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Contextual Studies
Unit 301

Fanzines and the Changing Identity of Football

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INTRODUCTION

The political and social structure of the football industry has changed dramatically in the last decade. The elite of the Premier League, fuelled by satellite TV and media saturation, get richer, whilst those at a lower level face a constant struggle for recognition and survival. This has influenced the changing identity of football spectatorship, as an influx of new discerning fans replenish the traditional working class support base. During this time, the football fanzine has developed to become the greatest self publishing phenomenon in Britain, with numerous publications established by and for supporters throughout the country, particularly those with an affinity to a specific club.

In this dissertation, I shall be discussing the role that fanzines play within the game, comparing them with the professional press dedicated to a sport immersed in media attention. I will be documenting the growth of the fanzine 'industry' against a backdrop of radical reorganisation in the game, and its contribution to the rise of an independent supporters' movement. I will be studying the style, content and attitude of football fanzines, their production and distribution, and how they influence, reflect and define football cultures and social identities. The fanzine industry competes with an extensive range of commercial publications such as match programmes, magazines, books and newspaper coverage. I shall be discussing these briefly, examining the reasons behind the rapid growth of football literature in recent years, and how the game has gained a new respectability and social recognition.

As a supporter of a non-league club, who also spectates at both league and premier levels, I am concerned about the radical changes in the political structure of the game, the effects of its commercialisation, and how the views and opinions of supporters frequently seem to be ignored. I will attempt to define the role of fanzines within the supporters' community, their relationships with supporters associations and with the football clubs themselves. I will attempt to evaluate their effectiveness in providing a 'voice' for the dissenting fan and a forum for individual expression and debate.

Throughout this dissertation, I will be referring to results from a questionnaire which was sent to a cross section of club fanzines. Many of the editors were kind enough to donate recent issues of their publications, which will provide a primary source of research and ensure that this study relates to the contemporary scene. It is worth noting at this stage, that my research was limited to fanzines within the English game. It is assumed, whilst slight differences in style and regional influences may exist, that Scottish, Welsh and Irish fanzines are as significant as their English contemporaries. Similarly, though a strong fanzine movement exists in a number of continental countries, it will remain beyond the confines of this study.

HISTORY OF THE FOOTBALL FANZINE

The origins of self publishing can be traced back to the 18th century political pamphleteers of the American Revolution, most notably Thomas Paine and his 'Common Sense' bulletins, and through to the radical underground press of 'Oz' and 'Private Eye' in the sixties. The earliest fanzines, in the form we know them today, were created amongst American science fiction fans, led by, what is generally recognised as the first fanzine, 'The Comet' in 1930.

The second fanzine revolution came about with the punk rock explosion in the seventies, spearheaded by 'Punk' in the States and quickly followed by 'Sniffin' Glue' in Britain. The cut and paste style and DIY ethic of the fanzine lent itself perfectly to the attitudes of punk, so much that even today, punk is synonymous with the fanzine industry in America where, unlike Britain, which lionised and then diluted it, punk remains a fiercely strong, independent movement.

Today, there is seemingly a fanzine for every topic, issue and persuasion. It is impossible to classify them, though the majority do tend to fall into recognisable categories such as sci-fi, TV and film, music, politics, religion and sex, in addition to a wide range of fringe and alternative lifestyles.

Though sports fanzines, it would seem, are in a minority in the USA, the football fanzine has established itself in Europe, and particularly in Britain, as the leading exponent in its field. The evolution of the English movement is often credited to 1986, when the domestic game was at a critical cross-road in its history. Yet its development can be traced back to a number of significant influences, both from within the self publishing industry, and from the game's wider social and cultural links.

One early influence came from an unexpected source. 'Foul' was created by two undergraduates in Cambridge in 1972, and ran for 34 issues over four years. Its highly satirical style owed much to the sixties movement that created 'Beyond the Fringe' and 'That Was the Week that Was', and its identity with the underground press and the radical agenda of 'Private Eye' (which took over the publication of later issues). Though it openly attacked the football industry, its main pre-occupation was to parody and lampoon the tabloid sensationalism of the game.

Though 'Foul' pre-empted the football fanzine by over a decade, the movement's cultural lineage owes far more to punk and the new self publishing industry it created. Gritty, subversive and ostensibly working class, the influence of the punk fanzine cannot be overstated. Its styles and attitudes defined much of the ethics still prevalent in the industry today. Though the link between punk and football was a tenuous one (punk was far too insular and hedonistic for that), as the movement dissolved, it led to a more broad minded fanzine manifesto. The strong regional identity of many fanzines and their increasing inclination to adopt other popular cultures, led invariably to references to the game.

This was exemplified by 'The End', started on Merseyside in 1981. Though still predominantly a music magazine, it courted fashion and football, echoing the cultural style of the so called 'soccer casuals'. Though its run coincided with the city's

(particularly the red half's) domination of the domestic game, it quickly became popular with rival supporters who, despite the fanzine's strong parochial identity, often contributed to later issues.

The first fully recognised football fanzines emerged in the mid-eighties. Despite the pre-existence of several evolutionary club fanzines, such as Bradford City's 'City Gent' (still going strong), it was the creation of two general fanzines, 'Off the Ball' and 'When Saturday Comes' which instigated the movement. Several of the earliest club fanzines were created in direct response to the disrepute of the sport at that time and in sympathy with the growing independent factions within the supporting community. Others evolved directly out of the music fanzine scene, by editors tired and disaffected with the blandness of the mid eighties pop industry.

Indeed, the growth of the football fanzine owed much to the music industry with whom it shared instinctive cultural tendencies. Its primary media coverage came from the music press, particularly the 'NME', and local independent record shops provided an early source of distribution. Gradually, as the number of publications rose, a network developed between fanzine creators from different clubs. They started swapping their latest issues by post, and meeting personally at away games. This was significant, in that it created a common cultural identity, and defined a mutual cause. It cemented the early fanzines, previously isolated and dispersed, into a recognisable movement that was to become, according to Steve Redhead, "identifiable as the late 1980's / early 1990's 'moment' of low modernism on the streets." (1)

Following the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, Ian Taylor suggested that "the decorations on the terraces at Anfield symbolised a mass popular religious rite which marked a cleansing of the game." (2) The subsequent Taylor Inquiry brought about radical changes in the political structure and the supporting of football. Terraces were ripped up, to be replaced by all-seater stadia. Grounds became safer and more comfortable at the expense of higher admission fees and, in the view of many supporters, spectator atmosphere.

The financial burden imposed on clubs instigated a massive commercialisation of the game, through increased merchandising and sponsorship deals. Supporters meanwhile became subjected to increasingly intensive policing and segregation. The political lobby responded to media hysteria with threats of ID cards and the banning of away fans.

The 'heroic failure' of the national team in Italia '90, beaten only by German penalties in the 'shoot out' of the semi-final (England's best ever World Cup performance on foreign soil), did much to focus the new rejuvenation back home. But it was the founding of the FA Premiership and the subsequent deal they struck with satellite TV that was to have the greatest effect on the game in the 90's. 'Sky TV' deluged the game with money, far beyond the resources available to its 'terrestrial' competitors, helping to create a Premier League comparable with any in the world, including Italy's Serie A, with which to attract the finest foreign imports.

However, what has subsequently enraged many supporters is that seemingly little of the vast profits generated in the game have filtered down to its lower echelons. This has been instrumental in dividing the sport into the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' as

“English football has absorbed the impact of deregulation in financial and broadcasting markets to embrace the values of the entrepreneur driven enterprise culture...” (3) The small, wealthy elite of top clubs continue to generate huge profits, with floatations on the stock exchange, and speculation about a European Superleague and ‘pay per view’ TV deals. Meanwhile, the majority of smaller clubs operate in a cycle of almost continuous insolvency, relying on the occasional big money transfer or lucrative cup run. They face a constant struggle to divert the attention of particularly young supporters from the attractions of the glamour clubs, to replenish their dwindling local fan base.

THE FANZINE INDUSTRY

Football has long been recognised as the national game, to the degree that it is almost embedded in the nation's psyche. Its social and frequently emotional impact goes far deeper than the often transient styles, trends and influences of popular culture such as TV, film and pop music. Similarly, the lack of any distinct youth culture in the 90's, prevalent in many forms throughout the previous four decades, and the intermixture of cultural influences, particularly in music, has promoted the identity of the football supporter and a new fan culture. The popularity and influence of the football fanzine has developed to a scale without precedence in the nation's self publishing industry.

Whilst the vast majority of today's fanzines follow specific clubs, there remain a small number dedicated to the game in general. Though none of these has achieved the widespread commercial success of 'When Saturday Comes' as documented later in this study, fanzines such as 'Offence' - an intelligent, slightly elitist publication with art-house pretensions, published by 'Libero' an independent supporters network - do contribute to the diversity of the movement. Free of the partisan rhetoric common to club fanzines, they offer an unbiased perspective, and often promote the cause of the wider supporters' community.

In addition to these, a fanzine may cover a specific aspect or interest in the game. The national team has several, such as 'Flair's back in Fashion' and an increasing number are dedicated to foreign leagues. 'Rigore' for example, promotes the Italian game for home grown enthusiasts and exiled patriots alike. The recent emergence of 'On the Ball', a quality, full colour monthly magazine dedicated to the women's game, is a direct response to the rising popularity of the sport (the fastest growing in Britain) and the occasional high media profile attained by club sides like the Doncaster Belles.

But the domination of club related fanzines demonstrates the nature of the domestic game and its followers. The vast majority of football supporters develop an apparently indestructible allegiance to one club that is often equal to or greater than their love of the game. Such loyalty is usually conceived at an early age, and rarely falters.

Club fanzines are typically A5 size, run to 30 or so black and white pages and cost £1. Some use a two tone printing process, whilst many use coloured card for their covers. The several high status club fanzines that have adopted an A4 format with glossy colour front covers (even though the inner pages remain predominantly mono-tone) have done so primarily to promote their sales in the high street newsagent, alongside commercial publications.

The football fanzine has one primary access for its distribution that is both fundamental to its existence, and intrinsically linked to the culture of the industry - the home fixture. It is here where fanzine editors have direct access to the majority of their potential readership.

Fanzine sellers are a common sight at football grounds. They usually operate outside the stadium, in a strategic position such as alongside the turnstiles. Some also operate within the ground, though results from the questionnaire would suggest that a

considerable number do so unofficially, without the club's permission. It is not unknown for supporters to buy a fanzine mistaking it for the match programme.

The official match programme, the traditional link between the club and its supporters, is the direct competitor to the fanzine at home games. The earliest programmes consisted merely of team sheets for the match, which were usually printed on the day. Whilst this remains a requisite feature of today's programmes, its function has been largely lost. Many modern programmes are compiled and printed up to a week before the match, whilst it has become common practice for coaches to announce teams only an hour before the game, relying on often inaudible PA systems to convey them to supporters.

However, over the years the programme has developed to provide additional features, most notably the message from the club manager or coach, now firmly established, with comments on recent results and performances. Often strong on photographic content and conventional in their design, programmes also regularly feature match reports, league tables and the latest developments at the club.

They rely considerably on advertising for their revenue and, unlike fanzines, they usually generate a significant profit margin per copy sold, which is transferred directly back into club funds. The quality of programmes can vary considerably from club to club, as can their cost and their sales, though they do tend to reflect the status and size of the club they represent.

Above all the match programme reflects the viewpoint of the club and by its very nature tends to be conservative. Programmes warmly welcome the opposing side, often devoting several pages to the club and its team's analysis. Bound by tradition and convention, it is, in many respects, the total antithesis of the fanzine.

It would however, be unfair to categorise all programmes as staid and boring. Many have attempted in recent years, largely as a result of the emergence of fanzines, to diversify their contents and design, even at times utilising features we would normally associate with fanzine publishing, to produce a more dynamic publication. Similarly, a recent trend has seen fanzines adopting more conventional features, such as league tables and player interviews, common to commercial publications.

This would suggest that an increasing number of fanzine editors would like to present a more comprehensive format with a broader perspective, rather than restricting it to the unorthodox and the radical. Whilst this may have been dictated by the rivalry with the match programme (many supporters will buy either a programme or a fanzine, but not both), it also demonstrates the competitiveness of many fanzines and their willingness to diversify, even if it means including features alien to their original manifestos. The editor of Newcastle United fanzine 'Talk of the Tyne' states:

"We still believe we are the voice of the supporters, but the fanzine industry has changed. I can count on the fingers of one hand the fanzines that are funny. We keep it going because we are the only fanzine at Newcastle that hasn't sold out and become part of the establishment. Reading Newcastle fanzines is like reading the match programme." (4)

Whilst this might indeed suggest a 'selling out' of the fanzine ethos as a radical alternative, it also demonstrates the economic reality of its fight for survival in an increasingly competitive media. When done well, the balance and juxtaposition of the two styles and attitudes can be complimentary. But whether this indicates that both the programme and the fanzine are moving closer together ethically, each fighting for the middle ground remains to be seen.

Whilst the home match remains the traditional source of revenue, the majority of fanzines, especially those related to larger clubs, whose fan base and potential readership is considerably greater than those able to attend a home fixture at any one time, also rely on other sources of distribution.

Those well established within the local community may use commercial outlets such as pubs, clubs and shops, whilst nearly all the editors questioned operate a mail order service, with some providing an annual subscription. However, potential subscribers must be aware of the fragility and inconsistency of the fanzine industry. Many editors are only able to operate on an issue by issue basis, and it is not uncommon for some fanzines to cease production after only a handful or even just one issue. Therefore, fanzines that do offer subscription tend to have a reliable publishing schedule, with the confidence to meet deadlines and maintain costs and cover prices.

Back issue sales are readily accepted by virtually every fanzine editor, who may offer them at a reduced price. However, their availability can be inconsistent. Fanzine editors need to work to realistic print numbers. Erratic sales may result in a large surplus of some issues, whilst others are sold out before potential sales are reached.

Buyers of back issues often include readers new to a fanzine, keen to catch up on past publications. But there is also a small, committed group of fanzine collectors who will happily purchase fanzines from any club. There is even a publication dedicated to them, 'The Fanzine Collector' and the swapping or trading of fanzines is common. 'When Saturday Comes' lists hundreds of titles and contact addresses in its classified section every month, and the specialist book store 'Sportspages' regularly stocks current and past issues of fanzines from across the country, at its branches in Manchester and London.

Fanzines can also provide, through mail order, a valuable link for supporters who have moved away from their home town. Interestingly, a number of fanzines operate from outside the club's regional area. 'Shaymen down south' a Halifax Town fanzine based in Welwyn Garden City, is dedicated specifically to supporters living in the south of England. Fanzines are also known to mail to overseas supporters. The Manchester United fanzine 'United We Stand' claims to distribute to 34 countries. There is even a scheme, adopted by the 'Prisoners Abroad' charity organisation, encouraging 'When Saturday Comes' readers to donate subscriptions of the magazine to supporters in foreign jails.

FANZINES AND THE MEDIA

Newspapers provide the traditional source of football coverage to the majority of supporters. Throughout the early part of this century, a specialised sporting press evolved that embedded itself into the nation's perception of the game. A new style of reportage, known as 'sportuguese' - originally developed by American boxing commentators - was adopted by the post war popular press, and eventually contributed to the tabloid exploitation of the game in the sixties, personified by George Best, football's first 'pop' celebrity.

Today, the national game regularly commands back page priority over all other sports, not only in the tabloids, with their traditional working class readerships, but also amongst the broadsheets, despite their natural tendencies towards cricket and rugby union. Whilst they do not possess the instant response of TV and radio, the national press provides daily results and match reports, regularly reinforced with interviews and analysis.

Sports coverage is highly reflective of a newspaper's social identity, ideology and politics. The trends developed through the post war period are firmly established in today's reportage. Broadsheet coverage tends to be discerning and impassive, with perceptive, in-depth analysis, whilst the tabloids present a wider, more superficial coverage. Highly readable and accessible, yet prone to hyperbole and sensationalism, they regularly adopt popular slang and jargon from football culture, in their casual vernacular.

High profile players are constantly vulnerable to tabloid exposure; personal relationships, drug and alcohol addictions and 'bung' scandals can propel them from the back pages to the front. The xenophobic rallying calls of several tabloids during England's recent World Cup and European Championship campaigns have been reduced to jingoistic, and at times, racist sloganeering. The personal persecution and character assassination of national team coaches has, in the opinion of many, far exceeded professional criticism. The media witch-hunt which accompanied the last few days of Glen Hoddle's tenure is only the latest example.

Of course, the tabloids will always contend that they are merely reflecting the thoughts and views of their readerships, whilst the debate on the influence of newspapers on the masses goes far beyond the confines of sports coverage. (Fleet Street's overwhelming affinity with the Conservative Party was often cited as a contributing factor to successive pre-Blair Labour defeats in general elections).

Yet it has been the alleged misrepresentation of the football fan that has particularly enraged many within the supporters' community. Widespread disgust amongst Liverpool supporters at 'The Sun's' controversial insinuations following the Hillsborough tragedy in 1989 is still reflected in the poor sales of the newspaper in the city, traditionally a market stronghold.

In 1827, two African Americans, Samuel Cornish and John B. Russworm, outraged by racist writing in the 'New York Enquirer', started their own newspaper 'The Freedom's Journal'. Its first editorial proclaimed "We wish to plead our own cause."

(5) This stands as an epitome to the self publishing industry, which even today embodies the spirit of the fanzine movement. The editorial continued with the words “Too long others have spoken for us. Too long the public has been deceived by misrepresentation.” (6)

The need for self representation is a fundamental principle in the self publishing industry. The misrepresentation of football supporters in the mass media is one of the primary driving forces that unites the fanzine movement. Compare the Cornish and Russworm editorial with that by Adrian Goldberg in the opening issue of ‘Off the Ball’ in 1986.

“We won’t be treated like idiots any more. We, being ‘ordinary’ supporters of mainly ordinary clubs, who are sick of being portrayed as morons in the press...” (7)

Football supporters are perceived collectively - as a spectatorship by the media, a paying commodity by the clubs, and an unpredictable, shifting mass by the police. They come together for ninety minutes and then disperse. The difficulty in individualising them, leads to generalisation and stereotyping. Constantly overlooked and ignored, only to be collectively castigated in irrational, knee-jerk reactions to hooliganism and violence, the supporters are given little or no opportunity to reply. Fanzines have “helped articulate the true voice of the terraces and have gone some way to dispel the stereotypical image of fans as hooligans.” (8)

Supporters are equally condescending of the emphasis of mass media coverage. A supporters' letter to ‘The Tea Party’, belittles the attention Stockport County receive locally.

“... down in division 2, City are still the media darlings, hogging TV and radio times and newspaper column inches...I’ve given up on Piccadilly, and I’ll do the same with GMR... we’re always at a crisis point, whilst it tells us United are ready to conquer Europe, and how great Jamie Pollock is.” (9)

‘WHEN SATURDAY COMES’

The distinctions that divide the self publishing industry from the commercial press are often blurred. Whilst many fanzines are fiercely proud of their independence, the majority rely on a professional print shop, whilst many of the most successful regularly adopt commercial outlets as a primary source of distribution. ‘United We Stand’ is sold in most newsagents in Manchester, and is widely available in selected outlets nation-wide.

The history of self publishing is littered with examples of ‘independents’ successfully transferring into the professional industry. The outstanding example within the football fanzine movement is ‘When Saturday Comes’. The self styled ‘half decent football magazine’ was first published in March 1986 by Mike Ticher and Andy Lyons (Issue 1 had 12 pages, a print run of 200 and cost 15p). It quickly gained a recognition and popularity beyond all others. Today’s WSC is distributed by Time Out, and sold in newsagents throughout the country.

Its success is hard to pin down, yet it surely owes as much to its intelligent writing, good marketing skills and a healthy enthusiasm to be diverse, as it does to sheer luck and opportunism. Such a move is invariably accompanied by shouts of ‘sell out’ from some within the fanzine industry, yet surely any ethical argument can only be justified by evidence of a yielding to submissiveness. Has this been done at the expense of cultural and artistic integrity?

Certainly, there can be no denying its dramatic changes in design. Early issues of WSC, indicative of the cut and paste style of early football fanzines, are almost unrecognisable from the cultured, conventional layout of today’s publication. It does however still retain selective elements typical to fanzine design within its refined compositions, such as cartoons, newspaper cuttings and the proverbial bubble speech photo, which still regularly graces the front cover.

‘When Saturday Comes’ costs £1.75 per issue - not much more than the average fanzine which is, typically, half its size and predominantly black and white. Despite its commercial dependence, advertising is surprisingly limited in WSC - a fraction of what is prevalent in most professional publications, and indeed less than a number of fanzines. Whilst it has had to adapt to the demands of professional codes of practice and issues of copyright, distribution and marketing, one can only speculate about the editorial restraints that may be imposed.

Yet it remains, in my opinion, refreshingly independent in its ideology, retaining the attitudes and diversity of a fanzine. It is as quick to challenge the politics of the game as it is to reflect on its social and cultural identities. It is equally happy to focus on the league and non-league game as it is the premier, with occasional nods towards the continental and world stage.

‘When Saturday Comes’ continues to appeal to the sensibilities of the intelligent football lobby. It remains loyal to its original crusade to unite supporters, exemplified by its ‘for the people’ masthead. It has, at times, been scathing of the lowering standards of some club fanzines, criticising their increasing partisanship and

provocation of club rivalries. In response, many within the fanzine movement have openly attacked what they see as the magazine's elitist, self righteous agenda.

But WSC has not forgotten its humble roots. It supports the fanzine industry with enthusiasm, regularly reviewing independent publications from around the country, and providing a comprehensive classified section of contacts. By doing so it demonstrates how "...mass media can also serve as reverse conduits back into alternative culture." (10) How many fans have been introduced to a club fanzine through picking up a copy of WSC in the high street newsagent?

'When Saturday Comes' stands unique amongst its commercial counterparts, retaining a strong cultural identity with its roots and its readership. It may not have the fresh improvisation of the best fanzines, yet under its guise of respectability, it remains radical and diverse, common to its self publishing ancestry.

FANZINES AND THE SUPPORTERS COMMUNITY

Football clubs represent their town or city. It is in their name, and intrinsic to their identity. They are inseparable from their roots and traditions, with their home ground or stadium a focal point for thousands. True, this has been corrupted by the national, even international following that is attained by some elite clubs, whose names have almost become brand names or products, and whose players have achieved star, almost god like status, with global recognition. Nevertheless, the majority of clubs rely on a predominantly local spectatorship. Supporters exist in a close proximity, in a real, physical community.

The vast majority of fanzines, those dedicated to interests and topics other than football, tend to create cultural communities of a common persuasion that transcend and challenge the restraints of the physical communities of its editors and readers. The football fanzine however, helps to reinforce the supporting community within the local club's geographical area.

This is particularly evident at smaller, non-league or lower league clubs. A non-league fanzine, for example, may have a regular circulation of half its club's average home fixture attendance - a proportion that Premier League fanzines can only dream of. True, many major clubs may have several fanzines in competition, whereas smaller clubs will tend to have only one. However, it is clear that fanzine circulation is not directly proportional to the numerical support of the clubs they follow.

Many non-league and lower league clubs have developed a greater sense of community amongst its supporters than larger clubs which is more close-knit, both socially and psychologically, within the local geographical area. In addition to this, many such clubs are virtually ignored by the national media, who remain keen to focus almost exclusively on a select elite. Top club fanzines regularly compete with often comprehensive coverage from both the print and electronic media, whereas that pertaining to minor clubs is often limited to the local press or radio station. This therefore stimulates a greater need amongst the supporters for the type of coverage that a fanzine can provide, which in turn can "generate a participative camaraderie and sense of collective identity." (11)

Ever since supporters have converged in significant numbers to watch football, they have united to form clubs and associations to promote their interest and profile in the game. The early 'brake clubs' organised to arrange travel to away matches, whilst others evolved around fund raising schemes to provide financial help to the clubs they supported. These helped to create solid spectatorships that deeply rooted the game into the local communities.

Football clubs, recognising the rapidly increasing popularity of the sport, quickly sought to seize control of any supporters associations. Independent organisations were discouraged and alienated. A National Federation of Supporters Clubs (NFFSC), formed in 1926, exemplified by their submissive slogan 'To Help not to Hinder' were largely ineffective.

Despite this, many supporters' clubs proceeded to make valuable contributions to the post war game. They were instrumental in financing ground improvements, establishing facilities for female and disabled supporters, and responding to the rise of hooliganism during the sixties and seventies. Throughout this time, some supporters groups developed healthy and rewarding relationships with their clubs, of which many still exist today.

However, by the time football had reached its nadir in the mid-eighties, supporters, shamed by the hooligan minority and bullied by the political establishment, felt betrayed and powerless. This instigated the rise of independent supporters' organisations at many clubs, free of any official alliance. They gained a national focus with the founding of the Football Supporters Association (FSA) on Merseyside in 1986 which immediately afforded weight and authority to the independent movement, providing a national forum for debate and protest.

Today, virtually every club in the land has at least one supporters club or association. Though it would seem their size and numbers are generally proportional to the status of the club, their political structure, their relationship with the club and their influence are inconsistent. The relationship between supporters clubs and fanzines is an interesting and sometimes complex aside. It would appear, at least within the limitations of my research, that only one club fanzine is officially linked to a supporters association (Wycombe Wanderers Independent Supporters Club and 'The Wanderer'), though several supporters clubs have their own newsletters. However, there is no reason to suggest that fanzine editors, or regular contributors, are not at least members of such clubs, if not actively involved in their running.

There is certainly evidence of an affinity between the two at a number of football clubs across the wide spectrum of the game. Non-league Chorley fanzine 'Two for Joy' runs a full page advert for the 'Magpies' Supporters Club, Nigel Macdonald, a Rochdale supporters club official, has a regular page in 'Exceedingly Good Pies', and the Leicester City fanzine 'The Fox' provides a monthly newsletter page for the Leicester City Independent Supporters Association (LCISA). Many fanzines are happy to publicise supporters club events and away travel schedules, providing a convenient link between club officials and their members. Of course, fanzines may rely considerably on supporters' club members for their readership, and therefore any empathy between the two parties can be beneficial to both.

However, internal politics within the supporter structure can differ with each football club. The situation can become volatile, especially at larger clubs, where several fanzines and supporters clubs may operate. Examine the case of 'The Mag v INUSA' as documented in the Newcastle United fanzine 'Talk of the Tyne' (Issue 24). It recalls how Mark Jensen, the editor of rival fanzine 'The Mag', challenged the integrity of the club's Independent Supporters Association in his Summer Special '98 issue.

"The ISA must be the first supporters association who have managed to alienate both the fans and their club - they have absolutely no respect amongst the supporters."

(12)

In reply ('Talk of the Tyne' publishes a INUSA newsletter page in every issue), the association chairman Kevin Miles questions 'The Mag's' relationship with the club, suggesting that it's "lack of independence" (13) is a direct result of its "reluctance to challenge the club," (14) which he argues, would jeopardise their access to club players for interviews, a primary feature of the fanzine.

Whilst this demonstrates the healthy debate that fanzines can provide within the supporters community, it also displays the conflicts that can arise between rival fanzines and supporters clubs. Furthermore, it demonstrates that whilst total independence allows radical opinion to flourish, it may sabotage relations with the football club, which a fanzine may rely upon to be able to publish articles it feels are necessary to compete with rival publications.

The relationship between fanzines and their football clubs vary considerably. Results from the questionnaire suggest that many clubs are apathetic to a fanzine's efforts, and therefore dismissive of their influence and opinion. A considerable number however, have developed a friendly rapport, though several editors suggested it can frequently change, and varies with individual officials. Many fanzines contribute financially to their club, especially at lower levels, with several donating the profits of every issue. Conversely, other fanzines have encouraged a bitter animosity, remaining fiercely proud of their independence, and their freedom to criticise the club at any time.

Supporters protest is prevalent throughout the history of spectatorship and common to all levels of the game. It can occur by chance, or through organised demonstration by supporters clubs, attracting huge numbers. Though usually precipitated by poor results and performances on the field, it is often subjected at the club board, and rarely at the team manager or players. Any protest is, however, susceptible to apathy within the supporters' community, through loyalty to the club.

"It is complicated by the very nature of that experience of identification and enthusiasm which is characteristic of the game's crowds. This complex emotional cargo tends to burst the vessels that would contain or define it." (15)

Fanzines often play a supportive role in organised protests, advertising demonstration dates and distributing leaflets "acting as information disseminators and campaign publicisers," (16) though evidence suggests that they are, occasionally involved in direct action themselves. In an article 'So what is 'The Oatcake'', a personal history of the Stoke City fanzine, long time reader Kevin Bowers chronicles the publication's active role.

"Yet again the supporters turned to 'The Oatcake' but this time something more than an angry editorial happened. The first event was a demo at the Bradford game (filmed by Sky TV) where the supporters did not go to their seats for the first 15 minutes of the game. This probably did nothing more than give the members of the board mild embarrassment; the second event made them squirm. A meeting was held at the town hall, an ambitious venture by all accounts... On a cold and wet night nearly 2,000 supporters turned up to give an overwhelming vote of no confidence in the board." (17)

IDENTITY AND FOOTBALL FANDOM

The radical changes in the football industry in the last decade have directly influenced the social structure of spectatorships and transformed the cultural identity of its supporters. As far back as 1971, Ian Taylor spoke of the “embourgeoisment” (18) of football, suggesting “a former working class pastime is becoming increasingly interpreted as a middle class leisure activity.” (19)

The subsequent effects of commercialisation, media saturation and an apparent respectability have, it would seem, attracted a new type of supporter - one that is more discerning and wealthy, yet passive and superficial. Detractors argue they lack the emotional responsibility and conviction of the traditional fan, and perceive the game as a consumer product.

But the increasing affluence of the typical supporter is not the only changing shift in spectatorship. Hooliganism in the 70's and 80's drove many of the older supporters from the game for good, and, despite a recent resurgence, female fans and those from ethnic communities remain a minority.

‘Sky TV’ is much maligned within the fanzine fraternity. However, predictions that it would reduce supporters to a nation of ‘armchair viewers’ have not been realised. The vast majority still watch ‘Sky’ in pubs and clubs, to the benefit of the publicans and breweries who have equipped their establishments with satellite dishes and big screens. This has, in effect, created a new sub-culture - new spectatorships in microcosm, which has reinforced the sport’s traditional links with pub culture. Steve Redhead’s theory on post fandom suggests that “the fragmentary, self conscious, reflexive notion of what it means to be a fan of soccer...is now more pervasive.” (20) Football therefore exists only as a component of a lifestyle procured through “style surfing.” (21) The post fan, Redhead argues, has replaced the ‘fanatic’, and “does not have to leave the home or the bar to see the object of ‘the gaze’.” (22)

The new ‘identikit’ football supporter, typically young, white, male, affluent and single, embodies much of the ‘new laddism’ culture of the 90’s that is somehow already politically correct, and therefore does not have to be. Cheeky sexism and coded racism is legitimised through deliberate irony. He is encouraged by a media reinvention of the game, infatuated with the glamour of the Premier elite and the rejuvenation of traditional football cultures and prejudices.

This is reflected in the steady rise in monthly magazines such as ‘4-4-2’ and ‘Total Football’. Glossy, high in photographic content and populist analysis, they reveal a reluctance to challenge controversial issues and rarely encourage radical comment. Many of the advertisements are not related to football - anything from Hollywood movies and computer games to mobile phones and hair gel - which confirms similarities with ‘male lifestyle’ magazines such as ‘Loaded’ and the ‘laddism’ of football fandom.

Whilst there is evidence of new fan culture in the fanzine movement, the majority of fanzines display, through distinct social and cultural references, nostalgia for the traditional terrace culture. Indeed, Ian Taylor suggests the fanzine industry has been

the primary advocate in 'reactivating' the emotional prejudices of a culture which he argues was one of "rampant racism, crudely sexist banter, and of aggravation conducted by groups of young white males of little education and even less wit." (23) Many fanzines openly despise the embourgeoisment of the game, which they believe has "sanitised and anaesthetised the experience of being a football supporter." (24)

Of course, the fanzine is often championed as a working class phenomenon, yet it is well documented that many punk and early football fanzines were predominantly produced at work, utilising employer's photocopiers and printers, which would rather suggest a white collar working / lower middle class editorial. Inevitably, the fanzine writer stereotype as the shy, socially awkward 'geek' is hard to shrug off. With tongue in cheek, Tom Davies dismissed the radical crusade often associated with the movement, to expose personal motivation in his article 'Born to be a fanzine writer' (WSC issue 43).

"...your main motive for getting involved is the chance to see your name in print loads of times, thereby appearing dead cool, impressing all the girls, and perhaps even getting a chance to be on the telly..." (25)

Fanzine readers are equally difficult to categorise. Whilst surveys suggest an ostensibly male readership, probably in their twenties or thirties, it may rather reflect the social and cultural persuasions of the writers, which can vary with each fanzine. Typical readers will however, tend to be sympathetic to radical thought and expression, with a liking for the offbeat and diverse.

Only a third of the fanzines in my survey regularly use female contributors, whilst only one, Swindon Town's 'The 69er' is edited by a woman. Whilst the male dominance is hardly surprising, the exact form and capacity of the female contribution to the scene is not always evident, since fanzines rarely credit individual features.

The male domination of the supporters' community may reflect the physical, and often aggressive, nature of the game, yet it is more likely to be a response to its rituals of spectatorship, evolved through generations of fandom, its instinctive links with pub culture, and its mass media perception. Female fans remain a minority. Though their numbers are growing (10% at many Premier club attendances), their role is often challenged by the bullish belief amongst many male supporters that their interest is somehow secondary, only developed through relationships as girlfriends or wives. However, there is little evidence of attempts to create a divisive feminist sub-culture within the supporters' community. Most female fans seem content to co-exist with their fellow male supporters, even if they are excluded from much of the traditional culture and ritual.

*"After about half an hour, this gear's so strong Smiggy's paralysed from the waist down and these two Itai's have got their hands down his pants and are going to give him a seeing to, you know, Pulp Fiction style. He can hardly talk but he's going - 'Kev, Kev help me! Eventually I woke up, I couldn't believe me f***in' eyes. I battered them bastards all around the boat. For the record his arse didn't get breached... but that man will owe me to the day he dies!"* (26)

'Kev the Mod's' exploits following England, as recalled in the Leicester City fanzine 'Where's all the Money Gone?', is typical fanzine 'laddism'. Whilst fanzines and the new football literati of the 90's have challenged the traditional forms of sports writing, it has done little to question its male domination. True, there is little evidence of any openly sexist agendas in the fanzines I reviewed, but neither has the movement used the opportunity to promote the role of women within the supporters' community. Instead, it has merely perpetuated, often unconsciously, the gender specificity of sports writing. Through cultural references and emotional identification, fanzines continually redefine traditional elements of masculinity and male bonding. Female contributions to fanzines can subvert and challenge traditional prejudices in the game, offer a fresh diversity to its coverage, and provide "a wider substantive and theoretical focus of football culture," (27) yet their influence remains limited and disappointingly insubstantial.

The majority of editors questioned considered their fanzine to be suitable for children, though a number of these admitted to a predominantly adult content, expressing a reluctance to sell to younger children. Many fanzines include elements of profanity and sexual innuendo.

The football industry is united in recognising the need to attract young supporters to the game. Larger clubs in particular have encouraged the influx of young fans with junior memberships, family stands and the intensive merchandising of replica kits. Similarly, the commercial sector has saturated the market with publications targeted at younger supporters. A typical example is 'Shoot', the long running weekly enjoyed by several generations of football mad schoolboys. Today's 'Shoot' is glossy and colourful, with a bold tabloid style. Typical features include full page posters, star interviews and jokes, games and quizzes.

There is however no indication to date of any independent publications aimed specifically at young supporters. Whilst a niche may exist at top Premier clubs, particularly for match day purchase, 'kid's fanzines' would have to compete with the professional publications to which young fans are accustomed, and whose production values may be beyond the limitations of an independent publisher. As always, children are amongst the most discerning of consumers.

The dramatic rise in football literature in the last few years has witnessed a new trend in football writing, which has both reflected and contributed to the emergence of a new cultural identity. The catalyst for this, Nick Hornby's 'Fever Pitch' has become one of the best selling football books ever. First published in 1992, it is written in the form of a diary, structured around key football matches in the author's life, supporting Cambridge United, England and most notably, his beloved Arsenal.

There have been better books about football, but few have captured the mood of the times so intensely. Its self depreciating humour made it equally popular with non-football fans, particularly female readers. Here was a middle class professional, sensitive and articulate, driven by primitive, working class urges - torn between the sensibilities of nineties 'new man' and the 'laddism' of his football addiction. We see how it affects his life, his relationships and his career.

'Fever Pitch' gave football a literary respectability and paved the way for numerous successors, of varying quality, eager to capitalise on what those within the publishing industry labelled the 'Hornbyization' of the game. Its style set a trend in football writing - viewing the game from the fan's perspective. Suddenly it seemed, everybody was writing about football - soap stars, pop celebrities and even politicians were encouraged to recollect childhood days on the terraces.

Interestingly, the diary style 'slice of life' entries in 'Fever Pitch' were reminiscent of much of what fanzine writers had been doing for years - personal, idiosyncratic, humorous and high on emotion and addiction. Yet whilst fanzines are perceived as an example of the "low 'literaturisation' of soccer culture," (28) 'Fever Pitch' became, in effect, a fanzine for the bookshelf, and was instrumental in introducing the game to the chattering classes.

Whilst the rise in quality, sometimes distinguished football writing, in whatever guise, has to be welcomed, a recent trend in books about football hooliganism is rather more disturbing. Though several are examples of responsible, investigative journalism, many sensationalise and even glamorise the movement, wandering incongruously between the distinctions of fact and fiction.

The majority of fanzine editors questioned have published articles regarding football hooliganism or racism. Those that have not may do so purely through personal choice, feeling it does not fit into the character of their publication, whilst others may not have contributors who have been personally exposed to major incident.

Football hooliganism and its subversive culture is far too complex an issue to discuss in depth here, yet fanzines constitute a part of the 'collective responsibility' of its coverage and analysis within the media. They can speak out against such elements, and deride them. The 'Hard Bastard' cartoon strip in 'The Oatcake' (issue 204) portrays a hooligan as cowardly and pathetic to comic effect. Supporters are often at the 'sharp end' of hooliganism and usually suffer its consequences. They can provide lucid and credible analysis from grass roots level, that can contest the often over zealous reactions of the press.

Issue 10 of the Millwall fanzine 'Tales from Senegal Fields' adorns its front cover with sensationalist tabloid headlines, following clashes with Manchester City supporters, along with the title 'Here we go again'. Inside, the fanzine points to involvement from other London club hooligans and retorts:

"... the club and the fans have been working hard to rebuild and change the reputation... most of this good work has been thrown down the toilet in one night of pure madness and stupidity. The ringleaders are NOT Millwall fans and certainly don't give a toss about the club. They were suffering the effects of drink and were only interested in kicking it off." (29)

In the same issue, Dave 'Hogs Breath' Martin writes candidly of the irony of Millwall's notoriety.

“Whilst all of us enjoy the reputation to a certain extent, it can be quite useful at times...pitch invasions and big time ‘offs’ may well be good fun but they don’t do Millwall FC much good.” (30)

It would be wrong to promote the hooligan reputation of Millwall by focusing entirely on them - many other clubs have similar minority elements, but such quotes demonstrate how fanzines like ‘Tales from Senegal Fields’ can present the supporters’ perspective, thereby balancing media interpretation, even though their influence remains limited.

Despite the continued success of black players at all levels of football, this has not been reflected within the game's spectatorships, with black support disproportionately represented at many clubs, whilst the sport continues to fail in its desire to attract interest, both on and off the field, from the country's Asian communities.

The long running ‘Let’s kick racism out of football’ campaign has united the sport’s administration, clubs and supporters. Yet the fanzine movement has largely failed to promote active involvement from supporters within the ethnic minorities, retaining its traditional white dominance. Elements of overt racism remain in football sub-cultures, and fanzines are reluctant to tackle the complex, deeply rooted psychological prejudices prevalent within the supporters’ community.

Whilst the public distribution of racist and subversive material at football grounds is usually met with retribution from supporters, the media may be used within underground hooligan networks. It is well known that hard-core elements, though small in numbers, are highly organised. Though often displaying allegiance to a specific club, they may use covert networks to provoke or challenge rival fans before a forthcoming fixture, or as a means to rally together for games involving the national team.

Recognised hooligan organisations are constantly vulnerable to police surveillance and even covert infiltration. Therefore, print media may be adopted as a secure method of communication. This may exist in the form of simple messages or primitive newsletters, yet as football hooliganism is known to adopt subversive and racist imagery such as the swastika, there is no reason why the visual style of a fanzine is not used. These would however, by necessity, remain underground, only accessible through established hooligan networks, and therefore I can only speculate about their existence and the extent to which they are distributed.

FANZINE PRODUCTION, STYLE AND CONTENT

Relatively few fanzines are one man operations. The majority tend to involve a production team of two or three, whilst relying on a small, reliable contingent of regular contributors. The days of cutting and pasting hand written texts together on the kitchen table seem long gone. Every fanzine I reviewed was predominantly word processed, usually on a home PC, with many of these utilising a commercial DTP software program. Whilst printers and photocopiers are still used for editing purposes, the majority employ a professional print shop for final runs.

The efforts involved in publishing a fanzine are often beyond the comprehension of many readers - writing and typing articles, compiling and editing contributions, preparing visual imagery and layout. 'The Peterborough Effect' specifically requests that contributions be sent on floppy disc to save time. In addition to this, editors need to organise distribution, advertising and print runs, whilst carefully balancing finances and revenue. In issue 19, 'Shaymen Down South' documents the fanzine's hopes for expansion.

"Our current print limit is 120 copies, we would like to increase this to 200 so that we can try out a few marketing ideas. There are no known commercial printers who would do such a print run at an economical price... The publication is likely to average 24 pages (6 sheets of A4 paper) so we are looking at 1,200 sheets of double sided printing. Expenses of up to £60 per issue are currently available. The copy for printing can be made available on e-mail, on disc or on paper." (31)

Advertising in fanzines is typically sparse - a fraction of that prevalent in the professional press. 'When Saturday Comes' is the major advertiser, reinforcing their links with the grass roots of the industry. Many fanzines are totally ad-free, and therefore generate all their revenue from sales, whilst the remainder limit theirs to mainly local enterprise, who occasionally adopt the offbeat style and humour of the publication.

Editors and writers devote long hours outside work, during evenings and weekends, under pressures common to commercial publishing, yet with a fraction of the time, resources and financial incentive (fanzine profits are marginal and a minority achieve it with every issue). Whilst they may share methods and hardware with the professional industry, they retain the amateur ethos of the hobbyist and enthusiast. A non-league fanzine editor states:

"We produce the 35 page fanzine without any adverts or financial sponsors. It is solely self financed - we cover our costs and use the profits to help the club by way of match sponsorships etc." (32)

A fanzine may become so well established, not only within its supporters community, but also throughout the industry, that when its creator decides to 'retire', another individual or group may take over the publication, retaining its name, and even its editorial style (similar to commercial publishing). Indeed, fanzine 'veterans' may have several different publications to their name.

Whilst many fanzines are able to depend on a reliable source of input from regular contributors, some at times, become desperate for greater response. In an urgent plea in issue 23, Rochdale fanzine 'Exceedingly Good Pies' states:

"...the number of articles, letters, features etc. that have been received in the last 12 months has been of a pitifully low amount...we are unable to say at present if EGP will be able to continue in its current format for the whole of this season or indeed continue at all." (33)

Fanzines frequently encourage response from their readers too. Indeed, many see this as their primary role, providing a wide forum of ideas and opinions and thereby creating a "culture of dissent." (34) The most evident form of reader participation is the letters page, which encourages interaction, and provides an opportunity for strong opinion and radical thought that would otherwise be excluded from exposure in the professional media, such as the local press. Sometimes, they can evoke a response from the fanzine or other readers, thereby instigating debate and encouraging fan democracy.

Fanzine titles tend to be highly original, humorous and off-beat. Many indicate the club they follow - its nickname, team colours or home ground, or refer to a present or ex-player such as the Manchester City fanzine 'Bert Trautmann's helmet'. Some adopt regional colloquialisms, football songs or slang, whilst others may use or derive elements from popular culture exclusive of football, such as TV, film and pop music. (The Burnley fanzine 'Kicker Conspiracy' is named after a song by the Mancunian indie band 'The Fall', who filmed the video at Turf Moor). The remainder, it would seem, are totally abstract, their meanings known only to the fanzine writers themselves.

Many fanzines can serve a functional purpose, often providing practical information, particularly for supporters travelling to forthcoming away fixtures. Typical of many, though particularly good, is Nuneaton Borough's 'To the Manor Reborn', whose comprehensive guide includes helpful tips such as motorway junctions, coach prices and train timetables, along with details of how to find the ground, nearby pubs and admission fees.

Fanzines subvert traditional modes of sportswriting. David Rowes' study of sports discourse would suggest that fanzines often adopt an "orthodox rhetoric" (35) displayed in the ".form of advocacy or editorial journalism instead of reportage." (36) Though they may cover events and issues common to the professional press, they usually do so from a different slant or aspect, often with a peculiarity or nuance that is highly personal and subjective. This can take many forms, though fanzine writing tends to follow distinct paths such as radical conjecture, humour and nostalgia.

Fanzines are inherently personal. Opinions are often radical and, conversant with the fanzine ethos, tend towards the 'personal politics' popularised by the new left in the late sixties. By "viewing a topic through a highly subjective lens," (37) fanzine writers provide a highly eclectic mix of personal expression, that can even include poetry and songs. This form of "reflexive analysis," (38) creates, according to Rowes, a "tension between universalism (an abstract ideal) and particularism (the lived experience)." (39)

Fanzine humour takes many forms. Much of it is inextricably linked with traditions in football fandom, yet it also reflects the personality and cultural influences of its writers. One editor questioned professed his humour is “more Hislop and Merton than Hale and Pace.” (40) From the highly satirical to debased toilet gags, humour is often used subversively. Many fanzines continually play on deeply rooted club rivalries, evident at all levels, the worst of which can be highly antagonistic and provocative. Most of the light hearted humour is reserved for players and officials of their own club, often poking fun at playing abilities and physical attributes.

Excursions into trivia expose the self awareness of the stereotypical fanzine writer as football ‘anorak’. The seemingly endless preoccupation with food, for example, spills into many away match reports. Though it is common to the traditions of fan culture, the deliberate over-emphasis on the quality of an opposition's pies or chips is used as a comic device. Lapses into nostalgia are similarly common. With misty eyed tales of ex-players, cup runs and days on the terraces, they constantly regurgitate traditional sources of football culture. In issue 3, the aforementioned ‘Kicker Conspiracy’ brilliantly recalls football songs from the seventies.

“Also added to the supporters’ ritual were a number of handclap rhythms - one sometimes wonders how ‘70’s fans found time to watch football. The ‘We’re gonna win the football league again’ chant / handclap had its musical origins in a R’n’B number (sometimes played at the Hop) and also used as an introductory jingle on Tony Blackburn’s ‘school salute’ slot... Spotting ‘Oh Alan Alan, Alan Alan Alan Alan Stevenson’ as ‘Chicory Tip’s’ ‘Son of my Father’ is something that falls into the capabilities of a blind man on a galloping horse.” (41)

Fanzine design is traditionally amateurish and eclectic, rejecting the convention and order of the professional press. Despite the new technology, football fanzines still tend towards elements of cut and paste, indicative of their punk ancestry, and its “access aesthetic.” (42) Long passages of text are interrupted. Visual images are randomly distributed. No two pages are alike. One editor suggests his fanzine “breaks down each page into more readable, eye catching ‘chunks’.” (43)

However, such juxtapositions have, it would seem, been discarded by many in the industry, whose layouts tend towards commercial conformity (encouraged, no doubt, by the increasing use of DTP software), whilst others have little visual content whatsoever. Whilst traditional imagery such as cartoons, comic strips, photo-captions and newspaper cuttings remain a common source of fanzine culture, several publications, such as ‘No More Pie in the Sky’ (Notts. County), have come to rely entirely on commercial software ‘clip art’ for their visual content. A typical floppy disc with 200 football related images (players, boots, scarves etc.) costs £20.

Traditional elements of fanzine design may have resulted unintentionally from an absence of professional training and tight deadlines. Yet it would appear that editors are increasingly determined to present a more professional format at the expense of spontaneity and radical visual expression. The traditional amateurism of fanzines reinforces their familiarity. The occasional use of hand-written text and badly drawn cartoons humanises the content. Though many fanzines have become visually dull and

uninspiring, the best still reflect the spontaneous excitement and enthusiasm of the movement.

Fanzines are often influenced by popular culture. It is traditional to beg, steal or borrow from commercial sources. Fanzine titles, as we have already seen, are often derived from such elements. But it is equally common to refer to TV programmes, films and popular music within specific articles and features. This often exposes the age and gender of the writer and “invokes similar structures of feeling and sensibility between text and reader by employing emotional identification with specific cultural references.” (44) Within a single issue (number 10), Scunthorpe United fanzine ‘Son of a Ref’ provides a spoof pantomime poster, a comic strip based on ‘The Exorcist’ and a film script derived from ‘Withnail and I’.

In addition to this, many fanzines regularly recycle photographs and other visual imagery, often distorting or manipulating them to comic effect. A typical example is the photo caption or speech bubble, derived from the sixties underground press and particularly synonymous with ‘Private Eye’.

How much of this recycling is done unsolicited is not known. The fanzine industry is not traditionally renowned for adhering to copyright laws, and it may vary considerably with each publication. If this is a form of piracy, it has a cultural analogy with the rap musician or DJ, who takes samples from other, usually more mainstream, music to mix them into a new style. However, many fanzines, particularly those who support high status clubs and generate large readerships, are as defensive of their own copyrights as any commercial publication, often displaying the standard statutory warnings. This is a total reversal of the policy of many early punk fanzines, which openly encouraged the copying of their material as an integral part of their ethos.

Whilst this wanton piracy has been abandoned by their footballing successors, the reproducing of articles is practised, when formally agreed upon by the relative parties. Recycled features tend to include contents that are relevant to the game in general, to the fanzine movement, or to the supporter’s community as a whole.

A fanzine may publish an article originally regarding another club, if its relevance can be translated to their own supporters’ interest or concern. Following the transfer of QPR left back Rufus Brevett to Fulham, ‘There’s only one F in Fulham’ ran an article ‘Ruthless Rufus?’ in their October / November 1998 issue. This had been originally written by QPR fan Clive Gifford for his fanzine ‘A Kick up the R’s’ (issue 99) at the time of the player’s departure. What had originally been conceived as a fond farewell for one set of supporters became, in effect, an introduction to the player for another.

If fanzines borrow from popular culture, then it is also apparent that the roles are often, if less significantly, reversed. Elements of fanzine design in particular, have been adopted by many commercial publications from time to time, often used sparingly as an antidote to their largely conventional, innocuous style. Jokes, sketches and photo captions are regularly found amongst the glossy conformity. Many match programmes, as already documented, have developed a more relaxed and eclectic format in response to the direct competition from fanzines at home fixtures.

But the influence of fanzines on mainstream culture is not restricted to the print media. There have been several attempts to encompass the style of a fanzine in a video format, most notably, in footballing terms, with BBC2's former 'Standing Room Only' and the laddish 'Fantasy Football League' (ITV, formally BBC2).

No fanzine or its writer is exempt from libel. Despite the limited circulation and influence that fanzines invariably assume, they are as responsible to the laws of the land as any commercial publication. This is highlighted in a letter 'What price free speech?' published in the Worksop Town fanzine 'The Toothless Tiger' (issue 16). Rob Waite documents the case of Steve Harland, editor of the Darlington fanzine 'Mission Impossible'.

"Believe it or not, in this land of free speech and democracy, Harland is at present being sued for a four figure sum, and running up solicitors bills in excess of £400 for telling the truth about a dubious character called Steve Morgon. In essence all this DFC stalwart did was reveal a few home truths about a deceitful asset stripper, which is not against the law. But he misspelled Morgon's name (Moron and Mor(g)on) on two separate occasions, and subsequently is being sued for defamation of character." (45)

The network between fanzines, established early in the movement, remains strong. Half the editors questioned confirmed links with other publications. It is loosely based, and the majority only establish long standing ties with one or two others, usually ones whose clubs play in the same league or division. There is however, evidence of an empathy between fanzines from the different echelons of the game, and the regular swapping or trading of fanzines, and that of fanzine articles, within the industry may extend to greater numbers.

The future of fanzines cannot be assessed without discussing the effects of computer technology. I have already documented their use in fanzine production, and an increasing number (about half the fanzines I reviewed) have established an e-mail address. Relatively few however operate a web site. Those that do, seem to be high status fanzines such as 'Talk of the Tyne' and 'The Oatcake'. So far, this is predominantly the reserve of the commercial sector in the game. Many clubs have one, as do commercial enterprises with vested interests in the sport. Further fanzines may follow the trend. Indeed, one editor suggested "The 'zine bubble has definitely burst. Websites are taking over as they are far quicker to 'press'." (46) However, their effectiveness is limited to the number of supporters who are online, and they do not possess the physical and personal appeal of a printed fanzine on match days, in its natural environment.

CONCLUSION

One could suggest that the football fanzine is merely a succession of idiosyncratic rantings from an individual or group, irritatingly thrust into the faces of unsuspecting supporters on match days. On the other hand, it can be promoted as an independent 'voice' of the disaffected supporter, championing the views of the football fan, providing a forum for discussion and debate.

Inevitably, the truth lies somewhere between the two, but where? Of course, no two fanzines are alike, though they do tend to follow distinct patterns of style, attitude and conjecture. Indeed, after reading nearly a hundred fanzines during my research, it is very easy to be critical of the similarities and general lack of originality in the movement. However, the vast majority of supporters only encounter those connected to their club, and often only one. The fact that to them it provides an alternative to the hackneyed commercial press is what gives the movement its continued momentum.

But herein lies a shortcoming of the fanzine industry, that their influence is inevitably limited by their natural audience and circulation. It would therefore be unwise to attempt, as many analysts have previously done, to legitimise the power of the football fanzine through its combined movement, when the majority remain staunchly partisan to a specific club. (The scarcity of general football fanzines only emphasises this and reinforces the importance of 'When Saturday Comes').

True, the existence of networks within the industry does point to a communal cause for the wider supporters' community, and the provoking of club rivalries is often tempered by typical fanzine humour. But it is mass media coverage of the game, particularly its related hooliganism, which influences the perception of the general public, including the majority who do not support football. And it is this perception which usually imparts pressure on the sport's administration and political lobbies, which in turn instigates changes in the game. Despite the rise of the independent supporters' movement and the founding of the FSA, the authorities still display a reluctance to listen. All this leaves the ordinary club supporter feeling powerless, and fanzines in particular, in their insularity, have little or no influence.

As I have documented, supporter's communities are vulnerable to internal politics and differences, and to apathy inherited through deeply rooted emotional ties. Whilst there is an argument for greater unity at some clubs, the dilemma at many is one of representation. Few fanzines are pretentious enough to promote themselves as a leading voice within the supporting community, preferring instead, to provide a forum for discussion and debate, between individual fans, supporters' associations and occasionally, even the clubs themselves.

The changing identity of the supporter's community has done little to affect deeply rooted rituals and prejudice. The 'new fan', "no longer the traditional cloth cap figure, but a passive selective consumer" (47) has, in many respects, merely adopted traditional terrace culture, and reinvented it as a lifestyle accessory through new fandom 'style surfing'. 'New laddism' is much like 'old laddism' except it is more middle class. To quote Steve Redhead "post fandom is well illustrated here by the playfulness and jokey irony of soccer fanzines." (48) Yet he concedes that, at times,

the movement has “inevitably also included...many examples of soccer fanzine writing which were downright sexist, racist, homophobic and xenophobic.” (49)

The majority of fanzines represent supporters of clubs that have largely lost out in the embourgeoisment of the game. ‘Sky TV’, all-seater stadiums and executive boxes are frequently treated with contempt. Many fanzine writers display an affinity with terrace culture, in what Sarah Champion calls “an unashamed celebration of sheer ugliness and low art,” (50) through distinct emotional reference and nostalgia, even though this excludes minority constituents within the supporters community which the movement has largely failed to encourage.

Few however, could doubt the commitment and dedication of fanzine producers. They feel deeply passionate about their club and the game in general, whilst retaining a strong identity with the ethos of the self publishing movement, as was demonstrated by the enthusiastic and generous response of those who helped with my research.

Of course to many supporters, if a fanzine raises a laugh or a smile at half time, it is worth the money, but I hope this dissertation has demonstrated how fanzines can represent a “particularly significant example of cultural and political contestation,” (51) even if their influence will always remain limited. I have attempted to define their role within the supporting communities at club level, and their response to the changing identity of football fandom and its culture. Fanzines constantly remind us that there is more to being a football supporter than owning a replica shirt and a satellite dish.

The movement may, as several editors in my survey suggested, have reached its peak, with “the highpoint of its cultural effect...now long since past.” (52) Yet the role that fanzines have to play in the “political democratisation of football” (53) remains as vital as ever. The democracy of views and opinions they provide encourages individual expression and debate, and allows the voice of the supporter to be heard above the roar of the crowd.

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APPENDIX A: FANZINE TITLES

The following titles are the fanzines that I reviewed during my research. This is only a fraction of the total number of English football fanzines currently under production, which may run to over 500.

Another View from the Tower (Blackpool)

Back of a Postage Stamp (Woking)

Bastard in Black (general)

Bert Trautmann's Helmet (Manchester City)

Blyth Spirit (Blyth Spartans)

Bucks Fizz (Telford United)

City Gent (Bradford City)

Cockney Rebel (Chelsea)

Come in No. 7 Your Time is Up (Bristol City)

Do I Like Tangerine (Blackpool)

Elfmeter (German football)

Exceedingly Good Pies (Rochdale)

Fanzine Collector (general)

Flair's Back in Fashion (England national team)

Flashing Blade (Sheffield United)

Fly Me to the Moon (Middlesbrough)

The Football Supporter (FSA)

4,000 Holes (Blackburn Rovers)

The Fox (Leicester City)

Give 'em Beans (Barrow)

Give us an R (Tranmere Rovers)

Hoof! (Plymouth Argyle)

The Holy Trinity (Aston Villa)

I Can Drive a Tractor! (Norwich City)

Jackanory (Swansea City)

Jumpers for Posts (King's Lynn)

Keegan was Crap Really (Doncaster Rovers)

A Kick up the R's (Queens Park Rangers)

Kicker Conspiracy (Burnley)

Leyton Orienteer (Leyton Orient)

A Load of Bull (Wolverhampton Wanderers)

A Love Supreme (Sunderland)

Mad as a Hatter (Luton Town)
The Mad Axeman (Lancaster City)
The Mag (Newcastle United)
Mission Impossible (Darlington)
My Eyes have Seen the Glory (Tottenham Hotspur)

No More Pie in the Sky (Notts County)
No-one Likes Us (Millwall)

The Oatcake (Stoke City)
Offence (general)
The Onion Bag (Chester City)
On the Ball (women's football)
On the Terraces (West Ham United)
Our Flag's been to Wembley (Braintree Town)

The Peterborough Effect (Peterborough)
Poppies at the Gates of Dawn (Kettering Town)

Rage On (Oxford United)
Red News (Manchester United)
Rigore (Italian football)

Scuffers! (Stevenage Borough)
Sex and Chocolate (Sunderland)
Shaymen Down South (Halifax Town)
The 69er (Swindon Town)
A Slice of Kilner Pie (Huddersfield Town)
Son of a Ref (Scunthorpe Town)
The Square Ball (Leeds United)
The Supporter (general)

Tales from Senegal Fields (Millwall)
Tales from the Riverbank (London clubs)
Talk of the Tyne (Newcastle United)
The Tea Party (Stockport County)
There's only one F in Fulham (Fulham)
Tiger Rag (Hull City)
The Tommy Cook Report (Brighton and Hove Albion)
The Toothless Tiger (Worksop Town)
Tora Tora Tora (Chesterfield)
Two for Joy (Chorley)
United We Stand (Manchester United)
Up the Arse (Arsenal)

The Vale Park Beano (Port Vale)

The Wanderer (Wycombe Wanderers)
The Wearside Roar (Sunderland)

When Skies are Grey (Everton)
Where's the Money Gone? (Leicester City)
Without a Care in the World (Ipswich Town)

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Flat 6
6 Havelock Street
Blackpool
FY1 4BN

Dear Sir

I am a BA (Hons) degree student at Blackpool and the Fylde College. I am currently compiling research for my 3rd year dissertation, in which I will be discussing the role of the football fanzine.

Please find enclosed a multiple choice questionnaire, which I have sent to a cross section of fanzine editors. I would be extremely grateful if you could spare a few minutes of your time to fill this in, and return it as soon as possible in the stamped addressed envelope provided. It would be most rewarding if you could also send a recent issue of your fanzine.

Please note that this is a general survey, and replies will be treated in the strictest confidence. No specific fanzine will be referred to in relation to the results of the questionnaire. Thank you for your kind co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Andy Coverdale

Questionnaire

Please tick one box only for each question, unless stated otherwise.
Feel free to add any extra comments you may wish to make on the sheet provided.

1. How much does your fanzine cost per issue?

- Up to 75p
- 75p to £1.50
- Over £1.50

2. How often do you sell your fanzine?

- Every home game
- Once a month
- Periodically

3. What are your average sales per issue?

- Up to 100
- 100 to 500
- Over 500

4. Do you sell your fanzine in the club's ground?

- Yes, with the club's permission
- Yes, without the club's permission
- No

5. Apart from match days, where else can I buy your fanzine? (tick any)

- Shops
- Pubs / clubs
- Mail order

6. Do you provide any of the following services? (tick any)

- Subscription
- Back issues
- Other sales (e.g. T-shirts)

7. Do you make any profit on your fanzine?

- Every issue
- Some issues
- None / loss

8. Does the club have any official involvement with your fanzine?

- Yes
- No

9. Have any individual players / staff been unofficially involved?

- Yes
- No

10. Which best describes the club's reaction to your fanzine?

- Friendly
- Antagonistic
- Apathetic / none

11. How many other fanzines do you know support your club?

- None
- 1 to 2
- 3 or more

12. Which of the following does your fanzine tend to cover? (tick any)

- Club
- Football in general
- Issues outside football

13. Which of the following do you consider your fanzine to be?

- Humorous
- Serious

14. Do you publish readers' letters / opinions?

- Yes
- No

15. Have you ever published articles regarding football hooliganism?

- Yes
- No

16. Have you ever published articles regarding racism in football?

- Yes
- No

17. Do you consider your fanzine to be suitable for children?

- Yes
- No

18. When did your fanzine start?

- Up to 3 years ago
- 3 to 10 years ago
- Over 10 years ago

19. How many people regularly work on your fanzine?

- 1 to 3
- 4 to 10
- Over 10

20. What is their average age?

- Up to 20 years
- 20 to 30 years
- Over 30 years

21. Are there any regular female contributors to your fanzine?

- Yes
- No

22. Which of the following are used to publish your fanzine? (tick any)

- Word processor
- PC
- dtp software
- Photocopier
- Printer
- Professional print shop

23. Do you have any links with fanzines that support other clubs?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Of the 50 questionnaires sent out, 10 were to Premier League fanzines, 10 to those of each division of the Football league and 10 non-league. Of these, I received a total of 37 replies.

1. How much does your fanzine cost per issue?

Up to 75p (8)
75p to £1.50 (27)
Over £1.50 (2)

2. How often do you sell your fanzine?

Every home game (5)
Once a month (5)
Periodically (27)

3. What are your average sales per issue?

Up to 100 (3)
100 to 500 (16)
Over 500 (18)

4. Do you sell your fanzine in the club's ground?

Yes, with the club's permission (8)
Yes, without the club's permission (9)
No (19)

5. Apart from match days, where else can I buy your fanzine?

Shops (26)
Pubs / clubs (13)
Mail order (35)

6. Do you provide any of the following services?

Subscription (27)
Back issues (33)
Other sales (13)

7. Do you make any profit on your fanzine?

Every issue (15)
Some issues (17)
None / loss (5)

8. Does the club have any official involvement with your fanzine?

Yes (1)

No (36)

9. Have any individual players / staff been unofficially involved?

Yes (19)

No (18)

10. Which best describes the club's reaction to your fanzine?

Friendly (15)

Antagonistic (8)

Apathetic / none (14)

11. How many other fanzines do you know support your club?

None (17)

1 to 2 (13)

3 or more (7)

12. Which of the following does your fanzine tend to cover?

Club (37)

Football in general (21)

Issues outside football (6)

13. Which of the following do you consider your fanzine to be?

Humorous (25)

Serious (12)

14. Do you publish readers' letters / opinions?

Yes (35)

No (2)

15. Have you ever published articles regarding football hooliganism?

Yes (25)

No (12)

16. Have you ever published articles regarding racism in football?

Yes (21)

No (16)

17. Do you consider your fanzine to be suitable for children?

Yes (24)

No (13)

18. When did your fanzine start?

Up to 3 years ago (7)

3 to 10 years ago (25)

Over 10 years ago (5)

19. How many people regularly work on your fanzine?

1 to 3 (26)

4 to 10 (8)

Over 10 (3)

20. What is their average age?

Up to 20 years (3)

20 to 30 years (15)

Over 30 years (19)

21. Are there any regular female contributors to your fanzine?

Yes (12)

No (25)

22. Which of the following are used to publish your fanzine?

Word processor (12)

PC (23)

DTP software (18)

Photocopier (11)

Printer (15)

Professional print shop (20)

23. Do you have any links with fanzines that support other clubs?

Yes (19)

No (18)