

# Introduction

- Learning outcome - Critical understanding of gender theories with regard to popular cultural forms (music)
- Focus for today
  - Introduce some key ideas re gender and music
  - Music genres – rock, Indie, heavy metal, rap
- Some examples
  - Madonna, Prince, Bowie (seminar - Lady Gaga and others)
- Instruments as gendered
- Assignment 1 possibilities: Analysis of songs, music videos, DVD covers, fansite etc. – all part of a textual analysis or each one could form the basis of its own textual analysis.

# Gender and Music

- Men have dominated the profession
- Opportunities were not equal
- Discourses constructed and perpetuated through diverse outlets
- Different genres have distinct histories, performances and practices
- Which influence how gender is constructed

# Rock Music

- Notions of gender affect rock industry/music
- Employs particular instruments –electric guitars, drums
- But still difficult to define and many sub-genres exist.
- Frith and McRobbie (1990)
  - Music is loud, lyrics are assertive and arrogant
  - Control and production is often male
  - Heterosexuality is dominant (aggressive heterosexuality)
  - But may not be read in that way by fans.



# Indie Music

## Indie music

- Alternative rock
- More open to female participation
- Or there are more women in this workplace
- Louise Wener (Sleeper) 'The truth is, the world of indie rock was then, and still is, a doggedly macho environment, notoriously unforgiving of female interlopers'



# Heavy metal

- Heavy metal (Denski and Sholle 1992)
  - Macho aggressive
  - Heavily marked with feminine elements
  - But not subversion because of aggressive male heterosexuality



# Rap



- Underground –become more mainstream
- Labelled misogynistic e.g. Snoop Dogg
- Themes in gangsta rap
  - Self promotion/using sex to sell music/appealing to sexist audiences
- Fleurant (2006 cited in Leonard, 2007) male artists degrade women, women artists and audience members accept this
- Female rap artists (e.g. Missy Elliot)
  - Face challenges but can challenge
- Morgan (2000) –become sexual stereotype OR write progressive/educational lyrics

# Gendered instruments

- Thompson (2000 cited in Leonard 2007)
  - More vocalists are female
  - Role of vocalist – taps into and reinforces notions of femininity
  - Those who don't conform are seen as subversive



# Madonna

- Madonna
  - Cited as Butler's idea of the ability to construct own identity beyond the binary
  - E.g. music videos such as *Justify my Love*, *Vogue*, *Erotica*, *Express yourself*
  - Constant image changes
  - But there are contradictions
  - Musicians know they are performers



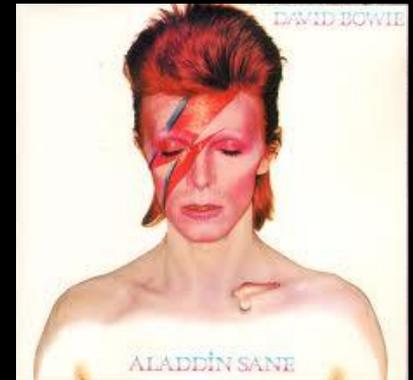
# Prince

- Avoids performances that threaten his own masculinity
- But disrupts masculinity via looks and mannerisms
- Many female performers/artists
- 80s and 90s became increasingly sexualised
- Prince – appeals to a polysemic gaze
- Constant reinvention
- Manipulates identity (hooks 1994) appealing to mass audiences means selling out



# David Bowie

- David Bowie Documentary
- Ziggy & Spiders from Mars
- The Stars Are Out Tonight



# Nicki Minaj



# Summary

- The music industry has been dominated by males
- Even the instruments and genres appear gendered
- Some genres lend themselves to reinforcing gender binaries
- Artists may challenge gender binaries
- Our readings/interpretations may determine how we perceive musicians/music/performers
- Assignment question 5: Textual analysis of musician/band/dvd/fansite/websites/song lyrics
- Learning outcome 2: assess the ways in which gender are constituted/challenged in and through particular forms of culture

## List of references

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