

MUSI 1002

Class 2:

Commodification and
Standardization

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969)

- Member of the Frankfurt School
- Colleagues include Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas
- Critical theory
- Marxist understanding of society
- Criticized capitalism

The Culture Industry

- Made up of economic institutions
- It produces forms of culture that are commodities
- According to Adorno, the commodification of cultural products leads to a standardization of these products
- Standardization leads to passivity in consumers

Standardization

- Popular Music is standardized in several ways:
 - 1) a number of types that are immediately recognizable
 - 2) a small number of structures
 - 3) a small number of components to each song that are interchangeable

Pseudo-individualization

- The type of variation that exists between standardized products
- Surface changes
- They do not alter the basic structure

High vs. Low Culture

- “Serious” vs. Popular music
- Differences incl:
 - Degree of standardization
 - Level of complexity
 - Market context

Role of the listener

- Caught up in a standardized and routine set of responses
- The pleasure derived is superficial and false
- Individuals who enjoy these pleasures are corrupted by immersion and are open to the domination of the industrialized, capitalist system

“On Popular Music in Advertising”

- How does David Allan relate these ideas to the use of popular music in advertising?

“On Popular Music in Advertising”

- His Premise:
 - The use of popular music in advertising is growing
 - Companies attempt to reach a wider audience with the use of music
 - Musicians seem more willing to have their music used for commercial purposes

Product Placement in Song Lyrics

- Common in Hip-hop
 - Busta Rhymes “Pass the Courvoisier” (discussed in Allan article)
 - Migos “Versace”
 - Ace Hood “I Woke up in a new Bugatti”
 - Early examples include:
 - Run DMC “My Adidas”
 - Important for the promotion of products, but can also point to the artist’s success (material wealth)
 - Products often significant within the culture/subculture



Product Placement in Music Videos

- Brittany Spears
 - “Circus”
 - “Hold it Against Me”
- Ke\$ha
- Jennifer Lopez feat. Pitbull
 - “On the Floor”
- Pitbull feat. Ke\$ha
 - “Timber”
- Avril Lavigne
 - “Rock n Roll”
- Avicii
 - “Wake me up”



Replacing lyrics with advertiser's name/message

- E-bay commercials
- Venus/Intuition (use songs where lyrics already fit)
- Connection to Adorno and concept of Pseudo-individualization

Commercials for Analysis/Discussion

- Eminem Chrysler Commercial
- Bob Dylan Chrysler Commercial
- Adidas Originals Commercial (Beggin')
- Princess Mary Margaret Hospital Foundation
- State Farm/ OK Go "This Too Shall Pass"
- Google Chrome/Lady Gaga
- Target/ Justin Timberlake

Tin Pan Alley



- An area of Manhattan around 28th Street where much of the sheet music for the popular vaudeville tunes of the early 20th century were written

Tin Pan Alley



- Irving Berlin was the most prolific of the Tin Pan Alley Composers
- Wrote songs such as “God Bless America” and “White Christmas”
- Other Tin Pan Alley songwriters include: Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, George and Ida Gershwin, and Cole Porter

Technology and mass dissemination



- 78 r.p.m. records represented the beginning of the transition from written to recorded music

“On Wax,” Paul Whiteman and Mary Margaret McBride

- Paul Whiteman’s Ambassador Orchestra achieved unprecedented commercial success

