Artifact to Experience: *The development of visual presentation of music from the 1950's till the present.*

Benjamin Mark Stacey

Listaháskóli Íslands

Hönnunar- og ariktektúrdeild

Grafísk hönnun.

Artifact to Experience: *The development of visual presentation of music from the 1950's till the present.*

Benjamin Mark Stacey

Leiðbeinandi: Guðmundur Oddur Magnússon

Abstract:

In my essay I will be dealing with the topic of music marketing and its relative visuals. Especially that of album covers and its connections to marketing psychology in the later half of the 20th century. The main theory that the essay is centered on are the Freudian ideas of crowd psychology and the subconscious irrational urges and desires of consumers. In conjunction with these theories i will be looking at how these theories were utilized, manifest and in some cases thwarted by un-predictable technological and sociological shifts. The structure of the essay is primarily chronological starting out with Freuds theories and the use and expansion of them by Edward Bernays and how they are relevant to music marketing. The importance of the medium is also traced and its visual aspects explored through examples of groundbreaking album artwork from early Gramophone records, the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Yes and The Sex Pistols. The importance of the shift in medium is made apparent in the chapter on the internets effect on the modern music industry. Finally I will explore what the future may look like in regards to the fundamental shift of music out of a physical medium and the effects this may have on peoples perceived value of music. This theme and its underlying concepts are also the basis for my final project, Dot Plus Records.

Table of contents.

1. Introduction.

The 20th century saw a huge conceptual shift in ideas about how products should be marketed to consumers. Amongst other things this had its root in Freudian psychology and its use by production line based industrial societies. This paralleled and in some respects caused profound sociological changes that took place during the century. Essentially the shift was from a model where consumer purchases were based on need and on rational decision making to a model where consumers were driven to acquire by manipulation of their unconscious urges and desires.[1]

Music, as an art form, is particularly targeted on the emotional and subconscious aspects of human nature. The difficulty with marketing physical music (like records) is that you need to purvey a feeling of what the musical contents are like using graphic and visual communication with the consumer. The common denominator is that graphic and visual communication can, if desired, also address the subconscious and the emotional self. In tracing the history of the development of visual presentation of music in the latter half of the 20th century we can see how these Freudian marketing techniques were adapted and incorporated into music packaging and marketing.

---

[1] V Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders,* IG Publishing, Brooklyn, New York. 1957, p. 30 and A Curtis, *The Century of The Self, BBC*, 2002, Episode 1.

2. pre 50's:

a. Psychological basis for marketing strategies in the 20th century.

The central themes of marketing strategies in the 20th century were based in Freudian psychology. Sigmund Freud was a psychiatrist that lived and practiced in Vienna in the early 20th century and later on in London. He's known as a pioneer of psychoanalysis. His ideas were complex but there are some important features of his concepts that were to become applicable to marketing in general but in particular to that of music marketing. Freud believed that individuals were driven by unconscious, primitive, irrational urges predominantly of a sexual or aggressive nature.[2]

In psychoanalysis behavioral patterns and conscious thought were believed to be motivated by these subconscious drives and could be manipulated or altered by addressing the subconscious mind. The notion of addressing people's unconscious urges rather than their rational minds was to be utilized in formulating public opinions and later they were to be picked up and incorporated into marketing strategies starting in the 1920's by Freud's nephew Edward Bernays.[3]

b. Edward Bernays.

Edward Bernays was born in Vienna in 1891 but promptly moved to New York the following year. After graduating from Cornell University he began to pursue a career in journalism and as a publicist. Edward Bernays is widely considered to be the father of public relations. He was greatly influenced by his uncle's ideas and he developed Freudian ideas principally with the aim of helping big business to sell products. He was a very long-lived man and only died in 1995 and

---

[2] Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Sigmund Freud', Accessed 10 January 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud and Packard, 1957, p. 106-112.

[3] Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Edward Bernays', Accessed 10 January 2011 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Bernays and Curtis, 2002, Episode 2.

his ideas dominated concepts of marketing throughout most of the 20th century. The chief technique was to appeal to people's irrational, subconscious emotional desires rather than to their logical, rational selves. This meant that marketing contained hidden symbolisms and suggestions that appealed to the subconscious.[4]

c. Development of Freudian principles for marketing.

The most famous example is the "torches of liberty" event. In 1929 Bernays was working for the American Tobacco Company. At that time it was socially unacceptable for women to smoke, this was considered solely a male preserve. In consultation with the psychoanalyst A.A. Brill, Bernays was informed that smoking was driven by an oral-erotic impulse and that the cigarette was a subconscious symbol of the male organ. For a women to smoke would represent an emancipation because she would then, symbolically, have her own penis. She would then not require the services of or domination by a man. On hearing this, Bernays organized a publicity stunt. He sent word to the media that a group of suffragettes would make a protest, lighting "torches of freedom" in the New York City Easter Day parade. He arranged for a group of New York debutantes to simultaneously light cigarettes (the "torches of freedom") in the full glare of the world's press. The story was reported worldwide. At one stroke, smoking for women became not only socially acceptable, but also was made a symbol of their emancipation and individuality.[5]

Another example is the marketing of the Betty Crocker cake mixes. The early formulations of these cake mixes were simple powdered mixes and sales were poor. Bernays came up with the idea of reformulating the mixes so that the housewife needed to add an egg to the mix. This addressed the subconscious feelings of guilt felt by the housewife for taking a kitchen shortcut. They also thought that putting an egg into the mix was symbolic of the wife donating her egg to

---

[4] Wikipedia, 'Edward Bernays' 2011and Curtis, 2002, Episode 2.

[5] Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Torches of Freedom', Accessed 10 January 2011, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torches_of_Freedom and Curtis, 2002, Episode 2 – 3.

her husband.[6] Nowadays this may sound absurd but nevertheless sales of the Betty Crocker cake mixes soared.

d. Why Freudian principles work well with music.

It's easy to see that this type of emotionally targeted marketing is particularly suitable for music. Response to music is primarily an emotional activity. Prior to the development of Bernays' ideas (as will be developed below), appeals to consumers were on a rational basis that addressed the products superiority to the

(Image 1. Bobbie Lecan's Need More Band: Apaloosa Blues, HMV. 1920.)

consumers' conscious mind.[7] For music the only way to appeal to a consumer on a rational, logical basis was to market music according to the superior technical quality of the medium. [8] So for example the label of the early 78rpm record of Bobbie Leecan's Need-More Band recording of Apaloosa Blues is dominated by the image and markings of 'His Masters Voice' which was a reference to the technical qualities of the record rather than its contents.

e. Priority of recording-company to artist on the labels.

As we have seen, in the early days of the recording industry there was a far heavier emphasis on the technical aspects of the recordings as opposed to the more artist oriented model that we are familiar with today. This was mainly a result of the developing nature of the recording industrie's media. Technical superiorities of one or the other media over another were often touted as main selling points. Gramophones at the time were a very new technology and there was still a lot of debate and rivalry over what production methods

———————————————

[6] Packard, 1957, p. 90 and Curtis, 2002, Episode 2.

[7] Curtis, 2002. Episode 2.

[8] Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Gramaphone record', Accessed 10 January 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gramophone_record

and formats the recordings should be issued in.[9] Due to this feud between rival producers and developers of the format the technical aspects of the records were often if not always touted as the main selling point for the records rather than their content.

These factors had very important consequences for the graphic design of the records, firstly the record companie's name and reputation were much more represented than the artists. An example of this is shown in the Polydor cover of Marina by Los Espanoles.

On the cover and the label the name polydor is at the top, it is bigger and it is in a graphic element. That is, it has a higher position in the visual hierarchy of the design. The artist's name on the other hand is set in plain type, much smaller and almost at the bottom of the visual hierarchy.

(Image 2. Los Espanjoles: Marine, Polydor. 1954.)

As seen on the HMV label above, graphics were being used early on to represent an aspect of the recording.
Even though this could be a very enduring image (the HMV image has lasted throughout the 20th century)
it was still only illustrating a technical point rather than conveying an emotionally targeted message.

In order for Bernays theories and Freudian marketing principals to be implemented here there had to be a shift in emphasis from the technical qualities of the medium to the emotional qualities of the content, i.e. the music. This meant also that there had to be a shift in emphasis in the graphics from the record company to the artist.

_____

[9] Wikipedia, 'Gramaphone record' 2011

f. Radio has no visual or tangible element.

Another way people were listening to music was through the radio. In the 1920's the first widely accessible radio broadcasts were made and the use of radio as a source of entertainment had begun. Although as with gramophones the equipment needed to listen to the music was only really available to middle class households with disposable income. One of the main drawbacks of the radio for presenting music is that it is inherently unable to provide a visual element.[10]

This issue would rear its head again much later in the move of music to the internet, as we will see. But before that, in the fifties, the radio was to play a very important role in the rise of the 'pop star' and the resulting shift from the record companies towards the artists. This would have a very profound effect on the visual presentation and the way music was marketed.[11]

3. 1955-1965 the rise of the pop-star and production line economics.

Bernays was greatly influenced by the methods of public persuasion used by mass media to heighten animosity towards Germany during the First World War. After the war Bernays realized that if these means of mass persuasion could be so effective in times of war they could certainly be applicable in peace time as well.[12]

However Bernays was essentially an elitist. He thought that the masses, being driven by primitive and dangerous urges, needed to be controlled. They were too stupid to think for themselves and to allow them to do so was dangerous. Through an understanding of these Freudian drives, and through an ability to appeal directly to the unconscious mind Bernays felt that it was possible for a patrician elite to control the masses. This could be done with political or commercial ends in mind.

---

[10] Donlad Gíslason Ph.D., musicologist. Interview by the author, 3. January 2011.

[11] G Kot, *Ripped: How the Wired Generation Revolutionized Music.* Scriber, 2010.

[12] Curtis, 2002. Episode 2 and Wikipedia, 'Edward Bernays' 2011.

His intent was probably felt by him to be benign; he thought that reduction of the population to docile, satisfied consumers was an essential component of a stable, democratic, free market driven society.[13]

This idea that it was possible to control how people thought by a direct appeal to their subconscious, irrational and emotional selves also suited the model of big business manufacturing at this time (1950's and early 60's). Production line based economies of scale were essential to the profitability of manufacturing. Production lines are best suited to producing a lot of the same, of very similar product. Therefore it was important to get all consumers to want the same thing. So during this period, attempts at so called "mind control" by businesses was based on the strategy of homogeneity of thought, all consumers should be influenced to buy the same type of product.[14]

This production line based form of mass marketing was manifested in the music industry through a number of mechanisms. Firstly in order to make emotions based appeal to the consumers the promotion of music switched from its emphasis on the label and its technical quality to an emphasis on the music and more particularly the artist[15]. In order to suit the production line economic mentality of the time it was important to generate a large amount of popularity for individual artists. This promotion of individual artists allowed some of them to become really popular, to achieve pop-star status.

During the 1950's a generation of teenagers was gaining evermore freedom and power over how they spent their free time and especially how they spent their pocket money.[16] Increasingly more people could afford to buy records and the single was the most common form of music that was sold. Furthermore with the advent of the transistor radio people had a cheap portable and

_____

[13] Curtis, 2002, Episode 1- 2 and Wikipedia, 'Edward Bernays' 2011.

[14] Curtis, 2002, Episode 1- 2 and Packard, 1957, p. 161- 170.

[15] Arnar Eggert Thoroddssen, music journalist. Interview by the author. 12. Jan 2011.

[16] A Dister, *The Story of Rock*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1993, p. 34.

compact way of listening to music wherever they went[17]. This development expanded the reach and influence of the radio to parts of society that could not afford to buy records before and subsequently increased the clout of popular music. This was accompanied by aggressive promotion of individual artists over the radio often by corrupt means.[18]

(Image 3. The Beatles: Meet the Beatles. Capitol, 1963.)

Musicians of the day were increasingly coming from similar backgrounds and were of a similar age to the people that were listening to the music. This helped them form a personal emotional connection to them. The record labels sought to capitalize on this by promoting the bands more and more as personas and characters that the audience could "get to know".[19] The effect this had on the album covers was that images of the artists were increasingly being put on the covers as a means for people to get closer to them and hence get to know them better. The musicians were increasingly portrayed as icons that the audience wanted to emulate.

This idea of musicians as icons with broad, mass appeal is reflected in the imagery on the Beatles first album cover, "Meet the Beatles".[20] On the cover the band members are presented as straight forward, rather prosaic images. However the lighting, the direct gaze and the black background (and the "Beatle" haircuts) all combine to make an iconic, monolithic image. There is nothing here to appeal to different individual tastes, the emphasis is on mass appeal. Everyone should buy this record. This approach is underlined by the text's "England's Phenomenal Pop Combo" as though the whole country owned the band. Note that the name of the record label is still on the cover but its prominence is very much reduced.

---

[17] A C Altschuler, *All Shook Up,How Rock'n'Roll changed America.* Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 131-2.

[18] Altschuler, 2003, p. 150-60.

[19] Donald Gíslason Ph.D. 2011.

[20] Wax Poetics: *Cover Story: Album Cover Art*. Power House Books, 2009 and Dister, 1993, p. 57

4. 1965-1975s: The rise of individualism

Bernays and the Freudian marketing men did not have everything their own way. Indeed, by today's modern thinking the idea that women holding cigarettes feel satisfied because they have their own symbolic penis, or that by breaking an egg into a bowl of Betty Crocker cake mix a woman is dedicating her eggs and her fertility to her husband, is clearly ludicrous. But how did we get to the point of seeing this as a joke? There were several forces at work that started in the late 1950's and became very important in the 60's that undermined the Freudian vision of monolithic marketing through manipulation of the subconscious mind. This had profound effects on the way marketing strategies in general and music marketing in particular evolved in the latter part of the 20th century.

Firstly, in post Second World War Europe and America, people were shocked and afraid of what could happen if evil people were able to gain substantial influence over a population by appealing to their subconscious, irrational minds. The terrible tragedy brought upon the German nation and subsequently on other European countries and the Jewish diaspora by the Nazis was seen essentially as a case of Freudian manipulation of a population. Primitive impulses of hatred and violence were stirred up and directed against non Aryan races. Subconscious emotions of parental love and obedience were redirected towards a love of the state and subservience to it. In the post war world, people were very fearful of any suggestion that they were being manipulated by Freudian appeals to their subconscious.[21] These fears were brought out into the open by publication in 1957 of Vance Packard's "The Hidden Persuaders" which was an exposé of the mind controlling methods used by American advertising agencies.[22] While some of what Packard wrote was exaggerated to the verge of being conspiracy theorist, it found great resonance with the population at the time.[23] People began to mistrust and question what was being done to them

---

[21] Curtis, 2002. Episode 3.

[22] Packard, 1957, p. 188 – 240.

[23] M C Miller, 'Introduction' to Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders*, IG Publishing, New York, 2007, p. 9-30.

through manipulation of their subconscious minds. And, awareness is an effective way to short circuit a direct attempt to address the subconscious.

Secondly, during the 60's and 70's a social and cultural revolution swept through the Western world. The reasons behind this are numerous, but they were partly motivated by a growing mistrust of the patrician-capitalist model of a consumerist society. People started to question whether perhaps their

(Image 4. The Beatles: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Parlophone. 1967.)

consumerists wants and desires had actually been put there by some Madison Avenue marketing executive.[24] This led people to question what it was they actually did want. And the answer seemed to be diversity and richness of experience. They discovered that people are individuals and when freed up they will pursue a large variety of tastes and experiences.[25] This form of individual discovery was called "Self actualization".[26]

These changes had profound effects on the music industry and music marketing. Take for example a later Beatles album cover, Sgt. Pepper.[27] The iconography of the band members is still present. However the way they are dressed is certainly nonconformist, even for the time. The outfits, in their different colors are highly individualistic. The crowd around them is diverse and mysterious. Each individual in the crowd seems to have his or her own peculiar story attached to them. The entire image is filled with a sense of narrative, as if there is some strange story going on.

---

[24] Packard, 1957, p.231-240 and Miller, 2007, p.9-30

[25] J Morrison and R K Morrison, 'Woodstock Nation' in *The Rock History Reader*, T. Cateforis (eds), Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London, 2007, p. 115-119.

[26] Curtis, 2002. Episode 3.

[27] Wax Poetics, 2009 and Gunnar Lárus Hjálmarsson (dr. Gunni) musician. Interview by the author. January 13, 2011.

The appeal is no longer to a mass population who all think in the same way. The appeal is highly individualistic, highly fractionated, and targeted only on those who "get it" (as we all think we do). And just in case we don't get the point, figures of the old, monolithic iconic Beatles are standing just beside the band, looking somewhat subdued and rather like Madame Toussaud's Wax Works figures (which in fact they are).[28] Look how far we have come. Whether this image is reflecting the mood of the times, or whether it is driving the movement towards individualism, or whether it is purely an attempt to market the music to a new free thinking and individualistic audience is a matter for debate. Perhaps it is all three. Whatever the case, its message comes crashing through like a sledgehammer.

5. 1970's: The peak of the album cover.

a. Individualism on Abbey Road

During this period the vinyl record had become established as the predominant medium and there was no foreseeable technical development. The size of the album covers made them an especially suitable canvas for the album artwork. The growth of individualism was reflected in musical tastes and genres diversified to the point that people could base their personal identity around any given genre.[29] The buying of an album is the buying into an image and a statement of personal identity and individuality.

The growing individualism of the 60's and 70's allowed people to wriggle out from under the oppressive, monotonic shaping of consumers by marketers and advertisers of the 50's. But the freedom of the consumer would be short lived. The self-actualization of individuals allowed them to re-invent themselves, to reconstruct their own thoughts, values and ideals, their own style. Marketers were quick to pick up on this. Free thinking individuals, set about creating their own style, would need an appropriate set of products with which they could express themselves.

---

[28] Arnar Eggert Thoroddssen, 2011.

[29] Stuessy, 2008 and Donald Gíslason, 2011.

This opened up great potentials for diversification in markets. Fortunately, these developments were paralleled by complementary changes in manufacturing processes. Formerly, production-line economics meant that large runs of near-identical products were necessary. Therefore there was an interest in having consumers all with near-identical desires. New manufacturing processes meant that smaller runs were economic, and diversification of product lines first became possible, then became the rule.[30]

(Image 5 The Beatles: Abbey Road. Apple. 1969.)

The social development of an individualization of style is interestingly portrayed in the cover of Abbey Road.[31] Although this album was produced in 1969 it illustrates themes of artwork that are more relevant to the 70's and early 80's. Gone are the uniforms of Sgt. Pepper (although these uniforms are highly nonconformist and in different colours, they are nevertheless all of the same style). Now in Abbey Road, each one of the Beatles is showing a different, self-actualized style. John Lennon is showing the style of the long-haired, almost saintly, Peacenik. His later songs, like "Imagine" make it clear that he was inventing his own, humanist religion at this time. Ringo is a sharp-suited celebrity. Paul is the mild-mannered rebel, mixing his barefootedness and cigarette with a conventional suit. George Harrison has divested himself of worldly adornments (like a decent suit) to concentrate on more spiritual, existential matters. The message is "do your own thing, but you'll all identify with at least some aspect of this album".

There are other important aspects to this famous image. The band is seen as marching, with determination, across the direction of travel (the road). We the audience (as the traffic) are stopped. The band is marching across the perspective plane of the picture.

_____

[30] Curtis, 2002.

[31] Wax Poetics, 2009.

They seem to know where they are going, but it is not in the same direction as we the audience is going. At the time the album was recorded the band knew that they were going to split up and go their separate ways.[32] The Beatles would stop, and part company with their audience. This is exactly what is going on in the picture. They are walking off.

b. The publicity stunt.

Another of Bernays' tactics was to force his products into the public imagination by involving them in stories that would be reported in the press, creating what would now be called a "buzz" about them. The most famous example of this is the "torches of freedom" cigarette promotion referred to earlier. This idea of the "tie-in", getting the press to report on a story that had the essential purpose of promoting a product, is still used extensively in marketing today.[33] Imagery had its role in promoting this. Take another look at the cover of Abbey Road. At the time this album was released in 1969, a rumor was circulating that Paul McCartney had died in a car crash in 1966 and had been replaced by a look-alike. It is to this day not known for certain whether this was started as a deliberate publicity stunt by the Beatles (probably it was not) however there are indications that they tried to capitalize on it, by introducing cryptic symbolism into their works.[34] It was suggested that John Lennon says the words "I buried Paul" in the final section of the song "Strawberry Fields Forever". A second clue is the phrase "turn me on, dead man" audible when the song "Revolution #9" is played backwards. The cover of Abbey Road is said to be ripe with symbolism. John Lennon, leading the group and dressed all in white, is symbolic of a preacher or a heavenly being. Ringo, following dressed smartly in black symbolizes the mourner. George Harrison, dressed shabbily in denims and following behind, symbolizes the gravedigger. Paul (or his look-alike) is dressed in an out of date suit, is barefoot and smoking a cigarette (here a symbol of ill health, not emancipation). These symbols represent the corpse. The formal step of the group's march across the road can be seen as funeral procession, escorting Paul to the grave.

---

[32] Stuessy, 2008.

[33] Wikipedia, 'Edward Bernays' 2011.

[34] Wikipedia, 'Paul is Dead' 2011.

The apparently simple image of the Abbey Road cover is laden with symbolism, if you choose to view it that way. Perhaps it was all unintentional, that it is a simple picture of the band crossing Abbey Road on their way to the studio. Whatever the case, the image is considered so important that the zebra crossing on Abbey Road has recently been given Grade II Architectural Protection status by the U.K. government, a grading usually reserved for buildings of great historical importance.[35] Clearly someone thinks this image is important.

(Image 6. Pink Floyd: Dark Side of the Moon. Harvest / Capitol. 1973.)

c. Art work surpassing music

Album covers became so iconic that the cover artwork could surpass the notoriety of the albums contents.[36] People could buy albums purely based on the artwork on the cover because it was attractive or it fitted their image of themselves. This is a testament to the strength of the visuals being put on the covers. To this effect the album cover had become a work of art in its own right. Art is an emotional expression in the visual format as opposed to the musical.[37]
Its not a straight technical narrative portraying the band members or the recording quality but rather portrayed the mood of the albums contents. This is a move away from the rational to the irrational, emotionally driven choice. It fits in perfectly with the Freudian and Bernaysian marketing concepts.

The 1973 release by the band Pink Floyd, 'Dark side of the moon' featured cover-art by Storm Thorgerson who has since become a widely revered artist especially in the Realm of album

---

[35] Abbey Road Studios, Press Release: Accessed 10 January 2011. http://www.abbeyroad.com/news/story/?newsid=145

[36] Wax Poetics, 2009.
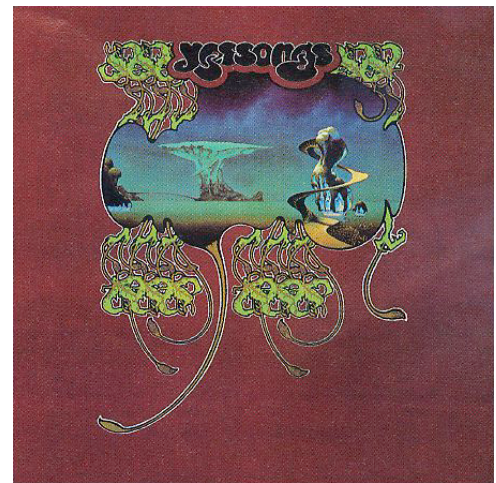
[37] Donald Gíslason, Ph.D., 2011.

artwork.[38] Its image of light passing through a prism is a prime example of an album's artwork that has surpassed its contents. The image has become so iconic that there are large amounts of people who may actually know and recognize the cover but do not even know anything about the band or the kind of music on the album itself.

This trend towards individualism and self actualization can if taken too far become self indulgent and sickly. An epitomy of this trend seen in both the cover and the contents of "Yessongs" by Yes. The cover contains an image of an introspective, figurative world which contains its own structures, laws of gravity, display fonts and obscure symbolism. The music is similarly undisciplined and self indulgent.

d. Punk as reactionary individualism

Predictably there was a reaction to all of this cloying individualism. In the late 70's it was swept away with violence by the punk rock movement. The contrast in the album covers couldn't be more stark. The cover of "Never Mind the Bollocks" looks raw and homemade in comparison to the carefully composed cover of Yessongs. The titles on the Sex Pistols cover look like they've been ripped out of a newspaper which they probably were. Of course the music is similarly raw as well.

(Image 7. Yes: Yessongs. Atlantic. 1973.)

Even though they were supposed to be the antithesis of what had come before the Sex Pistols actually conformed very well to a Bernaysian marketing strategy. These

(Image 8 The Sex Pistols: Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols. Virgin. 1977.)

_____

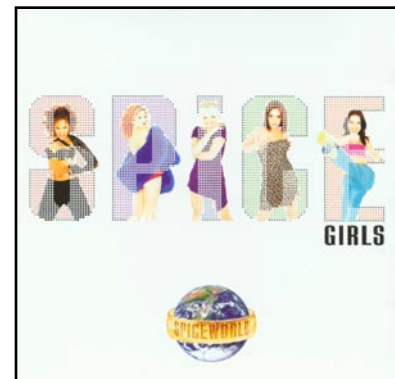[38] Wax Poetics, 2009 and Stuessy, 2008.

people had an image presented by both their album covers and in their appearance that transcended their music and defined a whole new genre of individual expression, the Punks. There are indications that this was deliberately orchestrated by Malcolm McLaren, creator and manager of the Sex Pistols.[39]

6. 1990's: Consumer profiling.

As marketers studied the development of the new individuality in consumers, a surprising concept emerged. Although people were re-inventing themselves and developing their own personal styles, these styles could be classified quite easily into only a few simple types. Thus advertisers and marketers were able to classify this new individualism, and tailor their pitches to these well-defined categories. The practice of consumer profiling was born.[40]

A great example of how this was used is shown in the marketing of the supergroup The Spice Girls, and is illustrated in the cover of their second album, Spice World.[41] The aim in marketing the Spice Girls (and they were a pure marketing invention) was to go for broad mass appeal. But how to do this when the masses were fractionated and individual? The answer was simply and brilliantly to market

(Image 9. Spice Girls: Spice World, Virgin. 1997.)

the music to a few well defined profiles that would appeal to the majority of the target audience. Each profile would correspond to a particular type of sexual preference in teenage males and style aspiration in teenage females. These profiles are blatantly illustrated on the cover and in the (manufactured) personas of the Spice Girls: Scary, Ginger, Baby, Posh and Sporty. Just pick the one you like.

---

[39] Dister, 1993, p. 123 and Wikipedia, 'Malcolm McLaren' 2011 and Stuessy, 2008.

[40] R. Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 225 and Curtis, 2002.

[41] Wikipedia, 'The Spice Girls' 2011.

The music's for you. Just in case you don't get the point (consumers are stupid, remember, Bernays said so) then there's an image of the whole world unified by the Spiceworld banner. This reduction of the free thinking and individualized styled masses to five simple stereotypes is as brilliant as it is offensive to the consumer. What is really Scary, is how well it worked. Or perhaps it was just the catchy tunes that made them so popular. This was not solely a feature of the girls but the same themes can be seen in boy bands such as, *NSync and the Backstreetboys.
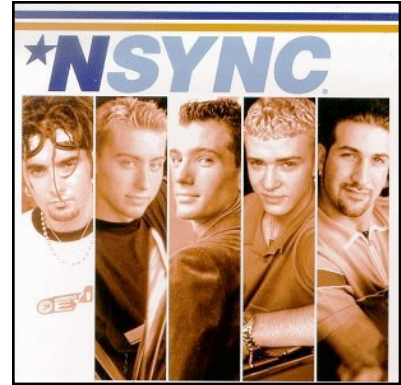
(Image 10. *Nsync: *Nsync, RCA. 1997.)

7. 2000's and the theoretical future.

a. The diversification of music production and format.

The breakdown of the production line economic model became complete in the past decade. As the power of home computers increased the computers themselves became more capable and the phenomenon of the bedroom-studio setup started to emerge. These advancements in recording technology meant that it was becoming easier and easier for people in their own homes, especially teenagers, to write, record and distribute their own music through the internet and even in physical format as a written CD. This gave rise to very small and specialist D.I.Y. micro labels.

b. The new methods of distribution.

With the advent of widely used file sharing and mass accessibility to music that it brought people were no longer bound to what they could listen to by what was played on the radio or the amount of records they could afford or knew about. By the mid 2000's it was not at all strange to own a collection of music that could span anywhere from a few dozen to 10's of thousands of records without actually owning a single one of them in physical form. This is owed mostly to the advancements in digital audio and the MP3 format that allowed for easy distribution of huge quantities of music through file sharing networks.[42]

The internet also made the distribution of music vastly more cost efficient and there for democratized it. Now anybody with an internet connection could potentially reach anybody else in the world who had an internet connection. Websites such as myspace start popping up and become a variable mecca for young and unsigned artists to put their music up on display. The format it took was that of a social network but its strongest point has always seemed to be its catering to independent music. The fact that the profiles could only undergo a certain amount of customization leveled the playing field for independent artists. An established artist with a multimillion dollar record label behind them could not necessarily present him self better than a 17 year old making music in his bedroom. The simplicity and accessibility to the image of an artists profile gave even further rise to the movement of bedroom recording artist.[43]

The world of illegally downloaded music essentially sprung up from the fact that there was a technology available that made it possible for anybody to move the contents of a CD onto their computer and then share it with countless numbers of other individuals all over the world. Possibly because of this perceived manner of 'stealing' the practice was labeled as stealing from the outset.

---

[42] D. Sheff and R. Tannenbaum, 'Rip, Burn, Die' in *The Rock History Reader*, T. Cateforis (eds), Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London, 2007, p. 337- 41.

[43] Kot, 2010.

That said, the fact that downloading has become such a common practice may well have laid the ground work for the current shift in music sales from the physical domain to the digital.[44]

c. New methods of music listening.

As it became more and more common for music to be listened to on portable players such as iPod and other MP3 players the predominant method people found themselves using to listen to music was no longer through home stereos or large hi-fi systems but through headphones. This convenience in portability would fundamentally change the way people listen to music as it makes it into a much more introvert experience in the sense that you are not required to share it with anybody else inadvertently or not and there is also a low probability of someone seeing what kind of music it is you are listening to.[45]

d. How does this affect the graphic presentation now and in the future.

The act of actually buying an album online as opposed to buying the physical item in a record store is still a very different practice. The emotional experience of going into a record store and buying a vinyl album (possibly just because you liked the cover) has to a large extent been lost by the move to internet marketing and music formats such as MP3 that have no physical reality at all. This makes the shopping experience one of coldness and loss of personal connection with the artist and the music. This meant that there was a loss of control over the consumer by Bernaysian marketing techniques. Consumers are once again highly individualistic, presented with huge choices and are shopping in an emotionally detached way. How has the industry accommodated for this and how has the graphic presentation dealt with this?

---

[44] Sheff and Tannenbaum, 2007 and Kot, 2010.

[45] Kot, 2010.

Despite their fundamental differences the online experience is geared towards a model very much resembling the conventional record shop. For example the Apple iTunes store is the most common and widespread method of buying music.[46]

The graphical presentation of the album artwork is still bound to a representation of the original album cover format. However there is no apparent attempt made to channel the consumers down a particular line and tell them what to think. Instead the emphasis is on presenting the consumers with a vast array of choice and allowing them quickly and easily to drill into their own particular, individual preferences or genres. So this is an example of the re-emergence of consumer individualism driven by the underlying technology.

Rather than fighting against it the challenge and the approach of the graphic designers seems so far to try and accommodate it. Within the confines of traditional graphic presentation i.e. the album covers. There are some trends however that show that some bands and organizations are trying to explore this new model of music delivery through electronic transfers in novel ways. Their interests in graphic elements associated with this are evident in the three notable examples given below:

i. Last.fm

FM Radio is declining in popularity.[47] This may not necessarily be spelling the end of the concept of radio. In the same way people used to rely on radio for their source of what was new and interesting in music the concept of the internet radio station has really come to the fore. This move from the radio set to the internet has enabled radio to finally add a visual element to its operation as with the website Last.fm.[48] Last.fm runs its own radio station where you are able to customize to a certain degree the type of music that comes up each time. The lack of full control over the content is actually a plus here instead of it being prohibiting. One of the strong points

---

[46] iTunes Website, Accessed 10 January 2011. http://www.apple.com/itunes/ and Kot 2010.

[47] Kot, 2010.

[48] Last.FM Website, Accessed 10 January 2011.http://www.last.fm/home

and innovations to Last.fm's model is the display of a variety of information about the band whilst it is being played. You will be presented with photos of the band and their album artwork whilst listening to the music.

ii. Radiohead

(Image 11. iTunes Music Store. Apple inc. 2008.)

Radiohead is a good example of a band that did very well as a conventional record selling band that embraced the internet instead of trying to lash out at it and stop the developments taking place with the medium.[49] In the case of Radioheads 2007 release "In Rainbows" the album was made available for download in a "pay what you want" format on a website dedicated to the album as well as being released on CD.

The website itself offered a very visual experience as for the buying experience. It was setup in a way that it was visually pleasing and interesting with a moving video background and interesting imagery during the process of getting the album. This is a good example of how the concept of experiencing album artwork has been adopted by the web to offer a unique experience to the fan even though once the songs are in place on the users system the thumbnail that displays the album cover is off the CD.

iii. Ok Go

The band 'Ok Go' on the other hand is a band that owes in most part its success and notoriety to the internet and the concept of viral marketing. They are arguably the first band that owes their musical career entirely to their popularity online.[50] The way they became really popular online was through the use of video.

---

[49] Kot, 2010.

[50] Kot, 2010.

That band would produce very elaborate choreographed videos that would then circulate on video sharing websites such as youtube. What is most interesting about this phenomenon is that the music of the band was essentially riding on the back of the interest in the visuals of the video itself. The band has since kept up this trend of elaborate videos despite criticism that the visual and the videos have started to be more of what they are about than the actual music. Where have we heard this before? The main point about these three examples is that all three have been able with some degree of success to recapture the emotional connection between the listener and the music by taking advantage of the visual enhancement opportunities provided by the internet. This is an approach that has yet to be fully exploited.

However it is not clear that all consumers are going to be satisfied with this approach. This is indicated by the resurgence of vinyl as a recording medium:

e. Renaissance of vinyl, manufactured nostalgia?

The demographic of people that are buying vinyl records is populated increasingly by people who were born long after the CD was introduced and certainly don't remember vinyl records as being a predominant medium for listening to music.[51] This raises a number of questions relating to why vinyl records have in recent years been making a comeback.

Is it because of a technical quality differential over MP3? Is it because of a desire for a retro styling, a manufactured nostalgia of sorts? Is it fans wanting to invest themselves more in their favorite artists? Perhaps what people are missing is a Bernaysian contact with their emotional irrational subconscious.

As practical as it may be to have access to a seemingly endless amount of music on the internet there are certain aspects that a digital experience is completely incapable of recreating. iTunes has done a very good job of creating an easy to use interface to find, sample and purchase music

_____

[51] Wikipedia, 'Gramaphone record' 2011

from. But on the other hand with vinyl there is a far more visceral and tactile element to being able to flip through a rack of albums and pick one, feel the texture of the cover, look at the artwork, have a look at the track listings and flip through the booklet or equivalent accompanying artwork. In the move to internet marketing although it does provide great opportunities to enhance the visual presentation of the music are we not neglecting the importance of the tactile elements in establishing an emotional connection with the product.

8. Summary & Conclusion

In summary, in reviewing developments of visual influences in music marketing, it is very easy to see influences of Bernaysian marketing techniques. We've seen a shift from an appeal to the rational conscious mind of the technical benefits of the product to the emotional appeals made to the subconscious, irrational mind. However there is also a certain cyclical nature to the developments we've seen. The production line economics and attempts at mass consumer manipulation facilitated the rise of the pop-star icon. This subsequently fractionated into a wide variety of individual styles by the rise of self actualization in the sixties and seventies. Again the Bernaysian marketers tried, with some success, to consolidate the market by developing consumer profiling techniques and marketing strategies. A further wave of fractionation came more recently with the technological advances of internet and low tech music production. So far there is no sign that marketers have been successful in re-consolidating the consumer experience and it remains for the moment highly fractionated. The jury is still out on the success of web-based marketing techniques like those of iTunes, that essentially preserve the graphical elements of album cover design but neglect the opportunities of enhanced visual experience available through the internet and neglect the emotional benefits of the tactile experience.

9. References:

Abbey Road Studios, Press Release: http://www.abbeyroad.com/news/story/?newsid=145
Accessed 10 January 2011.

Altschuler, Glenn C. *All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America.* Oxford University
Press, 2003.

Arnar Eggert Thoroddsen, music journalist. Interview by the author, 12. january 2011.

Curtis, Adam: *The Century Of The Self*. BBC. 2002.

Dister, Alain. *The Story of Rock.* Thames and Hudson, London, 1993.

Donlad Gíslason Ph.D., musicologist. Interview by the author, 3. january 2011.

Gunnar Lárus Hjálmarsson (dr. Gunni), musician. Interview by the author, 13. january 2011.

iTunes Website, Accessed 10 January 2011. http://www.apple.com/itunes/

Kot, Greg. *Ripped: How the Wired Generation Revolutionized Music.* Scribner, 2010.

Last.FM Website, Accessed 10 January 2011, http://www.last.fm/home

Miller, Mark Crispin, 'Introduction' in Packard, V. *The Hidden Persuaders*, IG Publishing,
Brooklyn, New York, 2007.

Morrison, Joan and Morrison, Robert K. 'Woodstock Nation' in Cateforis, T. (eds), *The Rock
History Reader*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, New York, Oxford, 2007.

Packard, Vance, *The Hidden Persuaders*, IG Publishing, Brooklyn, New York, 1957.

Sheff, David and Tannenbaum, Rob, 'Rip, Burn, Die' in Cateforis, T. (eds), *The Rock History
Reader*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, New York, Oxford, 2007.

Shuker, Roy, *Understanding Popular Music*, Routledge, London, 1994.

Stuessy, Joe, *Rock and Roll: Its History and Stylistic Development.* Prentice Hall, London,
2008.

The Staff of Wax Poetics: *Cover Story: Album Cover Art.* Power House Books, 2009.

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Edward Bernays', Accessed 10 January 2011,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Bernays.

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Gramaphone Record', Accessed 10 January 2011,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gramophone_record

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Malcolm McLaren', Accessed 10 January 2011,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_McLaren

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Paul is Dead', Accessed 10 January 2011,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_is_dead

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Sigmund Freud', Accessed 10 January 2011,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'The Spice Girls', Accessed 10 January 2011,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spice_Girls

Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 'Torches of Freedom', Accessed 10 January 2011,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torches_of_Freedom

10. Image references:

Image 1 - Album cover for Bobbie Lecan's Need More Band: Apaloosa Blues by *HMV*. 1920. http://www.nugrape.net/hmv-bl.jpg 10.january 2011.

Image 2 - Album cover for Los Espanjoles: Marine by *Polydor*. 1954 http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/a/a2/Polydor_orange_II.JPG Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 3 - Album cover for The Beatles: Meet the Beatles by *Robert Freeman*. 1963. http://mostpopularunpopular.wordpress.com/2010/01/ Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 4 - Album cover for The Beatles: Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band by *Robert Fraser, Peter Blake, Jann Haworth* 1967 http://www.sonyinsider.com/2009/03/19/sony-and-sgt-peppers-lonely- hearts-club-band/ Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 5 - Album cover for The Beatles: Abbey Road by *John Kosh* 1969 http://christopherave.wordpress.com/2009/10/28/abbey-road/ Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 6 - Album cover for Pink Floyd: Dark Side of the Moon by *Storm Thorgerson* 1973
http://www.gregwilson.co.uk/2010/08/living-to-music-pink-floyd-the-dark-side-of-the-moon/ Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 7 - Album cover for Yes: Yessongs by *Roger Dean* 1973
http://www.amazon.com/Yessongs-Yes/dp/B000002J1Y Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 8 - Album cover for the Sex Pistols: Nevermind the Bollocks by *Jamie Reid* 1977
http://molkochow.blogspot.com/2010_05_01_archive.html Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 9 - Album cover for Spice Girls: Spice World by *Virgin records (designer not credited)* 1997 http://www.amazon.ca/Spice-World-Girls/dp/B000000WFF Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 10 - Album cover for *Nsync: *Nsync by *RCA (designer not credited)* 1997
http://www.nsync-fans.com/discography.htm Date Accessed 10.january 2011.

Image 11 - Screen shot of Apple Itunes Store by *Apple Inc.* 2008
http://artrus.wordpress.com/2010/04/27/como-crear-una-cuenta-en-la-itunes-store-usa/ Date Accessed 10.january 2011.