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In a Thousand Ways, In a Thousand Songs

Rachel E. Jones

Lake Forest College, jonesre@lakeforest.edu

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In a Thousand Ways, In a Thousand Songs

Abstract
This paper examines the cultural and musical growth of popular British boy band One Direction. I contextualize my argument through an analysis of various elements of fan culture, boy band history, and popular music theory to argue that, because boy bands’ public images and the music that they perform are both driven by their intended audiences, their music must feature more significantly into discussions about boy bands. I apply this principal to One Direction’s discography to determine the relationship between the band’s music and inauthentic public image.

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First Advisor
Donald Meyer

Second Advisor
Scott Edgar

Third Advisor
Dustin Mengelkoch

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LAKE FOREST COLLEGE

Senior Thesis

In a Thousand Ways, In a Thousand Songs

by

Rachel E. Jones

April 25, 2017

The report of the investigation undertaken as a Senior Thesis, to carry one course of credit in the Department of Music

Michael T. Orr
Krebs Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Donald Meyer, Chairperson

Scott Edgar

Dustin Mengelkoch
ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the cultural and musical growth of popular British boy band One Direction. I contextualize my argument through an analysis of various elements of fan culture, boy band history, and popular music theory to argue that, because boy bands’ public images and the music that they perform are both driven by their intended audiences, their music must feature more significantly into discussions about boy bands. I apply this principal to One Direction’s discography to determine the relationship between the band’s music and inauthentic public image.
In loving memory of Colleen and Herb—
Carl and Ellie have nothing on you
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Table of Contents

I. Abstract..........................................................................................................................i
II. Dedication.....................................................................................................................ii
III. Acknowledgements....................................................................................................iii
IV. Table of Contents.......................................................................................................iv
V. Introduction................................................................................................................1
VI. Chapter One: Literature Review..............................................................................9
VII. Chapter Two: What Makes a Boy Band.................................................................26
VIII. Chapter Three: From *Up All Night* to *Midnight Memories*.........................42
IX. Chapter Four: *Four* and *Made in the A.M.*.......................................................56
X. Conclusion..................................................................................................................66
XI. Bibliography...............................................................................................................68
Introduction

On July 26, 2010, the bootcamp portion of the seventh series of *The X Factor* was drawing to a close.\(^1\) 108 acts remained in the running, but 72 of these acts had to be eliminated leading into the next stage of the competition. Among the group of solo artists who did not make the cut were five boys, all of whom were between the ages of 16 and 18: Niall Horan, Zayn Malik, Liam Payne, Harry Styles, and Louis Tomlinson. But almost immediately after learning that they were not continuing in the competition as solo acts, Horan, Malik, Payne, Styles, Tomlinson, and four female solo performers were called back to the stage.

What happened next was unprecedented: on a whim, the judges chose to take these strong performers and allow them to proceed within the competition as two group acts.\(^2\) The female group, dubbed Belle Amie, only made it through to the fourth week of live shows, coming in 11\(^{\text{th}}\) place overall.\(^3\) The story of the male group, One Direction, unfolded a little differently; although they only placed third in the competition,\(^4\) their fame did not stop with their *X Factor* run. In the years following, they have risen to a level of superstardom that extends far beyond anything that those judges could have imagined when they made the initial decision to form the group in 2010.\(^5\)

The seeming impossibility of this band’s success only becomes more pronounced

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\(^1\) After the initial auditions of this British singing competition, the contestants participate in a bootcamp, where the judges select a small group of acts to continue to the live, audience-voted weeks of the show.


\(^5\) *One Direction: This Is Us*, directed by Morgan Spurlock (2013; Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures, 2013), DVD.
when one considers the precise circumstances that brought these boys together. For Liam Payne, this 2010 audition was not his first for *The X Factor*. Back in 2008, he auditioned and was eliminated in the last round prior to the live shows because he was only 14; Simon Cowell asked Payne to give himself time to develop his voice more and encouraged him to return in two years to audition again. The 2010 series was also the first time since 2006 that *The X Factor* held auditions in the Republic of Ireland, without which Niall Horan would not have had the opportunity to audition. Even as it was, Horan only barely made it past the first round of auditions because of multiple judges’ misgivings about his lack of vocal maturity. Perhaps the most remarkable of all, Zayn Malik stated after the fact that he seriously considered not attending his audition in the first place; he likely would not have attended if his mother had not literally pulled him out of bed. It was sheer luck that these boys all ended up in the bootcamp stage of the seventh series of *The X Factor*, and it is even more miraculous that they were able to perform so well as a group, considering that they were so haphazardly thrown together.

One Direction’s journey on *The X Factor* is only the first piece of a successful career. After the band placed third in the competition in December of 2010, supporters rallied to ensure that One Direction was not forgotten. Simon Cowell describes the campaign in *One Direction: This is Us*, stating, “literally from the second [*The X Factor*] finished, fans made it their mission that One Direction were going to become the biggest band in the world.” The boys became a global phenomenon before even releasing a single, and this initial internet frenzy culminated in the release of their first album, *Up All Night*, in the fall of 2011. With *Up All Night*, One Direction became the first UK

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
group to debut at the number-one spot in the US with their first album,¹⁰ and in the years following, support of the band only became more widespread.

For all the band’s commercial success, however, the critical reaction to One Direction has remained largely mixed. A Billboard review of their debut album speaks of the group very positively, saying that “even on its weakest tracks … ‘Up All Night’ demonstrates an originality in sound that was necessary for the revitalization of the boy band movement.”¹¹ A review of the same album by Rolling Stone is far less favorable, with reviewer Jody Rosen suggesting that they instead be called “One Dimension.”¹² This sort of mixed reaction is representative of the response that One Direction received across the board with each of their albums. Even those who have overall positive remarks to make about One Direction always make sure to mention the band’s status as a boy band, first and foremost, with their individual talents existing as a secondary feature to their collaborative vocals. In his review for online magazine PopMatters, Zachary Houle prefaces the article by acknowledging that “this British boy band is the kind of thing serious music critics like myself aren’t supposed to like.”¹³

Comments like this one by Houle raise a question that is seemingly obvious, but well worth examining: What makes the “boy band” designation so objectionable? So many groups have been described as boy bands over the years that the definition has become rather loose, but there are a few traits common to a great many boy bands that most likely contribute to the negative perception that the image has garnered. For example, when Billboard created a list of the 20 best boy band songs of all time, they


specifically included only groups in which most of the members do not play instruments on their albums or on stage.\textsuperscript{14} Because of this characteristic, in particular, music critics and casual listeners alike often dismiss One Direction and other such bands. In addition to accusations that they cannot play instruments, most boy bands are accused of being unable to sing. Boy bands are also often developed by talent managers or record producers and often perform music that was written for them, rather than by members of the band. Both of these factors invite criticism from those who regard this as a sign that the band has not developed organically.

That said, there is a particularly notable characteristic that unifies all boy bands across decades: lyrical subject matter. Boy bands are known for releasing love song after love song, intended to make each individual fan – generally an adolescent girl – feel unique and believe that she has been noticed by not just any boy, but the members of the band specifically. One Direction’s discography most certainly falls into this camp, and for this, too, they have received a great deal of criticism. Even though it is a common complaint, it’s worth questioning whether it is valid, because many well-respected bands have committed the crime of primarily writing their music for their female fans.

Among these bands, one group stands out above the rest. After coming together in the late 1950s, this band spent approximately five years crooning love songs to their young female fans before diverging from this path around 1965. With their later music, The Beatles earned the respect of casual fans and seasoned musicians alike, but people are far too eager to forget the reality of their early career as one of the first truly successful boy bands. In their early albums, the melodies were enjoyable, but not remarkable, and their lyrics were essentially love letters to their fans. The differences

between The Beatles and bands like One Direction might initially seem stark, even when one examines only The Beatles’ early years, because the band does not meet many of the traditional standards that people have established for boy bands: the four boys came together organically and all played instruments on stage, and from the very beginning, John Lennon and Paul McCartney were composing a clear majority of their own songs.

However, I would contend that far more important are the lyrics and the audience of the band in question, and these are characteristics which the early Beatles and other boy bands inarguably have in common. The precise content of contemporary boy bands’ lyrics might have become more explicit – where The Beatles talking about wanting to hold a girl’s hand, One Direction sing about wanting to “go all the way” – but this is a product of the era in which their music is being released. Most of The Beatles’ early songs are about love, and they are often written in second person, implying a relationship with their fans in the same way that other boy bands often do with their music.

The Beatles and One Direction followed a remarkably similar path to stardom. Beatlemania took Great Britain, and then the United States, by storm, and images of screaming girls at Beatles concerts neatly epitomize the band’s experience in the early ‘60s. For those who attempt to claim The Beatles as the quintessential rock-and-roll artists, it must be rather difficult to reconcile the similarities between the masses of screaming girls shown over the course of A Hard Day’s Night,15 and the hysteria exhibited by fans in One Direction: This Is Us as Horan, Malik, Payne, Styles, and Tomlinson follow a similar journey from obscurity to fame.16

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15 A Hard Day’s Night, directed by Richard Lester (1964; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2002), DVD.
16 One Direction: This Is Us.
This comparison is not intended to dismiss the latter portion of The Beatles’ prolific career; it is certainly worth stressing that The Beatles were one of the most innovative bands in recent history, and their legacy is apparent in countless ways in today’s music industry. However, to disregard the reality of their stint as a boy band is to misunderstand their beginnings. On their early albums, The Beatles honed their craft, developing an understanding of music composition that made Sgt. Pepper and The White Album possible. They, like any boy band, received severe criticism due to their relatively simplistic sound. In 2014, the Los Angeles Times published an op-ed piece containing several snippets of reviews of The Beatles’ music, all published in 1964. Within these reviews alone, they are described as, “god awful,” and, “a group of disorganized amateurs”; in a February 11, 1964 review from the Los Angeles Times, William F. Buckley Jr. blithely declared that “not even their mothers would claim that they sing well.”¹⁷ Their reputation at the time lacked any modicum of respect for what is now regarded as The Beatles’ critically-acclaimed musical and song-writing capabilities.

Of course, in 1964, The Beatles’ most successful days – musically, if not commercially – lay ahead. But even in their early music, there are already noticeable flashes of what is to come, brief indications of the very characteristics in their music that The Beatles would eventually be lauded for among casual listeners and music theorists alike. In Beatles as Musicians, Walter Everett identifies lyrics, rhythmic techniques, formal designs, and tonal features as significant categories in which The Beatles showcased talent early in their career, drawing attention to their use of mixed modes and of non-traditional interactions between scale degrees.¹⁸ So, what were The Beatles’

contemporary critics missing? The musicality was there all along, but it’s something that people only seem to have been able to identify after the fact.

The animosity directed toward The Beatles in their early years ultimately begins to hint at a larger trend: the negative perception of boy bands stems from the image of the bands in question, rather than the music that the bands release. Groups like One Direction, the Backstreet Boys, and NSYNC align more closely with the common perception of boy bands. Therefore, their images illustrate some of the features that most likely contribute to the negative reaction to boy bands. One of the most significant, perhaps, is the cultural favoritism of the “singer-songwriter” performance ideal that these bands automatically seem to contradict. It seems fair to presume that boy bands cannot possibly release compelling music, because most of them are manufactured groups made up of young adults with little to no formal music experience. This is not to say that there is no justification for criticisms about these features of the boy band phenomenon. However, The Beatles illustrate that it is not enough to develop organically or to create genuinely complex pop music, at which point a different feature comes to the forefront that is a far more likely cause of public animosity—like One Direction, the Backstreet Boys, or any other boy band, The Beatles claimed a young female audience as their primary demographic. This similarity is far from a coincidence when one is hard-pressed to find a review of any boy band that does not define the group with a snide allusion to the screaming teenage girls who support them.

Consequently, I would like to posit that the image of the generic boy band is representative of misdirected animosity toward vulnerable youths—particularly toward young girls. Furthermore, I question the fact that scholars have thus far limited themselves to specific elements of this image, disregarding the actual music that these bands release even though these features are both motivated by boy bands’ intended
audience—young teenage girls. Consequently, in the following pages, I do intend to contribute to the pre-existing conversation about elements of the boy band image, but the ultimate purpose of this paper is to expand discussion beyond image by turning to formal musical analysis and examining the interaction between these elements.

Through this analysis, it becomes clear that a discussion of One Direction’s cultural image is most effective when performed in tandem with an analysis of their music. Culminating with their fifth – and, given that they have entered a hiatus for an indeterminate amount of time, potentially final – album, *Made in the A.M.*, One Direction’s lyrical and musical trajectory indicates that their intended audience eventually extended well beyond their presumed demographic. However, the general public continued to perceive them as the young boys who woo girls by singing “What Makes You Beautiful.” Although a theoretical analysis of One Direction’s music illustrates that they have evolved drastically across their albums, the perpetuation of their “boy band” image remains, illustrating that beliefs about authenticity play a deeply influential role in the perception of the quality of popular music and of the bands who create it.
Chapter One: Literature Review

History of Boy Bands

Before analyzing One Direction as a unique entity, it is important to explore precisely how they fit into the legacy of boy bands within popular music. Analyses of boy bands rarely draw on bands’ actual music—any allusions to music extend only to the lyrics. Instead, scholars have primarily used boy bands to address sexuality, authorship and authenticity, and masculinity and gender. Due to the image that boy bands generally exemplify, they often prove to be compelling subjects in each of these areas of discussion.

The choice to characterize The Beatles as the first boy band is somewhat polarizing among both casual fans and critics, albeit for different reasons. If The Beatles are brought into an analytical discussion of boy bands, they generally appear as a reference point for what Maria A. Sanders describes as the “primary model for the modern pop group,” because The Beatles organically earned the success that producers have attempted to emulate with the manufactured groups that followed in their wake. That said, while The Beatles are not a quintessential representation of all of the features that have become associated with boy bands, their early career corresponds far too closely to that of other boy bands for us to disregard this early identification. Instead of rejecting the boy band label, it is more appropriate to characterize The Beatles as the only group thus far that eventually transcended their boy band image.

In the past decade, some defunct boy bands have re-formed and released new

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music, but such reunions are generally characterized by a sense of nostalgia. Take That, a British boy band, released their first album in 1992, and despite an eleven-year gap in music from 1995 to 2006 and the departure of two members, the band maintains a great deal of success within the United Kingdom, with five albums released in the past decade—the most recent of which came out on March 24, 2017. However, even though each member is well into his 40s, the media perpetuates the image that they are a boy band in everything but name—perhaps most notably, they are often referred to as a “man-band,” which inherently defines them as a group that has grown out of being a boy band but has not earned the title of “band.” Indeed, the continued sexualization of the singers and the subject matter and general pop sound of their more recent albums ensure that they remain a manufactured, niche interest for women.

In contrast, The Beatles gradually diverged from the romantic pop songs intended for teenage girls, so that by the time they released *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, they had become a band with more generalized appeal. Because of these changes, The Beatles successfully made an organic shift that other boy bands have attempted to force themselves through with very little success. In this way, I hope to reconcile some conflicting perceptions about The Beatles’ disparate identities to better represent their place as a boy band while also distinguishing them from other boy bands that have not successfully made a similar transition.

The rest of the boy band progression is less controversial than the placement of The Beatles as a participant in the subgenre, rather than as an inspiration for it. The Monkees are the earliest clear replication of The Beatles template. Some fans actually

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22 Maria A. Sanders, “Singing Machines.”
regarded them as a replacement for The Beatles, particularly once *Sgt. Pepper* proved to be too inaccessible for many of the band’s casual listeners. Various musicologists have also presented The Monkees as a crucial representative of the boy band; for example, Sanders describes them quite succinctly as “[The Beatles’] most blatant copycats.” The Monkees do not exist in portrayals of boy bands in some contexts—for example, Jennifer J. Moos centers her analysis specifically around bands that correspond with the characteristics by which boy bands have been defined since the 1990s, a choice which is far from isolated. There is justification to acknowledge and examine plenty of boy bands across the decades leading up to the 1990s—The Jackson 5, The Temptations, Menudo, Frankie Vallie & the Four Seasons, and New Edition are only a few examples of pre-1990s groups that correspond with the boy band template to some degree.

That said, most discussions of boy bands do *focus* on the groups from the late 1980s onward largely because, as Moos suggests, the boy band image did not solidify until the era of bands like Take That and New Kids on the Block. However, just as The Beatles play a crucial role in boy band history, The Monkees are remarkably significant to this story because they were the band that showed producers that Beatlemania could be replicated. Perhaps a given fan base would not be so widespread, and perhaps a band’s success would be more short-lived, but The Monkees still proved that with the correct formula, a band could be a success with little more than an image to their name.

**Gender in Musicology**

Within musicological discourse, feminist critics rarely apply their analysis to

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female fans, and scholars are certainly unlikely to provide an analysis as thorough as Hollows’. However, for the purposes of my thesis, the intersectionality of feminist and musical elements is still significant enough that previous musicological literature on feminism is a crucial consideration. Susan McClary’s *Feminine Endings* was not the first text to unite feminist and musical criticism; in her introduction, she almost immediately draws attention to the work that other feminist scholars have already done to recognize previously disregarded women composers and to address the ways in which women have participated in music throughout history in spite of society’s persistent attempts to minimize their role or exclude them entirely. That said, to some degree, McClary established the standards for feminist discourse within musicology. She opens *Feminine Endings* by identifying five categories of feminist elements within music that she intends to examine in her own analyses: the portrayal of gender in opera and the consequent development of gendered music; the explicitly masculine and implicitly feminine elements of music theory; the portrayal of desire and sexuality through tonality; male anxiety as participants within music, a perceived “feminine” medium; and the difficulty of legitimating the feminine within music without reproducing ideologies that damage the perception of women.

McClary also disputes ethnographers’ tendency to make presumptions about Western music while recognizing a variety of influences and meanings from non-Western music. Because musicology has traditionally embraced some presumptions unquestioningly, one of McClary’s primary goals for *Feminine Endings* was to dissect and genuinely reflect on beliefs that were previously standard. She argues that feminist criticism is such an effective medium in this effort because “feminism illustrates why

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29 Ibid. 7-19.
male-dominated musicology wants [violence, misogyny, and racism] to be non-issues and why they need to be moved to the center of inquiries about music.”

Many other musicologists followed McClary’s lead. Only two years after McClary released *Feminine Endings*, Marcia J. Citron published *Gender & the Musical Canon*. Citron’s work focuses on women composers who have largely been excluded from the canonized history of music. Citron questions the power of canons to “self-perpetuate” and to “replicate their encoded values in subsequent exemplars,” leading to what she describes as “the prescriptive and normative powers of canons [becoming] even greater.” Like McClary, Citron finds fault in a structure in which there is no room for scholars to question the preordained limitations on the field. She primarily objects to the characteristics – class, race, gender, etc. – that solidify the authority of the canon-making power and ensure that the canon is exclusive. For example, she lists Western art music, Schenker analysis, and historical emphasis as some of the “disciplinary paradigms” of musicology, while distinguishing these accepted elements from less ‘legitimate’ topics like rap and pop music.

Even as women composers are incorporated into history textbooks and anthologies, Citron observes that they generally appear as little more than afterthoughts, rather than as contributors to music history, which she believes will likely perpetuate the distinction of women composers as Other. As a result, she counters this potentiality in *Gender & the Musical Canon* by considering the significance of women composers’ place in the canon and the role of gender in the formation of the canon. Beyond arguing for greater recognition for women composers, Citron also briefly takes the time to specifically support women’s voices in the field of musicology, suggesting that women’s

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30 Ibid. 4-5.
32 Ibid. 22.
presence in musicology reflects women’s increasing role in Western music.  

Fan Communities

In “‘Some Kind of Innocence’: The Beatles Monthly and the Fan Community,” Mike Kirkup examines The Beatles fandom in great detail with the aid of a fan magazine. *The Beatles Monthly* intentionally fostered a perceived relationship between the fans and the band, but Kirkup also identifies its significance as a forum for fans to engage with one another. He utilizes fan letters to develop a more nuanced understanding of the fans’ perception of the band, conveying the vast variety of fan opinions with excerpts from quite mixed reactions to *Sgt. Pepper* and *The White Album*. Kirkup ultimately asserts that *The Beatles Monthly* illustrates the development of “the first modern pop mass fanbase.”

This sort of engagement with media and celebrities has become increasingly common with the development of the internet. In *Fandom At The Crossroads*, Katherine Larsen and Lynn Zubernis address the variety of methods for fan participation and draw attention to the internet as a “[facilitator] and [accelerator of] the fragmentation of fandom into sometimes harmonious, sometimes fractious groups that engage in a wide array of fan practices.” Because online fandom is semi-public, Larsen and Zubernis find that people – both those without and within fan spaces – have felt the need to censor content. Most fandom censorship is directed toward Real Person Fiction – fanfiction about celebrities, generally referred to as RPF – and toward stories with explicit content.

Some of these censorship movements have been motivated by various websites’ need for profit and ad revenue from outside sources that are opposed to certain types of

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33 Ibid. 43.
34 Ibid. 228-30.
35 Mike Kirkup, “‘Some Kind of Innocence,’” 77.
content, but a fair amount is actually driven by fans who are aware that the general public perceives fanfiction as shameful—therefore, some fans push to ensure that the RPF and NC-17 subgenres remain under the radar in an attempt to maintain some legitimacy. Larsen and Zubernis suggest that fans have somewhat internalized the common perception that fandom is synonymous with obsessive and ‘crazy’ behavior, which self-policing of fandom content certainly illustrates. This internalized judgment even extends to fan interactions with the content creators and celebrities they revere; Larsen and Zubernis draw attention to “the ‘fan shame’” question, when fans will ask celebrities for horror stories about occasions when obsessive fans went too far.

The negative image of the obsessive fan remains prominent within news and academic articles alike, although, as Kristina Busse observes, the characterization of fandom has become somewhat more positive in the past decade or so as ‘geeks’ have become more prominent in film and television and as previously niche media has gained more traction in the mainstream. That said, she also observes that fan communities are only acceptable “as long as they remain controllable,” which is largely related to fandom’s profitability. In her article “Fan Labor and Feminism: Capitalizing on the Fannish Labor of Love,” Busse draws attention to the commercialization of fandom, illustrating that the recent mainstream acceptance of fandom originates from its profitability rather than an increasing understanding of the passion and enthusiasm that drives fan engagement.

In “Fan Cultures and Fan Communities,” an article which Busse co-wrote with Jonathan Gray, the two authors examine another element of fandom by considering the extreme amount of interpretive interaction fans have with media. Furthermore, Busse and

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37 Ibid. 19-20.
38 Ibid. 58.
Gray find that fans place the same level of importance on critical analysis of media and their own community, creating very self-aware, self-reflective groups of people.  

Because of these observations, they speak in favor of the use of fan studies to analyze “high-culture fans,” which they believe would help scholars to better understand whether the “low-culture” communities are representative of or separate from general fan engagement trends. Unfortunately, Busse and Gray explain that such ventures have gained little traction and that fandom is still essentially a “low culture” environment.

Gender in Fan Communities

Both Busse’s article “Fan Labor and Feminism” and Larsen and Zubernis’s book unite their discussion of fandom with feminist dialogue. Busse alludes to the more generalized feminist theory that women are more likely to go unpaid or underpaid for their labor because much of the labor that has historically been carried out by women is perceived as a “labor of love” that consequently necessitates little or no repayment. Fandoms are appealing as female-dominated arenas in which women can exchange opinions and fan-created content, but Busse stresses that these communities encounter monetary exploitation far more than they encounter the direct criticism that used to be more prevalent.

Larsen and Zubernis express a distinct awareness of the overt mockery that women of fandom are likely to encounter. Men in fandom might still encounter criticism, but such comments tend to emasculate men by suggesting that because of their obsessive fandom, they likely have little to no interpersonal and sexual experience. In contrast,

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41 Ibid. 439.
women experience presumptions that they are hypersexual and hyperemotional.\textsuperscript{43} Larsen and Zubernis also present a double-standard between a generally more positive perception of younger women who “‘desire up’” in age as opposed to the hypersexualized image of older women who “‘desire down,’” providing an example of a three-year-old girl who was convinced that she was going to marry Justin Bieber and comparing her endearing hysteria to the shameful image of mothers in the crowd of a \textit{Twilight} film. They posit that the latter is less acceptable because it is a threatening illustration of female sexual desire, whereas the former can be attributed to the overemotional adolescent experience.\textsuperscript{44}

That said, Larsen and Zubernis also refer to “TPTB” or “the powers that be” – producers, writers, directors, and marketers in charge of the perception of a given piece of media – who quite intentionally market younger celebrities to both young girls and their mothers in an attempt to gain the largest audience possible. Consequently, women in fandom find themselves simultaneously enthusiastic and ashamed as they interact with their chosen media. Larsen and Zubernis also observe that even if young women are not criticized for their attraction to a celebrity, they are still generally encouraged to perceive themselves as objects to be desired, rather than as women who can experience desire.\textsuperscript{45} Furthermore, young women’s expression of sexuality is met with a degree of condescension and amusement that then extends past adolescence, resulting in the belief that rather than experiencing desire, women’s attraction to celebrities originates from the same hysterical, irrational fanaticism that the three-year-old Justin Bieber fan experienced.\textsuperscript{46}

In \textit{Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture}, Joanne Hollows devotes a chapter

\textsuperscript{43} Larsen and Zubernis, 59.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. 60.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. 62.
to female fandom as it interacts with popular music specifically. Hollows finds that youth cultures – and specifically that of pop music – provide a positive environment for women to negotiate and manipulate their own femininity. However, while youth culture is respected for deviance when it is attached to opposition and masculinity, it is dismissed when it is mainstream – and, in essence, feminine – because it is a representation of the consumption of inauthentic, conformist material.\(^{47}\) Hollows observes that although many subcultures allow room to experiment with gender and sexuality boundaries, these are generally the same subcultures that are closed to women, which illustrates that such social experimentation likewise becomes unacceptable for girls. As a result, “youth subcultures … are often defined and given coherence by a rejection of the feminine.”\(^{48}\) That said, Hollows determines that women react to this isolation by establishing a place for themselves within commercial cultural forms that were produced for them.

In addition to identifying means by which women create spaces for themselves, Hollows addresses certain elements of feminist criticism that characterize traditional femininity as inherently non-feminist. She remarks that a common feminist reaction to pop culture is that it “assumes that girls passively absorb and reproduce … the ideology of adolescent femininity,” but she believes that these critics are guilty of exceptionalism, perceiving themselves as above the same feminine ideology that effectively captured so many other women.\(^{49}\) The distinction between the feminist and the ‘ordinary woman’ also drives the perception that most women are unaware of lyrical content and are uneducated and unnecessarily emotional. Because of this perception, Hollows suggests that “for women in the field [of musicology], producing feminist work may be hard

\(^{46}\) Ibid. 68.
\(^{48}\) Ibid. 166.
\(^{49}\) Ibid. 169-71.
enough, without having the added burden of being seen to take ‘girly music’ seriously.”

She believes that this discrepancy has created an academic environment in which feminist critics disregard music that is too closely attached to the feminine.

Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards also address the misconceptions surrounding adolescent female fandom in their book *Manifesta*, in which they examine divisions within feminism that have developed in recent decades. They consider women’s inclination to participate in “Girlie culture,” which asserts that “it is a feminist statement to proudly claim things that are feminine.” They acknowledge that Girlie culture is not going to subvert the traditional societal structure, but that is not the intention of “Girlies.” Rather, it is a rebellion against various stereotypes that are enforced against women: expectations that they exhibit no indications of sexuality, that they adapt their mannerisms to participate in a male-dominated world, and that they exist only as objects to be sexualized in male fantasy.

However, Baumgardner and Richards observe that Girlies’ inclination to avoid Second-Wave ideals extends to political feminism, which the authors argue maintains an inherent role in feminism. This reaction to certain aspects of feminism characterizes Girlie culture in many feminists’ minds as a tame, mild version of feminism, while others regard it as a positive, progressive attitude. Baumgardner and Richards recognize both perspectives, but they assert that “when [feminists] are separated from [their] political history, it is primarily the reinventions that continue, as if women’s aesthetics were what

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50 Ibid. 175.
52 Ibid. 135.
53 Ibid. 137.
54 Second-Wave Feminism marks a period of feminist thought and activism that spans from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. Second-wave feminists diversified the issues addressed by feminism, expanding from suffrage and legality to wider issues of sexuality, family, reproductive rights, and domestic and sexual violence against women. Second-wave feminists primarily conflict with Girlie culture because of Second-Wave antagonism toward pop culture as an entity that is inherently sexist.
[they] wanted to transform rather than women’s rights.”55 They recognize that the deficits in Girlies’ reactions to feminism are not their fault but argue that Girlies must make themselves aware of the history of feminism and the role that political debate has played. Otherwise, they do believe that “Girlie culture can be a trap of conformity.”56

Authorship and Authenticity in Popular Music

An overwhelming majority of articles about boy bands address the authorship, which is a matter of controversy throughout popular music analysis. Any allusions to authorship primarily focus on the importance of identity and voice, particularly as it relates to boy bands. In the introduction to his book *Interpreting Popular Music*, David Brackett recognizes the remarkable importance of authorship to his analysis of the pop songs due to its connection to voice.57 In particular, he wrestles with the prioritization of the singer-songwriter above writing teams: although he acknowledges that it “seems unquestionable” that singer-songwriters’ music should be autobiographical and, consequently, more meaningful, he also identifies several dangers that this perception can present. If an audience places too much emphasis on music with a clear connection to the singer, Brackett suggests that they muddle the value of songs with multiple writers or songs that, through ambiguities in lyrics or group performances, might contain meanings beyond that which the songwriter intended.58

Both Keith Negus and Maria A. Sanders explore authorship in the context of a performer’s impact on a piece of music by considering preconceived Romantic notions about authorship—namely that composition is a profound, isolated process.59 In

55 Ibid. 152.
56 Ibid. 161.
58 Ibid. 14-6.
59 Throughout my paper, I will refer to artistic Romanticism with some frequency. By synthesizing various scholars’ observations about the interaction between Romanticism and pop music, I have chosen to regard Romanticism as the overall artistic movement of the nineteenth century, which brought the concept
“Authorship and the Popular Song,” Negus dissects the perception that authorship contributes directly to an audience’s enjoyment of a song, using observations from authors such as Nicholas Cook and Susan McClary to apply the “auteur” image to musicians who contribute to the sound and quality of their music, regardless of their authorship of individual songs. 60 He frames this analysis around the observation that people like to see a precise, motivated origin of a song through its lyrics and performances. Negus argues that his modified interpretation – which creates a broader perception of authorship – is appropriate for popular music, though he quickly qualifies this assertion by identifying examples such as The Beatles, for whom authorship is a crucial element of musicologists’ perception of them. Because of this counterexample, Negus concludes that the “real author” of a pop song has an inevitable amount of control over the performance of a song, which creates a necessity to acknowledge the author even as one embraces a more significant role of the performer.

Maria A. Sanders examines authorship specifically as it pertains to boy bands in “Singing Machines: Boy Bands and the Struggle for Artistic Legitimacy.” 61 She introduces the topic by mentioning the “Romantic conception of the artist,” which corresponds rather well with the singer-songwriter image that Brackett and Negus describes. Sanders cites various criticisms of this ideal, drawing attention to the Romantic emphasis on uniqueness and originality. 62 However, even while some scholars object to this image, Sanders points out a crucial irony: the prioritization of the Romantic artist and author remains deeply ingrained in both the public and critical consciousness even as most contemporary music is created by teams of writers and producers. Boy bands face a
particular amount of criticism on this front because the groups themselves are often manufactured by these teams. Sanders observes that this dynamic “makes it highly difficult for the boys to establish identities separate from [their songwriters and producers].”

Although she seems to recognize that this feature is essentially universal among boy bands, she also suggests that critics and scholars are too quick to characterize boy bands as an isolated example of ambiguous authorship and to condemn the young performers based on their perceived lack of genuine artistry.

Such expectations of authorship have led to larger questions about the authenticity of boy bands. Like Sanders, Mark Duffett presents boy bands in opposition to Romanticism, although he directs his focus specifically toward what he describes as “rock romanticism,” which consists of “emotionally experienced performers with congruent biographies, singer-songwriters with jaded yet soulful vocals.”

Duffett observes that any characterization of boy bands as inauthentic relies on the contrast between the ideal of rock romanticism compared with a pristine image that is polished by countless outside contributors, effectively eliminating any sense of the members’ agency. Instead of championing this perspective, he suggests that the members could be professional and skilled even as they are being manipulated by their producers, during which “their struggle for autonomy and remuneration represents a moment of authentication … at the very point at which they begin to expand beyond the immediate confines of the genre.”

Though her article does not discuss boy bands, Elizabeth Eva Leach’s article on the Spice Girls tracks a similar sense of discord about the authenticity of one of the world’s most successful girl groups—many of which were constructed based on the same

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63 Ibid. 581.
model that producers follow to create boy bands. As a basis for her article, Leach identifies an inherent truth that must be accepted to value authenticity in pop music criticism: “the authentic music is more real because it is less designed as a commercial venture.” Leach provides Adorno as a common source for arguments about authenticity because of the similarities between the debates about popular music and Adorno’s more general focus on commercialization as an antagonist to art. She draws on Joli Jensen’s observations from *The Nashville Sound* about commercialization and country music fan engagement to suggest that “[Adorno’s] perceived intervention of faceless commercial mediation deprives the fan of the idea that the experience is personalized and thus authentic” applies within pop music, as well.

Leach synthesizes the interpretations of these other scholars to guide her examination of the Spice Girls, ultimately concluding that any assertions about the value of a given musician or band are related to “general cultural-historical values,” rather than to the more specific characteristics of the artist. For example, The Spice Girls attempted to maintain their legitimacy through a general sense of ordinariness and through their feminist support of their young female fans. However, these attempts manifested in society’s dismissal of the group because they were not genuine in the context of the Romantic musician. Leach argues that pop music is distinct from the genres of music that have laid the groundwork for societal expectations and suggests that consequently, pop artists should be held to standards that recognize the genre’s characteristics.

**Analysis of Popular Music**

Like women composers, popular music has only recently begun to find a place

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65 Ibid. 191.
67 Ibid. 145.
68 Ibid.
within musicological discussion. As a result, scholars are still exploring topics and approaches for the subgenre. In addition to his observations about authorship, David Brackett identifies certain elements of popular music that he chooses to examine throughout *Interpreting Popular Music*. He emphasizes the “musical code,” which recognizes the broader relationship between musical sound and what he describes as “extra-musical” factors: image, biography, and historical context. Like McClary and Citron, Brackett is conscious of the inherent musicological biases attached to the canon of legitimated works and of the need to reexamine content that is currently taken for granted. He reorients his argument about the relationship between the musical canon and social dynamics like gender and class by arguing that pop music is a strong and currently underutilized subject area for ethnomusicology due to its overlap with “cultural insiders.” Brackett also wrestles with the emphasis on written theory and transcriptions as it applies to Western popular music, which, particularly in recent decades, has largely been written aurally. He suggests that written theory is necessarily prescriptive rather than descriptive, although he also recognizes that transcription can guide descriptive analysis as musicologists and music theorists approach a piece of music. Finally, Brackett considers the interplay between text and music in lyrical songs—he finds that this area of analysis benefits from considerations of social and cultural context.

*Analyzing Popular Music*, a collection of essays compiled by Allan F. Moore, opens with a similar reflection on pop music’s peculiar place within musicology. Moore simultaneously observes that “to investigate [pop’s] institutions and practices” because the genre bears so much musical relevance, and that pop is so distinct from other music in

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70 Ibid. 23.
71 Ibid. 30-1.
the Western canon that it cannot be analyzed in the same way.\textsuperscript{72} He, too, objects to the exclusive nature of musicology, alluding to the fact that “musicologists can no longer afford to ignore a particular corpus simply because it is written, performed, studied, or just listened to by … women, by expatriate, foreign, or isolated communities, by a particular social class or age group, or simply by ‘others’.\textsuperscript{73}

Because the genre prompts so many presumptions of quality and content, Moore presents his own priorities for analysis. Above all else, he believes that analysis should begin with the experiential sound of a given piece because it empowers the musical audience to recognize their own ability to demystify content. Moore and the other contributors to the collection also intentionally avoid any attempt to develop a popular music canon because of the diversity of content within the genre.

\textsuperscript{72} Allan F. Moore, \textit{Analyzing Popular Music} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. 5.
Chapter Two: What Makes a Boy Band

The “boy band” title is accompanied by several assumptions that the public tends to embrace, consciously or not. Most notable, perhaps, is the belief that the members of a given group cannot sing well, which in turn becomes a suspicion that members lip sync on stage and are Auto-Tuned in the studio. However, boy bands also face extensive criticism because of the assumption that the members cannot play musical instruments or write their own music. To many casual pop listeners and music critics, the very possibility of these features is an inexcusable offense, making any boy band inherently deserving of condemnation and unworthy of deeper analysis. However, these suspicions, particularly when combined, illustrate quite effectively why boy bands are such an appealing subject for scholars who are interested in authenticity in popular music. As I mentioned earlier, what Maria A. Sanders describes as the “Romantic conception of the artist” is often applied to popular music. Over time, this image has flourished and produced a culture that prioritizes the singer-songwriter image. In such a musical climate, boy bands represent a confluence of characteristics that subvert the “rock romantic” expectations, which make them deeply unappealing for many listeners.

Boy bands are not the only artists who encounter criticism for their divergence from this Romantic ideal. Boy bands and their girl group counterparts simply exist on an extreme level, which likely occurs because their publicity and marketing – and possibly even their initial conception and creation – are blatantly profit-driven in a way that the Romantic artist is not. However, the distrust of boy bands manifests differently between decades and, more importantly, depending upon how comfortably the boy band

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75 Scholars such as Duffett, Negus, and Sanders, whose works I addressed more extensively in my literature review.
76 Maria A. Sanders, “Singing Machines.” 580.
eventually transitions into the Romantic artist role.

In the case of The Beatles, society’s desire for authenticity has ensured that, at the beginning of the band’s career, the critical perception was far less reverential than it later became,\(^{77}\) which stands in remarkable contrast to the current overall impression of the band as one of the most influential acts in the history of rock-and-roll. As they grew older, The Beatles’ songs became more harmonically and formally complex and more topically serious, which earned the performers countless accolades. By the latter part of The Beatles’ career,\(^{78}\) Lennon and McCartney had become some of the primary representations of the profound singer-songwriter image that they had seemingly contradicted only a few years before. This shift in their image is peculiar, but hardly surprising. While The Beatles were on the rise in the music industry, critics were not paying serious attention to them. In the critics’ defense, they had little reason to: the lyrics in most of The Beatles’ early songs were remarkably simple; the members were handsome to the point of inciting aggressive frenzies among crowds of their fans; and in 1963, the oldest members of The Beatles were only 23 years old.

Serious music critics saw these characteristics and assumed that The Beatles were the next in a long line of young male performers on whom teenagers would fixate for a brief period before moving on to the next act.\(^{79}\) They could not possibly have known that The Beatles would contribute so extensively to the craft later in their careers.

Other boy bands and girl groups\(^{80}\) existed in this same period, but The Beatles’ most significant peer was, perhaps, The Monkees. Certain features that characterize The

\(^{77}\) Schneider, “What the Critics Wrote…”

\(^{78}\) For the purposes of this paper, Revolver (1966) marks the turning point in The Beatles’ music.

\(^{79}\) It is worth noting that these young male performers were the “boy bands” of the 1950s and ‘60s, arguably existing as little more than pretty faces to sell records.

\(^{80}\) Although this is a topic too big to broach in this paper, there is an interesting degree of sexism between the descriptions of boy bands and girl groups, as ensembles that often play similar roles in the music-making process.
Monkees – their inauthentic creation, the members’ distinct personalities, their almost exclusive use of others’ songs, and their lack of familiarity with musical instruments – have become common features among boy bands. Like the Monkees, several other boy bands followed in The Beatles’ footsteps in the following decades, seeking to obtain a similar degree of success, but it was not until 1985 that New Kids on the Block first performed and marked the beginning of a boy band resurgence.

Over 25 years after they were formed, New Kids on the Block are largely remembered for establishing the expectation that boy bands lip sync. In 1992, they were faced with allegations that they were lip syncing on stage, and despite their efforts to prove that these allegations were false, they were never able to regain the ground they lost, and their popularity waned.\(^{81}\) Since then, this understanding has become an ingrained part of the definition of what makes a boy band. Some will even take this accusation a step further by assuming that more recent boy bands like the Backstreet Boys and One Direction are Auto-Tuned in the studio in addition to suggesting that they lip sync on stage.

In the minds of many Americans, One Direction seems to be clearly following in a progression with 1990s bands Backstreet Boys and NSYNC. However, the English band Take That is far more representative of One Direction’s participation in the boy band legacy. Take That is not widely known outside of Europe, but they also illustrate many common features of the boy band. Their producer, Nigel Martin-Smith, was inspired by New Kids on the Block’s success and felt compelled to create his own British pop group.\(^{82}\) Take That differs from many other boy bands in two significant ways: one of their members, Gary Barlow, participated quite actively in the songwriting process,

and although the band took a decade-long break between albums and two of their original members left, as of 2017, Take That is still actively touring and releasing music. The Beatles is the only other significant boy band that managed to maintain such a degree of popularity as a band that crossed over from adolescence into adulthood, but Take That’s evolution does not parallel The Beatles’ because even as grown adults, the members have retained the image of a boy band: they continue to perform largely without instruments, and their lyrics and melodies remain reminiscent of their original sound. Although Martin-Smith intended to create a band that was successful among a wider demographic, their limits are still very much apparent in their “man-band” title, which the members even jokingly use to describe themselves.  

Take That’s formulaic five-member origin lays a clear foundation for One Direction, who Simon Cowell brought together 20 years later. One can also identify many stereotypes of the boy band in the public perception of One Direction, particularly the inevitable comments about the band’s largely female fan base. Descriptions of the fans dwell on the fact that they are young, that they are girls, and that they are screaming. For example, in a recent *Rolling Stone* review of a One Direction concert, Rob Sheffield makes numerous references to the audience, overtly stating that the band’s fans are all teenage girls. But when describing the crowd as such, Sheffield seems not to intend his words to be rude or dismissive of the fans; his article portrays the fans and the band in a remarkably positive light, praising One Direction’s evolution and identifying many positive elements of the band’s development. Many other critics are not so kind—Alexis

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Petridis questioned the success of One Direction in a review of the band’s second album, *Take Me Home*, stating that, “if you’re not an 11-year-old girl or the long-suffering parent of one, their oeuvre will remain a mystery.”

Comments like Petridis’s are far more prevalent, and lurking in the background of such criticisms is the persistent, disparaging notion that these young girls are foolish for becoming enthralled with a group like One Direction. In September of 2013, *British GQ* writer Jonathan Heaf conducted an interview with the band as that month’s cover article. This patronizing article states that One Direction fans “don’t care about the Rolling Stones. They don’t care about the meta-modernist cycle of cultural repetition. They don’t care about history. All these female fans care about is their immediate vociferous reverence: the beatification of St Harry, St Zayn, St Niall, St Louis and St Liam.”

Heaf’s discussion of the fans goes beyond Petridis’s subtle condescension, resulting in an overt declaration that it is not possible for girls to simultaneously support One Direction and entertain any outside intellectual interests; moreover, as Aja Romano notes in a rebuttal to Heaf’s article, he is objectifying fans and treating their sexuality as their sole motivator. That sentiment echoes throughout Heaf’s entire article, leaving readers with the distinct impression that Heaf perceives himself as existing well above the hormonal screaming girls that he describes.

Baumgardner and Richards’ book *Manifesta* sheds some light on the most significant problem with Heaf’s reaction to One Direction fans. Baumgardner and Richards describe Girlies as self-proclaimed feminists who absorb feminine-coded media,

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clothes, and make-up. For participants of this culture, appreciation for “the tabooed symbols of women’s feminine enculturation … isn’t shorthand for ‘we’ve been duped,’” which is a feature of the One Direction fandom—and adolescent- and female-dominated fandoms in general—that Heaf does not acknowledge. On the contrary, in the years since One Direction’s creation, fans have become skeptical about all information that is released about the band—and for good reason. On countless occasions, fans have conveyed their awareness of the false proximity that has been established between the fandom and the band, and of the image that each member is meant to represent. After six years of shifting public accounts of the members’ lives—such as an initial claim of Zayn Malik’s “brief hiatus” only six days before the official statement of his departure was released—it is fair to say that a large portion of the fandom is quite conscious that they are interacting with an image rather than a band.

However, even people who regard One Direction fans with a sympathetic eye do not acknowledge the extent of the fandom’s awareness. In a review of One Direction’s album *Four*, Caroline Aaron objects to the single “Steal My Girl” because its misogynistic implications of ownership “could leave a negative impact on much of One Direction’s (young, female and impressionable) fan base.” Particularly because many

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88 Heaf is far from the only person who describes the band and the fans with this condescension—comments like this are rampant in articles from other reputable sources and on forums across the internet.
fans are quite critical of the less favorable motivating factors behind One Direction’s creation, these well-meaning presumptions of fandom ignorance and naïveté ultimately become just as significant as negative comments like Heaf’s in perpetuating the undeserved condescending reactions that fans receive.

That is not to say that all participants in the fandom are equally self-aware. A 2013 Channel 4 documentary entitled *Crazy About One Direction* portrays the extreme side of the One Direction fandom.95 The filmmakers interviewed several particularly obsessive fans, many of whom express delusional opinions about the band—several of the girls are convinced that they will one day marry a member of One Direction, while others stalk the boys to meet them as many times as possible. One girl chose to get braces that she did not need because Niall Horan had braces, and another fan proudly muses that “[the One Direction fandom] could probably kill you if [they] wanted.”96 At no point do the creators make any explicitly disparaging comments about these behaviors, but throughout the documentary, they ask leading questions or edit clips to present a troubling image of the fandom. For example, toward the end of the documentary, the interviewer asks a fan if she has a boyfriend or has an interest in “real boys” her age—the girl answers that she is indifferent toward other boys, which is punctuated by a heavy silence before the clip ends.97 This moment is one of many that bears negative implications – in this case, that fans are so preoccupied with famous boys that they cannot direct their attention to genuine, healthy relationships – which confirm previously held negative perceptions of the band and their fans, but which also work quite effectively to convince previously neutral viewers that One Direction is little more than

97 Ibid.
an object of teenage obsession. As a result, the film ultimately perpetuates the sense of superiority that on-lookers experience toward these girls.

The characterization of these young, overzealous fans tends to obscure the section of the fandom that uses their enthusiasm for the band to mobilize its constituents in more positive ways. In honor of the band members’ birthdays, many fans donate money to charities; one group called 1D Fans Give has organized several fundraisers, which have accumulated hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations to various charities from 2013 to 2016.\(^98\) After the release of One Direction’s album *Four*, many fans did not support the label’s single choices because they did not feel that the chosen songs adequately represent the talents of the band. In May of 2015, they channeled their frustration into a movement to make the One Direction song “No Control” into a “DIY single.”\(^99\) “Project No Control” prompted fans to purchase and stream the song and to call radio hosts around the world to request it. In the span of only a few days, dozens of radio stations disregarded their standard rotations to meet fans’ requests, including notable pop stations like Z100 in the United States and BBC Radio One in the United Kingdom.\(^100\) As the members have begun to release solo music, fans have established similar movements for Niall Horan’s single “This Town,” Louis Tomlinson’s collaboration with Steve Aoki on “Just Hold On,”\(^101\) and Harry Styles’ “Sign of the Times.”

Even these movements – which are intended to promote and support the band – are often described with an undercurrent of condescension. For example, just days after the debut of “Project No Control,” One Direction appeared on *The Late Late Show with

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James Corden, during which Corden introduced the project by remarking that so many fans had asked him to discuss it, he was concerned that “they might kill him” if he did not oblige. Such comments are delivered in jest, but they are predominant and evidently accessible across audiences, indicating that the general public believes that violent fanaticism motivates even these positive fan interactions. This image reflects in the condemnation of seemingly “normal” girls and women who casually enjoy the band for any number of reasons: they might listen to only a few songs or to all the band’s albums; they might only care because they think the boys are attractive; they might think the members of One Direction are talented musicians; or they might simply enjoy the lively, pop sound of much of the band’s music. However, because of society’s perception of One Direction fans as exclusively overzealous and obsessive, these more diverse examples of positive fan identity are disregarded and delegitimized.

There is a strong interplay between this negative perception of the fans and the negative perception of the band—as a boy band, One Direction receives a great deal of criticism simply for existing. The general public makes the same assumptions about One Direction that they do about essentially every boy band (as noted earlier): that they cannot sing, that they cannot play their own instruments, that they do not write any of their own music, etc. The persistent distrust of young girls and their ability to make informed decisions about the music that they like then only strengthens the vehemence with which many reject One Direction. After the boy band gained a certain level of notoriety, it became incredibly difficult to convince their critics that the members of One Direction are anything more than the pristine, lip-syncing “What Makes You Beautiful” artists that people automatically visualize. In this way, the argument against boy bands

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has become circular, with the audience reflecting poorly on the band and the band reflecting poorly on the audience.

The latter result is particularly peculiar—because fans are judged for choosing to support One Direction, they somehow become responsible for the negative image that is projected onto them, even though they are in no way responsible for the manufactured nature of the band. It seems particularly unfair to blame young girls for falling in love with a band that was specifically engineered to make girls fall in love with them. However, when critics and the media only talk about the fans of One Direction in this deprecating light, it makes sense that the public reacts to by expressing varying levels of bewilderment, which sometimes borders on genuine discomfort and distrust.

Through their public image, then, One Direction certainly follows in the legacy of other boy bands that came before them, but in many ways, their fanbase does distinguish them from the bands described above. Their distinction mostly derives from online fan interaction, which was not a viable resource for fans even as recently as the early 2000s. As many scholars of fan culture have observed, the advent of social media has allowed the general public unprecedented access to celebrities, but it has also made global fandom engagement a reality. Among One Direction fans, the presence of social media enhances the negative and positive sides of the fandom that I highlighted, creating unhealthy, unrealistic expectations for the fans’ relationship with band members, but also providing a rich environment for fan encouragement and mobilization.

The internet allows for fan behavior to occur on a particularly large scale, but tracing back to Beatlemania, boy bands have been marked, in part, by their deeply involved fandoms. Fan magazines circulated for any number of niche interests, allowing

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a venue for fans to collaborate and exchange ideas about television shows, books, and bands. That said, when considering Mike Kirkup’s article on *The Beatles Monthly* in conjunction with the One Direction fandom’s Twitter access to the intimate details of the members’ lives, boy band fandom stands out as an extreme across decades. In “Some Kind of Innocence,” Kirkup observes that “the sense of being able to communicate directly to [The Beatles] on a one-to-one basis is crucial in building up a relationship between the fan and object of the fandom,” and this line of thinking would certainly explain why One Direction has consistently been made so accessible to the public.103

However, the prioritization of the fan-band relationship raises questions about the true value of boy bands outside of their fandom. This is not to say that appealing to a fan base is abnormal—the express purpose of late night talk shows, for example, is to perpetuate the public’s enthusiasm for and familiarity with a given celebrity, benefiting little-known singers and television actors on the one hand, and, on the other, A-list celebrities from Hollywood’s top-grossing films. That said, within the academic community, it certainly appears as though boy bands draw attention because they are an extreme example of this sort of fan communication. More so than most other celebrities, boy bands are marketed as an image for their fans – young, teenage girls – to idolize, romanticize, or sexualize, depending on each individual fan’s preferences. Fans’ awareness of these marketing strategies certainly does not seem to hinder their willingness to perpetuate the band’s profitability, because four of One Direction’s five albums debuted at No. 1 on Billboard’s list of album sales,104 and the band’s most successful tour grossed nearly 300 million dollars, making it one of the highest grossing

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103 Mike Kirkup, “Some Kind of Innocence,” 68.
tours of all time.\textsuperscript{105} That success might have to do with fans’ legitimate enthusiasm for their music, but there is no disputing that One Direction and their publicity team follow in the general boy band trend of prioritizing the establishment of communication between the fans and the band.

Because of the efforts to manipulate audiences into getting invested in One Direction, there is an inherent implication that the members are not talented enough to succeed on their own merits. This image then extends to the general public’s perception of them and other boy bands, perpetuating presumptions that boy bands are unmusical and inauthentic. Furthermore, it illustrates why academic exploration of boy bands is so limited to image, be it through authenticity or gender and sexuality: for many people, these are the features of boy bands that are rich enough to merit attention.

However, just as the fan community diverges from the general public’s expectations, the members of One Direction have honed a genuine level of musicianship across their five albums, and casual listeners and music critics alike have largely… not noticed. The public remains content, instead, to reiterate remarks about boy bands lip syncing on stage and lacking the ability to play instruments or write their own songs.

Some of these claims are, admittedly, more difficult to dispute than others. Ample evidence exists which illustrates that the members sing in performance: countless fans have uploaded their own videos of concerts onto YouTube, and one need not look too far before finding recordings where the members alter the lyrics, alter their own melodic line, or sing out of tune. In my own recording of their performance of “Fireproof” in Chicago on August 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2015, many of these characteristics of a live performance are

In the original lyrics of Niall Horan’s portion of the first verse, his lines are, “I’m feeling something deep inside/ Hotter than a jet stream, I’m burning up/I’ve got a feeling deep inside/ It’s taking, it’s taking all I’ve got.” In contrast, at 0:23 of the live recording, he reiterated the statement, “I’m feeling something deep inside,” rather than saying the line, “I’ve got a feeling deep inside.” At two points in this recording, members of the band also alter their portion of the melody in a prominent way. Liam Payne does it first at 1:52, slipping into a falsetto as he sings the word “long”; then, beginning at 2:22, Harry Styles draws out the word “fireproof” with a vocal run that is not present in the original recording. Finally, as is apt to happen occasionally in live performances, Louis Tomlinson seems to go briefly out of tune in his verse, which begins at 1:04. This is most notable on the word “won’t,” which he sings at 1:09.

However, given the circumstances of live performances, the members have shown themselves to be quite capable vocalists. During a generic One Direction concert, they are running around and exerting a great deal of energy on massive stages constructed for stadium venues. This concert experience necessitates a level of breath support and control which illustrated that One Direction’s vocal abilities are well beyond what people tend to assume.

The belief that One Direction cannot play musical instruments can be attributed to preexisting notions about some of the boy bands described earlier; groups like New Kids on the Block, the Backstreet Boys, and NSYNC were notorious for their lack of instruments when they performed on stage. The members of One Direction possess varying levels of instrumental proficiency, primarily on the piano and guitar, but Niall Horan is the most skilled guitarist, performing lead guitar on several songs when they

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perform live; most notably, he plays the acoustic guitar in “Little Things,” a ballad in which his part serves as the entire instrumental track. Although Horan is the only member of One Direction who plays an instrument during concerts, criticizing the band for performing primarily without instruments is unreasonable when one takes into account the vast number of pop artists who do not play instruments when they are on stage.\textsuperscript{107} Many well-respected contemporary artists play the guitar or piano in a small number of songs on stage, as Horan does at One Direction concerts, but will opt to spend the majority of concerts walking around the stage so that they can interact more with the crowd.\textsuperscript{108}

Finally, people generally assume that, as a boy band that formed at such a young age, the members of One Direction do not write their own music. To some degree, this assumption is accurate—their first album, \textit{Up All Night}, came out in 2011, when the oldest member was 19 years old, and at the time, none of them had any real experience writing music. Given the circumstances, it would not be overly presumptuous to suggest that their writing credits on that first album were gratuitous. This assertion is supported by the fact that all five members are credited as writing on the same three tracks, which makes their presence on the list of writers seem like even more of an afterthought.\textsuperscript{109}

That said, by the time they reached their fourth album, they seem to have hit their stride as the interaction between harmony and melody in their songs became more nuanced. The members of One Direction contributed to \textit{Four} to varying extents: Niall

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{107} This criticism, in particular, also displays a very strong cultural bias that has developed in America, in particular, because of the ingrained belief that singers cannot be musicians unless they are also instrumentalists. To think this way is to disregard the remarkable amount of musical ability a singer must have.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Taylor Swift is one notable example of this. She will play the guitar at points during her concerts, but because of the sheer size of the venues, she tends to set the guitar aside for much of a given performance.
\item \textsuperscript{109} This possibility is further supported by the sheer number of writers on each of One Direction’s albums—not counting the members of One Direction, 33 different people are credited for writing on \textit{Up All Night}.
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Horan made the most minimal contribution, credited as writing on three songs; Liam Payne is credited with writing on the most tracks, contributing to 10 out of 16 songs on the album.\textsuperscript{110} Their influence continued to their fifth album; the members contributed to 13 of the 17 songs on the album, and Payne also received his first producing credit for the track “Love You Goodbye.” They also have formed writing groups that they often are credited as working in, suggesting that each member prefers to collaborate with certain songwriters.

Due to the opaque nature of the band’s writing process, any exploration into how much a member contributed to a given song will be essentially fruitless, but surface-level evidence supports the notion that One Direction had begun to play a larger part in the writing of their own music by the time they reached their fourth album. That said, as with the other common objections to One Direction, treating their high level of collaboration as an inherently negative trait of the band is a gross misjudgment of their music because it is common for popular artists today to collaborate or to perform songs written entirely by other people. Even pop artists who are renowned for their songwriting, such as Taylor Swift and Adele, collaborate on their albums with other writers.\textsuperscript{111} For years, rumors have circulated that Beyoncé Knowles puts her name on songs to which she barely contributed,\textsuperscript{112} but this possibility is not enough to prompt the same kind of criticism that One Direction suffers. When collaboration or substantial lack of songwriting is so common across the music industry in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, it makes little sense to single out and criticize One Direction for possibly taking a passive role in elements of the

\textsuperscript{110} Liner notes to \emph{Four}, One Direction, Syco Entertainment, CD, 2014.
\textsuperscript{111} Both have worked with Max Martin and Shellback, two of the Swedish “factory” songwriters referred to in \emph{The Song Machine}. Not worth delving into now, but it’s interesting that these two singers who are renowned for their “authentic” songwriting have both written with writers who seem to represent a very inauthentic side of the industry (if you believe that songwriting \emph{for} an act makes that act somehow inauthentic).
\textsuperscript{112} Daniel D’Addario, “Is Beyoncé a Plagiarist?” \emph{Salon}, January 11, 2013. \url{http://www.salon.com/}
songwriting process.

Instead, it stands to reason that One Direction faces criticism due to the combination of their fandom and their questionable musicianship and songwriting practices. These characteristics accumulate to characterize the band as inauthentic musicians, rather than as inherently poor musicians. The association between inauthenticity and bad musicianship illustrates an ideology that pervades Western culture: because boy bands stand in direct contrast to Romantic expectations for legitimacy that figures like Duffett and Leach described, society has presumed that One Direction is another in a long line of inauthentic – and, by extension, bad – artists.

In her exploration of authenticity Leach concludes that pop artists should be held to standards that are better suited to the genre. However, she does not provide clear suggestions for standards that pop artists should be held to instead. I assert that pop artists such as One Direction can most effectively be evaluated based on their development and growth—this could apply to fluctuations in musical style and instrumentation, diversity of harmonic progressions and lyrical subject matter. Within a genre where all elements of music are linked closely to an artist’s intended audience, changes to any of them have the potential to alter One Direction’s image. In the case of the Beatles, who made a successful transition from the boy band to the rock romanticism genre, the shift in these elements eventually resulted in more “legitimate music” and prompted a drastic shift in audience. Even among pop artists whose development is not so drastic, recognizing their growth as musicians is crucial as we consider their place in the pop genre.

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115 Ibid. 160.
Chapter Three: From *Up All Night* to *Midnight Memories*

Through an examination of One Direction, the relationship between musical elements and the pop artist image is initially quite apparent. During the band’s time on *The X-Factor*, they accumulated a rather significant following; in the wake of One Direction’s third-place finish, these fans truly did keep the band from falling into obscurity. A clear majority of these fans were young teenage girls, which is exemplary of the audience for whom One Direction’s first album, *Up All Night*, was written.

“What Makes You Beautiful” serves as a relatively accurate representation of *Up All Night*, the band’s debut album insofar as the song epitomizes the term ‘bubblegum pop.’ The melody is very simple, and consists of a pattern that they cycle through twice in each verse. One iteration of the pattern is illustrated below.

Example 1: “What Makes You Beautiful” verse (measures 4-8).

As is evident from the excerpt above, the melody in the verses is very simple, almost entirely step-wise, and primarily limits itself to 1, only briefly passing to other notes. The only leap occurs from 1 to 5 between measures 5 and 6, but the jump is performed in such a way that it is difficult to pinpoint the precise scale degree upon first listen because the vocalist seems to include a brief glissando before he quickly trails off to nothing. The melody does stray from step-wise in the pre-chorus, but even then, it only contains characteristic jumps between 1, 3, and 5, shown in Example 2 below.

Example 2: “What Makes You Beautiful” pre-chorus (measures 13-16)
The pre-chorus then leads into the 18-measure chorus, which consists of a repeated 8-measure phrase and a 2-measure tagline. Only the first iteration of the chorus theme is included in Example 3. Like the verses, the chorus is heavily dominated by $\hat{1}$ and also almost entirely step-wise, the one exception being a jump from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$. Although the melody remains consistently simple throughout, if one were to identify a section of the song where it is the most complex, it would be the pre-chorus, if only because of the slightly higher prevalence of melodic jumps.


This conclusion is further confirmed upon examination of the song’s chord progression. It, too, is very simple, following a I-IV-V progression throughout the verses, chorus, and bridge, and incorporating a vi chord into the pre-chorus – which follows a I-IV-vi-V progression – creating the most harmonically compelling portion of the song. The harmonic and melodic elements of “What Makes You Beautiful” result in a very easy-to-learn, sing-able song that is sure to linger in people’s minds, making it a commendable choice for a debut single for this up-and-coming boy band. This earworm quality only takes the song so far, however, because the simplicity of the song leads to
the criticism that it is boring and uncreative—perfect, perhaps, for a teenage girl, but not what songwriters would create for more sophisticated audiences.

In and of itself, this objection cannot be based entirely on the melodic and harmonic characteristics of “What Makes You Beautiful.” This is not to suggest that such criticism is unwarranted, but rather that the specific focus of the claim is directed in the wrong place. An overwhelming amount of well-renowned contemporary pop songs rely on step-wise melody and a simple I-IV-V or variation on the I-IV-V-vi progression. The distinction between these songs and “What Makes You Beautiful” is that there are no other elements of “What Makes You Beautiful” where the writers took risks and branched out beyond common pop music conventions. The song contains little dynamic contrast, follows the common ABC song form, and utilizes rather generic drum, bass, and guitar riffs throughout. It is no wonder that many people listen to it and claim that it sounds just like another radio pop song, because given the band’s origins, it is likely meant to sound like other pop hits.

The most effective and engaging feature of “What Makes You Beautiful,” though, is the quality of the vocals, which is often dismissed due to the misconstrued belief that One Direction lip syncs. The harmonies in the chorus – most notably in the culminating chorus after the bridge, beginning at 2:38 – are not particularly complex, but they are executed well, leaving little question that the vocals are the strongest aspect of an otherwise relatively mediocre track.

Overall, this description also suits the other tracks on Up All Night. Excepting the ballads, the timbre is synthesizer-heavy throughout, which contributes to the manufactured sound of the album. They provide some variety to their timbre by incorporating scattered rock elements, most often in the form of a small amount of distortion in the guitar to create a “dirtier” sound. Melodies and chord progressions are
simple across the board, with the pre-chorus or bridge often emerging as the most tension-filled portions of the song. Interestingly, on *Up All Night*, the bridge is also the section that exhibits the most variation within the song form standard that “What Makes You Beautiful” establishes. Several of the songs, especially on the front half of the album, utilize a bridge that can be divided into two unique sections—in the case of “What Makes You Beautiful,” the first portion of the bridge is comprised of vocables\(^\text{116}\) over a minimal instrumental track, followed by a reiteration of the chorus by only one member of the band over low instrumentation. There are two common variations to this trend: the introduction of a new lyrical idea, as in their track “More Than This,” and a reiteration of the pre-chorus theme instead of the chorus, such as in “Up All Night.” The latter half of the album consists of songs that almost uniformly only contain a new lyrical idea as the bridge. No doubt in part because of the distinct variations between songs on what otherwise sounds like a very uniform album, the bridge often stands out as the most compelling portion of a song.

As with “What Makes You Beautiful,” though, the greatest strength across the album tends to be the members’ vocals; compared to some of their other tracks, “What Makes You Beautiful” actually does not do the members justice in terms of showcasing their talent. Instead, the ballads on the album, such as “More Than This” and “Moments,” are most successful at providing the boys with an arena to showcase their true abilities, quite possibly because the tracks are less dense and, therefore, give the members a chance to bring their vocal chops to the forefront of the music. Even so, their voices leave a fair amount to be desired. This can probably be attributed primarily to their age – the oldest member of the band was 19 years old when they recorded this album, and their lack of

\(^{116}\) “Vocables” encapsulate any sort of nonsensical syllabic singing. In the case of One Direction, songs with vocables are likely to contain “na na,” “la la,” and “oooh.”
vocal training at this early point in their career is very evident. Their age also hinders them because their voices still sound quite similar, having not yet had an opportunity to truly develop.

Given these features, it is not difficult to imagine why many people struggle to take One Direction seriously. If *Up All Night* and “What Makes You Beautiful” exist in people’s minds as what One Direction sound like, they are frankly quite justified in the claims that all the band’s music sounds the same, that the music is uninteresting, etc. It’s not so much that *Up All Night* is a bad album, but rather that it is mediocre. 38 different songwriters are credited with contributing to the album, yet it all sounds similar, and to many listeners, that makes it uninteresting. Some satisfying vocal moments and enjoyable melodic lines smattered throughout the songs are not enough to compel an average listener to purchase the album, let alone to keep listening to it.

Instead, *Up All Night* becomes a niche interest for young girls. While many other listeners would find One Direction’s simplicity uninteresting, it results in dance-able, sing-able songs that are very appealing to young listeners. The lyrics also hold a certain appeal for their audience: it is quite likely that most of their young fans have had few occasions when someone has sung their praises, literally or figuratively. Consider, too, the lyrics in conjunction with the handsome boys who are singing them, and *Up All Night* easily became a significant source of validation for much of their audience.

One Direction’s second album, *Take Me Home* (released in 2012), largely

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117 A much larger debate about children’s interest in and ability to engage with more complex music lies beneath this observation, and my stance on the subject is more nuanced than I can justify focusing on in-text at this point. For the sake of this analysis, however, I wish to clarify that my conclusions about the music’s appeal are definitively attached to the band’s image, and, thus, to some presumptions that those marketing One Direction have made.
follows in the tradition established by *Up All Night*. Most notably, the members have made some progress vocally, and it is easier to distinguish five unique voices than it was on their first album. Increasing vocal ability is the most distinctive improvement between *Up All Night* and *Take Me Home*. Lyrically speaking, songs are still primarily directed toward the audience, but some songs do contain implications of sexuality that begin to present the band as somewhat more mature, even if these playful hints do not affect the overall audience of the band. Some of the melodic lines are also less predictable and there is a more blatant rock influence on certain tracks which, overall, hint at the beginnings of a divergence from their bubblegum pop sound, but these changes are not drastic enough to draw much of a new audience.

“Live While We’re Young” was the first single released from this album, and it very nicely highlights these improvements. The rock influence on the album is very apparent in this song because of the thinly veiled allusion to the introduction to The Clash’s “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” Melodically, the verses still follow a step-wise pattern; in comparison with “What Makes You Beautiful,” the melody is less monotone and relies less on 1, as illustrated below:

![Example 4: “Live While We’re Young” verse (measures 5-8).](image)

As with “What Makes You Beautiful,” the melodic phrase ends on 2, a stylistic choice that the writers have most likely made to build some tension in an otherwise simple melodic statement. During the verses, the melody is doubled in both the bass and

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118 These lyrics are somewhat apparent in “Live While We’re Young,” the song that I discuss here, but a particularly significant example among fans is in the song “She’s Not Afraid,” which describes a girl who is supposedly “afraid of falling in love,” but it relies on tropes within music and other media about “making a man work for it” to heavily imply that the singer is hoping to have sex with the subject of the song.
guitar, creating a uniform sound; the drum set serves as the only contrast, providing hits on each beat. Unlike the pre-chorus in “What Makes You Beautiful,” the pre-chorus of “Live While We’re Young” is the most melodically uninteresting portion of the song, remaining almost entirely monotone on $\hat{T}$, as shown in Example 5.

Example 5: “Live While We’re Young” pre-chorus (measures 13-20).

“One iteration of this phrase is shown above in Example 6. Melodically speaking, the chorus relies far less on $\hat{T}$ than “What Makes You Beautiful” did; it also contains
jumps between 1, 3, and 5 and, in one instance, makes a jump from 2 to 5. The chord progression is relatively simple, as with “What Makes You Beautiful.” The verses follow a I-IV-I-IV-ii progression and once again, it shifts to a variation of the I-IV-V-vi progression in the pre-chorus—specifically, a vi-IV-I-V-vi-IV-V progression that leads into the chorus, where it resolves to I.

Like the songs on *Up All Night*, “Live While We’re Young” and many other tracks on *Take Me Home* rely heavily on changes in timbre, introducing and removing elements of the ensemble to create dynamic contrast and tension. In this song and others, the guitar is the primary contributor to the shifting tone of the album because by expanding the role of the guitarist, the instrumentals in general sound less manufactured. Compared to other tracks on the album, “Live While We’re Young” is not the best example of this change, but with even minimal variation in the guitar part between the verse, pre-chorus, and chorus, it sounds like the instrument plays a necessary role in the song in a way that the guitar often did not seem to on *Up All Night*.

The song form of “Live While We’re Young” also differs from the common form on the first album. The primary difference is in the bridge, starting at 2:06, which consists of a brief instrumental, followed by a new lyrical theme and a slight variation on the “live while we’re young” refrain. This format differs radically from any bridge on the first album, which is a change that reflects almost universally throughout *Take Me Home*—unlike *Up All Night*, on which a few specific patterns for the bridges could be identified, there are no clear patterns that emerge among the bridges on *Take Me Home*.

That said, a fair number of tracks on *Take Me Home* retain much of the bubblegum pop sheen that was so apparent on *Up All Night*. The album’s second single was “Kiss You,” which is certainly more reminiscent of their first album than “Live While We’re Young.” The lyrics are more explicitly intended to woo the audience, and
the melody is repetitive and quite sing-able. These two songs illustrate a dichotomy in One Direction’s identity that becomes a pattern across their second, third, and fourth albums as the band’s image begins to conflict with itself. “Live While We’re Young” presents a band that is beginning to grow up, but even as their music begins to evolve, “Kiss You” appeals to their younger audience—only the band’s maturing vocals really distinguish the song from those on *Up All Night*. Among their fans, a greater sense of musical maturity was likely an appealing acknowledgment that the band and their young fans were getting older. However, because *Take Me Home* is still heavily reminiscent of the original sound from *Up All Night*, the development in songs like “Live While We’re Young” likely had little impact on their image outside of their fandom.

*Midnight Memories*, One Direction’s third album (released in 2013), appears to be at war with itself, further complicating the dichotomy that begins to appear in *Take Me Home*. Like their second album, *Midnight Memories* includes elements of their bubblegum pop sound and several nods to well-known classic rock anthems, but it also pays homage to the folk-pop style that was arguably at its peak when this album was created. Because of these very different sounds, it is difficult to identify particular features of the music that apply across the board, so it becomes necessary to examine more songs in greater depth in order to gain a full perspective of the changes within the band’s sound.

One Direction released “Best Song Ever” as the first single from the album, and it remains grounded in the same style that One Direction became known for because of their first two albums: it is shameless in its pop sound, and begins with an intro that
unmistakably echoes the opening of The Who’s “Baba O’Riley.”

It proceeds where *Take Me Home* left off, slightly expanding on the band’s musical vocabulary and incorporating new strategies into the music even as it remains simplistic. The verse consists of an 8-measure statement which is itself made up of two identical 4-measure phrases, one example of which is illustrated Example 7. Although the verses are almost entirely step-wise, there are a few characteristics of the melody that are worth making note of. First, the phrase neither begins nor ends on 1, instead grounding itself almost entirely in 5. It also contains jumps from 1 to 6 and, more interestingly, from 6 to 2.

Example 7: “Best Song Ever” verse (measures 11-14).

In contrast, the pre-chorus and chorus of “Best Song Ever” rely on fewer pitches. The pre-chorus – represented in Example 8 above – begins on 1, but the first scale degree arguably plays the least significant role in the phrase. After a persistent repetition of 6, the first half of the phrase ends on 2, and the full phrase ends on 7. These melodic choices increase tension within the pre-chorus.

Example 8: “Best Song Ever” pre-chorus (measures 18-22).

The chorus resolves the tension established in the pre-chorus through the melody, which lingers on 1 for the longest stretch thus far in the song. The chorus makes

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119 “Best Song Ever” is generally regarded as an early but effective homage to One Direction’s musical influences. Title track “Midnight Memories” serves as another example that incorporates a well-known rock riff – an almost identical hook to “Pour Some Sugar on Me” by Def Leppard – which is criticized almost unanimously among critics as sounding ineffective and forced, illustrating that on this album, the band is struggling to find their own voice.
predictable jumps between 1, 3, and 5, but more remarkably, both the pre-chorus and the chorus make upward and downward leaps between 2 and 5. Even though the overall melody is still fairly simplistic, these features indicate, without a doubt, that One Direction’s melodies are becoming increasingly complex.

Example 9: “Best Song Ever” chorus (measures 22-33).

If “Best Song Ever” represents the perpetuation of One Direction’s bubblegum pop sound, “Story of My Life” is one of the songs on *Midnight Memories* that most clearly illustrates that One Direction have evolved since their second album. The melody in the verses shares many common characteristics with the verses of “Best Song Ever,” most notably in its predominant use of 5 and its comparably minimal use of 1: in the case of “Story of My Life,” 1 appears in the verse only once, as shown in Example 10 below. In addition, “Story of My Life” differs from the other songs that I have discussed so far because the verse incorporates a new idea halfway through its melodic phrase, where a vast majority of the verses on their first two albums consisted of a shorter phrase that was repeated. Aside from making jumps between 1, 3, and 5, the melody jumps from 2 to 6, as in “Best Song Ever,” and from 3 to 7.
Example 10: “Story of My Life” verse (measures 9-23).

The chorus is the first point in the song where the melody is strongly rooted in \( \hat{1} \).

Like the verses, the chorus is relatively monotone, but in this song, the band shows a degree of melodic sophistication that is not present in their first two albums. As shown in Example 11 below, at two instances in the chorus, the melody jumps from \( \hat{1} \) to \( \hat{3} \) before returning to \( \hat{1} \); shortly after, the melody jumps from \( \hat{1} \) to \( \hat{4} \) and back. The jump from \( \hat{1} \) to \( \hat{4} \) has a very specific function in the phrase because it resolves the tension that was established with the inclusion of \( \hat{3} \) in the preceding measures. This choice shows that the band now has a higher expectation of their audience’s ability to understand the melodic structure: as a result of the quick return to \( \hat{1} \) after the introduction of \( \hat{3} \), listeners have to track the absent \( \hat{3} \) through the melody until \( \hat{4} \) resolves it.
Ultimately, the true value of “Story of My Life” lies in its harmonic structure, which is more nuanced than anything from One Direction’s first two albums. The chords in the verses are heavily structured around vi, following a vi-I-vi-I-vi-IV-I-vi-IV-I progression. For the other songs that I have discussed, vi has only appeared in the pre-chorus, but “Story of My Life” marks a turning point where this changes; the vi chord plays a crucial role in many of their harmonies from this point onward. The pre-chorus follows a simple IV-V-I progression, but none of these chords occur in root position—instead, the pre-chorus follows a IV-I-V-V-I6 progression. This inclusion of inversions is another new development for their harmonies.

Example 11: “Story of My Life” chorus (measures 31-47).

Ultimately, the true value of “Story of My Life” lies in its harmonic structure, which is more nuanced than anything from One Direction’s first two albums. The chords in the verses are heavily structured around vi, following a vi-I-vi-I-vi-IV-I-vi-IV-I progression. For the other songs that I have discussed, vi has only appeared in the pre-chorus, but “Story of My Life” marks a turning point where this changes; the vi chord plays a crucial role in many of their harmonies from this point onward. The pre-chorus follows a simple IV-V-I progression, but none of these chords occur in root position—instead, the pre-chorus follows a IV-I-V-I6 progression. This inclusion of inversions is another new development for their harmonies.

Through the entirety of “Story of My Life,” the harmony and melody interact in a way that they never did on *Up All Night* or *Take Me Home*. They have interesting characteristics when examined separately, but this song is so strong specifically because the harmony emphasizes the compelling aspects of the melody, and vice versa. For example, in the verse of “Story of My Life,” shown in Example 10, the melody introduces a new melodic phrase halfway through the verse. This change is intensified by the chord progression, because this turn occurs on the same line where the harmony first progresses from vi to IV. This album marks a change where the interaction between the
different elements of a song plays such a role.

As I mentioned in my discussion of *Take Me Home*, “Live While We’re Young” is an illustration of a degree of musical growth that only had an impact on the band’s image within the fandom. “Story of My Life” marks a true shift in One Direction’s public image as the first song that prompted people to say things like, “I’m not in their target demographic, but…”120 The formal, melodic, and harmonic features that I’ve highlighted certainly illustrate that there is justification to attribute to them a greater sense of musical refinement and talent.

However, even as casual listeners recognized “Story of My Life” as a genuine, compelling pop song, the band’s overall image was not particularly affected. The general public presumed that they were not a part of One Direction’s intended audience, but “Story of My Life” is a drastic shift from the songs on *Take Me Home*—particularly because it was released as a single, chances are that the intended audience truly was more diverse than the target demographic for the first two albums. Consequently, *Midnight Memories* marks the album on which the band’s music begins to stand in conflict not only with itself, but also with their image.

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Chapter Four: Four and Made in the A.M.

One Direction released their next album, *Four*, in 2014. As with *Midnight Memories*, their fourth album increased the variety in their music as they strayed even further from their initial pop sound. The band and critics alike largely emphasize that this album was inspired by various artists from the 1980s. Despite this common thread uniting many of the songs, it remains difficult to identify characteristics that sufficiently articulate what the band is doing with their songs. While their sound has become a bit more nuanced since *Midnight Memories*, beginning to combine elements of their pop sound with inspiration from classic artists, I will simplify my analysis because, for the most part, the songs on this album can still be identified as more folk-pop or classic rock-inspired.

In September of 2014, “Fireproof” was released as a free download to accompany the announcement of One Direction’s new album. The song has been compared to Fleetwood Mac countless times since its release, with some critics specifically identifying Fleetwood Mac’s “Dreams” and “Gypsy” as probable sources of inspiration. In a discussion of One Direction’s image, “Fireproof” is significant not only because it was the first song that the public heard from the album, but more importantly, because it was released for free—this is one of the strongest indications that One Direction was attempting to entice a wider array of people to give their music a chance.

Like many the songs that I’ve discussed thus far, the verse of “Fireproof” is composed of two iterations of the same musical phrase, an example of which is shown above. Unlike each of those songs, however, this structure does not carry over throughout the track; halfway through the second verse, after only one cycle through this melody, the vocal melodic line briefly disappears and a guitar solo occurs, indicating that One
Direction have an increasing lack of regard for their old stand-by song form.

The first half of the verse is heavily constructed around $\hat{5}$, just like “Best Song Ever” and “Story of My Life” from Midnight Memories. The melody then changes halfway through the phrase, descending to $\hat{1}$ and rooting itself in that foundation even as it returns to $\hat{5}$ with the second iteration of the melody within the verse. Although the verse is primarily step-wise, there is a jump from $6$ to $\hat{1}$ in addition to the commonplace jumps between $\hat{1}$, $3$, and $\hat{5}$.

Example 12: “Fireproof” verse (measures 5-14).

“Fireproof,” unlike any of the songs that I’ve discussed thus far, does not contain a pre-chorus. This is not to say that all songs on the first three albums contained a pre-chorus, although most of One Direction’s songs do utilize one. The pre-chorus often serves as a place to build tension within a song across music, and it certainly carries that role in One Direction songs. Thus, “Fireproof” can be placed in direct contrast to pop expectations not only because it does not contain a pre-chorus, but also because of the means by which the band establishes tension instead.

In my discussion of Midnight Memories, I noted that the verses were grounded in $\hat{5}$, and that the chorus existed as the first point in which they truly rooted themselves in $\hat{1}$. “Fireproof” does something very different, with the verse resolving down to $\hat{1}$ halfway
through. The chorus, on the other hand, grounds itself entirely in 2, specifically utilizing 1 in the context of the vi chord, as shown below in Example 13. As a result of this choice, 1 plays a very minimal role in the melody of the chorus.


The entirety of the song’s harmony consists of the standard I, IV, V, and vi chords, but as with the melody, the structure differs greatly from a majority of their songs because the chorus serves to build tension, rather than to resolve it. In the verses, the two-part nature of each melodic phrase is also reflected in the harmonic structure; in the first six measures of the verse, during which the melody is built on 5, the harmony stays primarily on the I chord, only briefly changing to the V chord three times before returning to I. In the latter portion of the verse, when 1 plays a stronger role in the melody, the harmonic line changes, following a vi-V-IV-I progression. The chorus then utilizes a V-vi-IV-V progression, after which the resolution to the I chord at the beginning of the second verse is particularly satisfying. After the second verse, the harmony consistently uses the V-vi-IV-V progression for the remainder of the song; it doesn’t resolve again until the tagline at the very end.

In contrast to “Fireproof,” fan-favorite “Girl Almighty” stands as a solid example of One Direction’s more pop-oriented side. The form of the song is curious, if only
because it is rather difficult to determine where the verse ends and the chorus begins. The melody of the song is hardly worth dwelling on: the verses consist of a syncopated rhythm sung almost entirely on 3, and while the pre-chorus and chorus incorporate the use of more notes, they primarily rely on 1, 3, and 5. On the surface, it is worth pointing out the resemblance between this melodic structure and the structure of “What Makes You Beautiful,” which was also relatively monotone, although “Girl Almighty” might surpass “What Makes You Beautiful” because the tonic plays a much more minimal role in the melody. However, “Girl Almighty” shows a remarkable amount of growth from the band’s first single because of the harmonic structure of the song. Within the instrumental, the bass appears only sporadically, but when it is present, it creates an incredibly variable harmonic rhythm. For example, the verses are almost entirely built upon I, but at the end of each four-measure phrase, there is an instrumental interjection of another four measures in which the bass quickly shifts through a V-vi-IV-I-V-vi-IV-I progression.

For the most part, the actual progression is not particularly notable. At the end of the chorus, however, there is a progression that stands out not only in the context of “Girl Almighty,” but also across all of One Direction’s music as a uniquely creative choice. The chorus closes with a reiteration of the refrain, “I get down on my knees for you,” with only one vocalist and light instrumentation. Having just finished the last portion of the chorus on a IV chord, the bass proceeds diatonically down the scale from C# to B and resolving on the tonic, A. One’s first instinct here would be to presume that the bass is playing inversions of the I and V chords before resolving to I in root position, but instead, they surprise us, and in context they are undoubtedly using a iii-ii-I progression.

Lyrically speaking, the title suggests that “Girl Almighty” is another in a long line of One Direction’s songs intended to woo their audience. Although the tone has not
shifted entirely, it is worth noting that the song bears a sense of female empowerment rather than one of audience seduction. With the “I get down on my knees for you” refrain, this song presents the female subject as a strong figure, which is a far cry from the implication from “What Makes You Beautiful” that a lack of self-confidence is attractive. This song acknowledges girls as their primary audience, but it does not presume that girls are listening to One Direction because they want to be seduced. Although this song might appeal to the average young teenage girl fan of One Direction, its non-romantic message acknowledges different expectations of the audience and their motivations in listening to the band—at this point, it is safe to say they do not assume that fans enjoy One Direction because they are in love with the members.

Like “Story of My Life,” these tracks – and many of the others on *Four* – presume a level of melodic, harmonic, and formal awareness that One Direction’s first two albums most certainly do not. Further musical and genre experimentation on *Four* distinguishes it somewhat from *Midnight Memories*. Combined with the lyrics in songs like “Girl Almighty,” these features indicate that musically-speaking, One Direction has begun to shift rather clearly away from the boy band genre with *Four*. Through the more engaging musical material and the classic rock inspiration, this album contextualizes One Direction in a much larger musical conversation than they were participating in before. Their lyrics acknowledge their fans outside of the context of romance and indicate that the band has become more mature—not only through more explicitly sexual lyrics in songs like “No Control” and “Stockholm Syndrome,” but through discussion of far more complex relationships and emotions than that which they wrestled with in earlier albums.

In March of 2015, during One Direction’s fourth tour, Zayn Malik officially
departed the band. The remaining foursome released their fifth album, *Made in the A.M.*, in November of that year. In the wake of ballad-heavy *Four*, *Made in the A.M.* showcases a remarkable degree of diversity in style: reviewers have compared various tracks on the album to Hall & Oates and to Paul Simon;\(^{121}\) to The Police and Mumford & Sons;\(^{122}\) and to The Verve and Christine McVie.\(^{123}\) The album also involves a wider range of instrumentation; tracks like “Drag Me Down” and “Perfect” are more reminiscent of One Direction’s earlier albums, utilizing a standard pop-rock combination of guitar, bass, drum set, and synthesizer, while songs like “If I Could Fly” and “I Want to Write You a Song” rely on minimal acoustic instruments. In contrast, “Olivia” includes strings, trumpets, trombones, flute, clarinet, and harp—this end-product is far more reminiscent of The Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s* album than it is of One Direction’s earlier songs.\(^{124}\) The incorporation of diverse subjects, styles, and instruments created a more eclectic album, but *Made in the A.M.* is also a step forward harmonically, with many tracks illustrating a stronger relationship between the melody and underlying harmonic structure.

Their song “What a Feeling” contains a nuanced interaction between melody and harmony that is indicative of this larger trend. In this case, the harmonic structure keeps the song consistently rooted in C minor, but in the verses, in particular, the melody outlines or implies the relative major, placing an emphasis on 3 and 7 to such an extent that there is hardly any indication of a tonic/dominant relationship in the true home key. As illustrated in Example 14, both four-measure phrases in the first verse do end on 5,

\(^{121}\) Kenneth Partridge, “Swan Song (For Now).”
but the motion from 5 to 3 in measures 8 and 9 ensures that the return to 3 could sound like a resolution to tonic. In the context of the full chord progression, the emphasis on the relative major in the melody is not enough to make it sound major, but it establishes a sense of harmonic ambiguity that is crucial throughout the song.

Example 14: “What a Feeling” verse (measures 5-12).

In the pre-chorus, the predominance of 3 and 7 once again subverts the key that the chords established, this time by concluding phrases on 1 that resolve to 3. The melody first aligns itself more closely with C minor in the transition from the pre-chorus to the chorus, when a 7 in the melody resolves to 1 on the downbeat of the following measure. After this point, the melody becomes grounded in C minor, coinciding with the harmony; by the time the chorus culminates on 1, the minor tonality is far more definitive within the melody.

The bridge also heavily relies on the conflict between these two tonal centers, in part because of the overall predominance of 3. More importantly, however, the bridge consists of two four-measure phrases: while the first phrase concludes emphatically on 1, the second phrase resolves to the relative major. This progression from 1 to 3 sets the bridge apart from the verses, in particular, as the melody of the verses initially implies E-
flat major and transition toward C minor.

Example 15: “What a Feeling” bridge (70-77)

Here, the relationship between the music and the lyrics becomes particularly compelling. Throughout “What a Feeling,” the speaker describes an unnamed lover with whom he has experienced some sort of conflict, because of which they may never be together. While the verses begin with romantic declarations about the subject of the speaker’s affections, both verses become darker as the speaker acknowledges the obstacles to their relationship. In contrast, in the bridge, he allows himself to become more hopeful; in that moment, the shift to VII could easily function as a V/III chord if the song were to take a more positive turn to the relative major leading into the final chorus but instead, the song remains in C minor. Even here, after the melody and harmony are finally equally grounded in one tonality, “What a Feeling” ends on a moment of harmonic ambiguity because the last note in the song is 7. Because of this lack of resolution, the speaker and listener alike do not experience a sense of finality.

In contrast, harmony plays a secondary role in “Never Enough.” Instead, the band places the greatest emphasis on the establishment of a groove, which occurs largely through a consistent bass line of vocables in a two-measure pattern reminiscent of doo-wop. Although the song is in G Major, this ostinato progression centers around D—the
progression effectively walks down the scale from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{2}$, but rather than resolving to G and establishing a definitive relationship between the dominant and the tonic, the progression returns to $\hat{5}$. As the ostinato continues, the resolution to $\hat{5}$ becomes not only comfortable, but expected, to such an extent that it almost ceases to provide any implications about the tonality; it becomes more of an indicator of rhythm than of harmony.

The melody, then, serves the opposite function that it did in “What a Feeling” by clarifying the tonality rather than blurring it. The verses are relatively monotone, primarily remaining on the tonic to establish G major as the tonal center. However, where simplistic melodies were an indication of a desire for sing-ability on One Direction’s earlier albums, the monotone verses emphasize that harmony and tonality are not significant priorities in “Never Enough”; instead, the rhythmic groove takes center stage, making the lyrics themselves almost sound percussive at points. Moreover, when the melody’s range expands in the pre-chorus and chorus, it is incredibly impactful.

Although “What a Feeling” and “Never Enough” are noteworthy for very different reasons, when examined in tandem, both songs illustrate a larger trend: by *Made in the A.M.*, One Direction’s intended audience was certainly not one that was expected to only show interest in songs about young love, with simplistic melodies and harmonic structures. Some songs, like “What a Feeling” and “Never Enough,” manipulate harmony or rhythm, and a majority of the songs on the album showcase some elements of diversity in timbre or form from the traditional features that I described earlier. The content, too, is more mature—this applies not only to sexual implications like those in “Love You Goodbye” and “Temporary Fix,” but also to songs like “End of the Day,” “If I Could Fly,” and “Walking in the Wind,” all of which address romance without
romanticizing it. In one respect, these features acknowledge that their audience is continuing to grow up, but they also indicate that One Direction’s target audience has continued to shift toward an older and likely more generalized audience.

Furthermore, more than any of One Direction’s earlier albums, *Made in the A.M.* truly benefits from a diversity of genres and styles. *Midnight Memories* began to pay homage to some of the band’s influences, and *Four* develops upon that practice, but on *Made in the A.M.*, their influences are only an element that colors the songs, contributing to the overall tone without overshadowing the features that make One Direction distinctive—namely, their vocals. Consequently, *Made in the A.M.* is a cohesive album in a way that critics argued their earlier albums were not, which illustrates that by their fifth album, One Direction developed their own distinctive voice.

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125 In other words, every boy band PR team’s image of young teenage girls.
Conclusion

By the time One Direction went on a hiatus at the beginning of 2016, the members and their music had grown to such an extent that they were hardly recognizable compared with the young contestants from *The X Factor*. However, because their boy band image became so deeply ingrained in the public consciousness through *Up All Night* and *Take Me Home*, their evolution was not enough to shift the public’s perception of their intended audience, and they became a “guilty pleasure” band rather than transcending the boy band image as The Beatles did.

Although many factors likely hindered a similar transition – including the internalized sexism that I explored in Chapter 2 and a possible discrepancy between One Direction and The Beatles’ levels of musicianship which I have, admittedly, chosen to side-step – the conflicting identities of *Midnight Memories* and *Four* present a particularly significant road block. By making such a concerted effort to retain their younger audience, One Direction also retained the image that they were simply a boy band pandering to a profitable demographic, and their attempts at exploring new genres and styles and developing their musicianship on later albums were somewhat muddled because the public perceived them as inauthentic.

The importance of an analysis of One Direction’s music consequently extends beyond its relationship to their audience, becoming a driving source of the discrepancy between their perceived inauthenticity and their true musical growth. By no means are claims of One Direction’s inauthenticity wholly unfounded—indeed, the perpetuation of these claims can, in part, be attributed to their origins as a boy band, which places them in direct contrast to many of the Romantic values of authenticity. However, such presumptions also easily manifest in deeply ingrained stereotypes that prove to be inaccurate; while *Made in the A.M.* was not an immensely innovative pop album, it
certainly illustrated a level of musicianship beyond that which can be attributed to a negatively-perceived “boy band.” This discrepancy illustrates that although authenticity – or a lack thereof – can reflect the quality of music, it can also affect the perception of music by directly contradicting the quality as evidenced by a deeper theoretical analysis. Ultimately, this conflict in One Direction’s public image is an illustration of the potential dangers of artistic Romanticism, irrespective of medium, because Romantic stereotypes imply a direct correlation between authenticity and quality where such a relationship does not necessarily exist.
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