

MUS 3308

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

DEFINITION ON THE EXAM



- 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 




SUMMARY: the culture industry produces forms of culture as commodity (music)
the products form the commodity lead to standardization
standardization leads to passive 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?

these are not adorno's ideas on advertizing

david is applying some of the ideas and imagining what adorno thought about 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” 
- Kesha we are who we are 
- Jennifer Lopez feat. Pitbull
 - “On the Floor”
- Pitbull feat. Kesha 
- “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

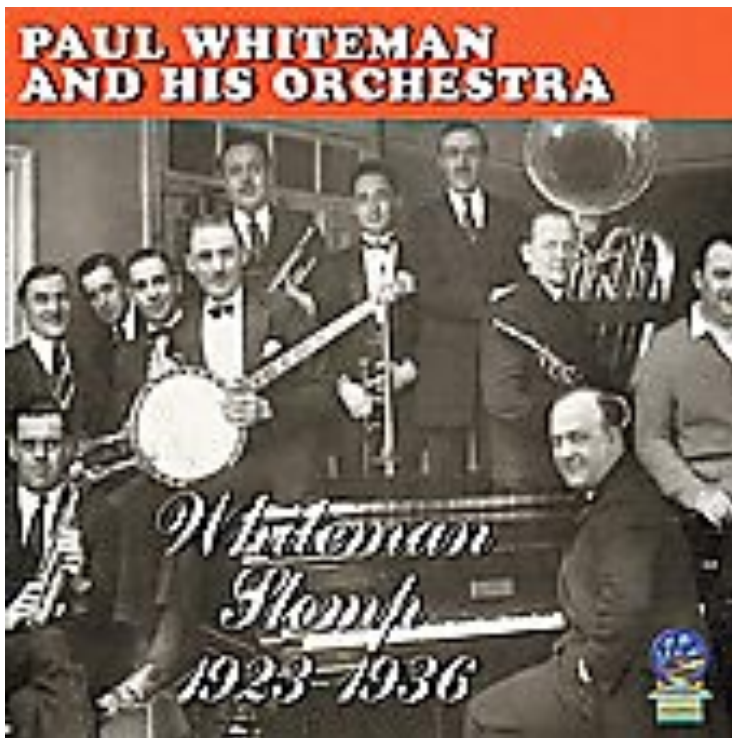


Technology and mass dissemination



- 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

