's like an exchange of information. So where I go to post about my music … It's like, oh do you have pictures? Do you have clips, do you have music, do you have recordings? And then you just pool stuff, and it's just like a big pool of sharing.' Similar to Lange's (2007) suggestion that media circuits perform a role of facilitating relationships, posting videos of a concert provides a point of shared interest between fans, not only in the passive sense of providing content that fans can watch individually and in private, but in the active sense of establishing contact and collaboration between music enthusiasts.

One distinction between indie and mainstream concertgoers can be made in terms of the prevalence of thinking of video practices as gift-giving. When asked about the

intended audience for their videos, mainstream participants frequently described wanting to provide videos for fans who couldn't attend the concert, citing the high prices for tickets to large-venue shows. For example, Frances included in her list of the intended audience of her videos 'people who can't afford the concert, which has happened numerous times to me, personally.' Similarly, Heidi assumed that the audience of her YouTube videos predominantly consists of other Muse fans, people who 'went to the show, or wanted to go, or just like Muse in general and feel like watching footage.' More directly, Jacky described people contacting her through YouTube to request access to her videos. Jacky stated that she complies with these requests on a case-by-case basis: 'If it's going to be for someone making money off of it, then no [I won't give access]… I don't mind sharing as long as it's available to everybody.' These criteria resonate with Lessig's (2008) comments on gift economies, which are based strictly on non-monetary relationships of exchange.

*Relationships with bands.* The relationship between fans, videos and bands was markedly different for participants who attended indie versus mainstream shows. Indie show participants unanimously reported at least occasionally using videos to contact the bands they filmed. In addition, Bina and Eric both indicated that they occasionally seek out permission from bands before posting videos, an impulse driven by wanting to respect the band's perceived ownership over the content (as well as perhaps wanting to establish communications with members of a band). In particular, Bina explained a standing arrangement with the lead singer of a favorite band, where 'if I go to a gig of theirs and I take videos, he requested that he has the right to veto any ones that he may not like, if the sound is off or if he's out of tune. That [way] he has a chance to veto them before they're out there, publicly.' Rather than seeing this as an overbearing act of control, for Bina this negotiation serves as a kind of cooperative act of production, where she plays an active role in promoting the band's music: 'I felt that I could contribute … in helping to spread their music, or hopefully helping to get their name further out there.'

In contrast to the sense of collaboration with band members suggested by indie fans, mainstream users indicated a more asymmetrical relationship between fans and mainstream bands. Although both indie and mainstream participants use videos as gifts, the networks in which these gifts circulate among mainstream participants tended to be more structured and public than the looser, more informal networks for indie fan communities. This is not to say that interactions with indie videos are necessarily less structured – some users reported very regimented practices of interacting with other fans through YouTube, which are discussed in the next section. However, without a single point of highly visible virtual connections between fans (such as forums and email lists), indie fans use more dispersed sites of interpersonal connection. The nuances of fan communities in terms of content can thus have particular effects in terms of how videos are used as both a personal and social tool.

## *Media capture and technological protocols*

Once a video goes up on YouTube, participants described a number of protocols for interaction online. Following Jenkins (2006), protocols refer to 'social and cultural

practices that have grown up around … technology' (pp. 13–14), and here includes processes of sharing, viewing, rating, commenting on, and monitoring interactions with online videos.

In contrast to his somewhat lackadaisical recording habits, Eric's process of monitoring his videos was more hands-on and involved regulated comment moderation, partly out of an interest in protecting the videos and reputation of bands he's filmed through filtering out any negative comments. Dan seemed to have the most direct involvement as far as protocols for his videos. Referring to his music blog, where he cross-posts his YouTube videos, Dan said that he will 'send a direct e-mail to his core [readers] to say okay, this is up, I want you guys to read it and I want you guys to comment on it … I hate when I do something and it just goes into the vacuum and I get no feedback.' He uses a similar strategy for YouTube videos, occasionally directly soliciting friends to rate his videos. Referring to a specific set of videos from a show, Dan described the process of monitoring comments and ratings:

> I saw that they were unrated, so I … sent them to one of my trusted people and said, 'Hey, five star[2] rate these because they're lonely orphans without ratings. And while you're at it, leave a comment or two.' I went back a bit later and they were all rated.

It is at the point of uploading a video to a social media site that the video transitions from the private to the public, and consequently engages issues of technological protocols and interpersonal interactions.

## *Own the moment, own the documentation*

The extent to which YouTube users view their content as gifts – and the extent to which those gifts will be shared – can be viewed as a question of ownership. Jacky raised the issue of ownership while describing YouTube's policy on copyright claims, in which users who post content belonging to an artist or corporation can have their videos removed. Jacky distinguished these complaints from the videos that she posts of concerts, referring to them as 'my own content, I recorded it.' For Jacky, the act of recording video confers a kind of ownership over it. Similarly, Frances talked about ownership of videos in terms of the singularity of live music: 'every concert is unique, and the song is never the same.' Specifically in terms of copyright and legal ownership, Frances felt that the impossibility of replicating a live event meant that personally documenting a show resulted in individual ownership of captured content. These accounts demonstrate a marked point of disjuncture between legal codes established to regulate copyright and YouTube users' perceptions of content and ownership. There are distinct legal issues (as well as social uses) for different components of a musical work (i.e. lyrics, officially produced music videos, DIY documentations of the performance), such that copyright issues surrounding a single song are extremely complex. This kind of disconnect of existing legal complexity versus the perceptions of some YouTube users is central to arguments that current legal frameworks are at odds with emergent practices and protocols (Lessig, 2008; Sinnreich, 2010). In van Dijck's (2009) terms, current legal codifications of ownership are inadequate for describing or coping with the complications at work in convergence culture's construction of user agency.

### *Enhancement, but not a replacement*

By virtue of their inclusion in this study, participants all valued videos as media objects that document a show. For several interviewees, however, it was important to point out that watching videos of concerts was not a substitute for physical attendance. Asked about whether or not she only edits videos of shows she attends, Heidi responded, 'there'd be no point of [editing a video] for a show I wasn't at … it'd just make me sad I wasn't there.' Heidi's comment suggests that watching videos of a beloved band performing at a show she didn't personally see does not provide a substitute for attending the performance, and in fact reinforces the sense of having missed out on a singular moment. Frances emphasized the importance of videos in documenting live events specifically because they are not replicable: 'if you're not there, you won't know what it was like, in that room, with that person on the stage. And with a video, you can almost know.' Frances's inclusion of 'almost' marks the critical divergence between seeing a show in person and seeing it in video. Although DIY videos in particular may provide the sense that one could have been at a show, Frances' statement underscores the gap between watching a show on YouTube and watching it in person. Eric summarized this sentiment by stating 'I'm glad YouTube exists, but the purpose is to be there and to experience … a once-in-a-lifetime moment.'

## Discussion

From interviews with YouTube users about videos of live music events, several key themes related to media, technology and community emerged. Moreover, we identify key differences in respect to these themes between mainstream and indie participants in our study. Table 2 provides a visual overview of the major findings, and an indication of whether the finding primarily applies to indie or mainstream participants. In summary:

- Producing content involves management of present experience with future gains, where a reduced enjoyment of the show is balanced by creating a lasting documentation of the event.
- DIY videos in particular are valued for their ability to replicate a sense of attending the show. In some cases, these videos are treated as gifts within explicitly non-economic systems of exchange.
- Concert videos provide a point of contact between individual users, fan communities and (at least in some cases) bands.

One tension among these findings is the question of negotiating a diminished immediate experience and an enhanced future gain, where there is something of a tradeoff in the decision to diminish experiencing one's favorite song being played live precisely in order to have a record of attending (and 'reliving') a show later. The routines discussed earlier (taking a limited number of videos, researching the band's tour set list, etc.) can be thought of as tactics for mitigating these tensions between short-term loss (a reduced enjoyment of the show) and long-term gain (a lasting documentation of attendance), as well as the private (the ability to relive an experience) and public (sharing content with other fans) uses for videos.

**Table 2.** Key findings for indie versus mainstream fans.

| Theme | Indie | Mainstream |
|---|---|---|
| Recording and sense of removal | 🧍🧍🧍🧍🧍 | 🧍🧍🧍🧍 |
| Developing habits when recording videos | 🧍🧍🧍 | 🧍🧍🧍🧍 |
| Prefer DIY to professional video | 🧍🧍🧍🧍 | |
| Videos as memory aid | 🧍🧍🧍🧍🧍 | 🧍🧍🧍🧍🧍 |
| Connections to fans through forums | | 🧍🧍🧍🧍 |
| Connections to bands through videos | 🧍🧍🧍🧍🧍 | |
| Using videos as gift giving | 🧍🧍 | 🧍🧍🧍 |

*Note*: Representation of key themes among participants. The persons in each cell represent the number of participants that referenced each theme.

The stated preference among indie showgoers for DIY videos has theoretical implications for the division between amateur and professional media. In her work on internet pornography, or netporn, Paasonen (2010) articulated the binary constructed to delineate professionalism and amateurism and argued that amateurs are positioned as willing to forgo monetary compensation for the creation of content because they find the work innately rewarding. Echoing Terranova's (2000) concerns on digital exploitation of free labor, Paasonen argued that these constructions of amateurism obscure the labor that goes into the production of content and fails to capture the complexities of participating online. Participants in our study reported an awareness of how their work differed from professional content, to some extent reinscribing the binary Paasonen sought to challenge. At the same time, by revealing the elaborate technological protocols and interpersonal communications at work in the production of these videos, Paasonen's insistence on the importance of viewing amateur work as socially complex and culturally valuable is affirmed.

In terms of motivation for taking videos, there is furthermore a negotiation of the individual and the institutional, where DIY videos can be seen as a demonstration of agency, in which fans record in order to create an individual documentation of a show rather than rely on an officially produced version. Following van Dijck's argument (2009) that a discussion of agency should be multi-faceted, the creation of these participatory media signifies a rejection of (or at least a dis-preference for) professional videos, an interest in individual or collaborative control or 'ownership' over a media representation of a show, and as a means of connecting with fans and bands through shared interaction with a video. Regarding the interworkings of online communities, Lange's (2007) description of media circuits provides an instructive conceptualization for understanding the role played by media objects in a community. Lange argued that 'while some media circuits support existing social networks that began in-person, other social networks would not exist as such without online media circulation,' and both scenarios can be seen in DIY videos of concerts. In some cases, media circuits take place among already acquainted fans who interact with each others' videos. In other cases, videos become a

point of contact for users who rely on videos and pursuant technological protocols to establish and then maintain social ties.

Returning to characterizations of fans from both mainstream and indie shows, we are able to identify key differences between these two groups. Where YouTube users who posted content of mainstream shows reported using videos as a point of connection with other fans, for indie show goers, videos were also a means of reaching out to bands. These relationships can either be fairly regimented or somewhat informal. In both cases, however, videos enabled fans to open direct lines of communication with bands, making YouTube a shared point of contact (and content). For mainstream bands, fan videos may get more hits, comments and ratings, but videos are primarily used as a link among fans rather than between fans and bands. Using Lange's (2007) terminology, for indie fans, DIY videos can sustain media circuits between fans and bands, whereas for mainstream fans, media circuits operate within the fan community. Particularly among mainstream concert viewers, there was an additional sense of taking, editing and sharing videos in order to participate in gift economies. Although the extent of participation varied among participants, they were unanimously aware of providing resources valued by other YouTube members. Through interview analysis, we provide thick descriptions of the social interactions within gift economies, and the role of videos – as pieces of information, as media circuits – within fan communities.

Several participants emphasized the importance of *not* thinking of videos as a replacement for attending a show. Related to issues of authenticity, Auslander (1998) has argued that music videos (referring to highly-produced promotional tools rather than the DIY fan videos) have fundamentally augmented the relationship between fans and bands. In this paradigm, music videos come to be seen as the 'authentic' record of a band's performance, where live performances 'authenticate the *video* by showing that the same images and events that occur in the video can be reproduced onstage' (p. 20, emphasis in original). Although an extended theoretical discussion of the commercialization of music is beyond the scope of this article, we argue that the creation of DIY videos taken by fans at live performances counter Auslander's suggestion that live music authenticates a band's recorded sound. With a more nuanced description of the importance and perceived role of DIY videos, there is perhaps a reversal of Auslander's claim that 'while the video authenticates the sound recording by replicating the live production of the sounds, live performance authenticates the video by replicating it in real space' (p. 20). Instead, DIY videos are taken by fans to document (and in Auslander's terms, authenticate) not only the show itself, but their personal attendance of the concert.

## Conclusions

In his text on mash-up culture, Sinnreich (2010) argued that in a 'hierarchy of uniqueness' for art and music, live performances are at the highest level of authenticity, while pirated content produced without official permission is at the bottom tier (p. 52). There is thus a kind of paradox to individually produced and circulated content of live music events, which represent a point of convergence between the highest and lowest levels of media authenticity. By sharing live concert footage online, the YouTube users in our study are circulating DIY content to a massive audience, rendering instantly reproducible

a singularly unique artistic event and effectively collapsing both ends of the uniqueness hierarchy. This is not to say that DIY videos and the concert itself cease to bear differences – participants were eager to point out the importance of live music and all recognized a distinction between DIY and professional content. But uploading footage of live music events to YouTube does constitute a phenomenon for understanding the stakes of authenticity and authorization in terms of technology and community. Our research has looked at content capture and social media in the specific context of this paradox, using in-depth interviews to gain a complex, granular perspective on issues of community, technology, ownership and authenticity. It is hoped that our use of qualitative research framed with critical theory has provided a way of making concrete some of the interdisciplinary, theoretical claims made about participatory media and social interactions of online communities.

This study could be expanded through different settings and methods. Most of the users who participated in this study were interested predominantly in rock music; research on other genres of music might reveal additional themes, routines or motivations related to videos and social media. Other types of events besides concerts could also constitute interesting case studies: for example, political events (e.g. protests or demonstrations) or unplanned and emergency events (e.g. forest fires) and so forth. As technology becomes increasingly embedded in daily practices of social interaction and artistic production, there is a pursuant need to understand how theoretical constructions of sociotechnical change are experienced from the perspective of everyday users. Paasonen (2010) argued that 'as user-generated content is increasingly recognized as both an asset and comprising consumables of a kind, it has become crucial to consider exactly what kinds of consumables these may be and what kind of circulation they enter' (p. 1308). This study has sought to provide a consideration for the consumables and circulations of a specific kind of media content (DIY YouTube videos from live music events) in order to explore the practices that constitute participation in these communities, and the implications – both theoretical and practical – for emergent forms of labor and media.

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## Notes

1. We do not list the names of bands performing at these indie concerts. In some cases, the number of videos currently on YouTube with content from these bands is so small that revealing band names would threaten the confidentiality of our participants' identities.
2. Since the time of the interviews, YouTube has altered its video rating system from one through five stars to thumbs up or thumbs down.

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