Introduction

This book is about gender, rock music and the music industry. Over the past 20 years analysis of gender and rock has often begun with the premise that rock is created and performed by men or that it exemplifies a masculinist culture (Rodnitzky, 1975; Chapple and Garofalo, 1978: 269–96; Harding and Nett, 1984; Frith and McRobbie, 1990). This book explores this topic further, examining different representations of masculinity offered by, and performed through, rock music, and how female rock performers negotiate the gendering of rock as masculine. The central concern is not specifically with men or women performing rock but with how notions of gender affect the everyday experiences of all rock musicians within the context of the music industry. Feminist theory has distinguished between the biological categories of sex (male and female) and the socially constructed categories of gender (e.g. masculinity and femininity). This separation of biological sex from modes of gender socialisation has allowed critics to question apparently ‘natural’ modes of social behaviour and challenge gender distinctions that support systems of inequality between men and women. Contemporary debate has broadened the scope of gender studies from a focus on women to analysis of institutions and related discourses of masculinity and femininity, and it has problematised even the apparent epistemological surety of the categorisation of sex (Butler, 1990: 6f.). Gender identities and discourses are not to be understood as static but as dynamic, changing over time and relating to the particular contexts of their production. As Butler states: ‘it becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained’ (1990: 3). This book examines how gender is ‘produced and maintained’ by discourses, institutions, groups and individuals operating within the music industry.

Throughout the following discussion a broad definition of the music industry is adopted, which includes institutions such as record companies and studios, and individuals such as musicians, promoters and record company staff. The book examines the interaction between a range of such music industry representatives, considering the way in which professional and artistic relationships, as well as managerial and financial decisions, are influenced by conceptions of gender. The intention is not to offer a broad overview of every facet of the industry but to concentrate attention on a range of practitioners and to examine their working practices. Much of the following analysis is specifically concerned with how musicians (whether amateur or experienced professionals) negotiate the music industry. For this reason particular attention has been given to those music industry professionals with whom rock musicians have most frequent contact, such as journalists, sound engineers, promoters, photographers and A&R (artist and repertoire) staff. The book draws on interview material with musicians to consider how they discuss, relate to and are positioned by these other industry workers. It examines how musicians operate within the music industry, the interaction they experience with other music industry workers and how those musicians are presented to the public via promotion and publicity strategies.

Core questions about gender, rock and the music industry will be addressed using a case study of musicians within a specific music genre and time frame: UK and US 'female-centred' bands performing so-called 'indie rock' from the early 1990s to the present. The term female-centred is used here to refer to bands that predominantly comprise female members who control the majority of the bands' creative output. I have avoided the term 'female rock groups' in order to allow for the inclusion of bands that contain men and women in their line up.[1] I have not focused on solo rock vocalists as my interest lies in considering how gender affects the professional lives of rock bands. Thus, male-dominated bands with a female singer, or solo female vocal artists, are generally not included. This criteria is consistent with Mary Ann Clawson's study of gender and instrument playing in rock bands. Clawson omits vocalists from her study on the basis that 'ensemble instrument playing is both the principal site of musical authority in rock music and the activity from which women have been most fully excluded' (Clawson, 1999a: 99). While a rock group comprising female instrumentalists *and* vocalists challenges certain associations between rock and masculinity, a male band with a female vocalist does not.[2]

The decision to use female-centred bands as a case study should not be understood as an assumption that studies of gender are necessarily studies of women. Rather, through the analysis of these bands, this book will discuss gendered discourses and practices, examining key areas of music industry practice in which gendered identities are presented and negotiated, such as in music performance, through media discourse surrounding music, and within music networks and scenes. In relation to these areas, a detailed analysis will be offered of riot grrrl, a feminist network promoted by female musicians, which emerged in the early 1990s. Riot grrrl developed within indie rock scenes in the US and UK, and encouraged and facilitated the participation of girls and women within indie rock practice. The book will also consider the organisation and staging of numerous international Ladyfests, a network of festivals organised by women and inspired by the earlier riot grrrl initiative. In focusing on female-centred indie bands I do not wish to peculiarise the position of these groups as somehow significant or different because of the sex of the musicians. Indeed, all too often journalistic articles and populist books focusing on 'women in rock' serve to differentiate female musicians from 'regular' male rock performers and thus to ghettoise their work (Katz, 1978; Thomson, 1982). Instead, I wish to investigate how these musicians experience working within this industrial context and to what extent notions of gender are significant within their work environment. While the concern of this book is with popular music production and mediation, its emphasis on understanding the significance of gender within a professional context places it within a tradition of gender – and indeed feminist – studies, which seek to understand how perceptions of gender impact on social and cultural environments. Although discussion will centre around the discourses and professional practices of the music industry, it should be remembered that the gendered character of the music industry and rock music generally both reflects and serves to constitute the gendered character of wider social and cultural realities and structures.

The book focuses on 'indie' in order to consider how gendered understandings and representations operate within a particular subgenre of rock music, and in order to avoid discussing rock music as if it were a composite whole with singular or clear defining characteristics. Certainly rock has many common characteristics, from its tendency to employ particular instrumentation (electric guitars, drums and electric bass) and styles of performance,[3] to the existence of common song structures.[4] However, even basic definitions and histories of rock give rise to complications and dispute. One attempt to define or explain rock, for example, describes the emergence of rock 'n' roll in 1955 and the elements of 'European music (harmony, poetic narrative) … [and also] driving rhythm, call-and-response shouts and scales with dissonant notes, known as "blue notes"' (Roberts *et al*., 1998: 364). As Richard Middleton argues, even at that time rock contained not only 'boogie rhythms, rough sound, blues shouts and physical involvement but also sentimental ballad melodies and forms, "angelic" backing vocal effects and "novelty" gimmicks' (Middleton, 1993: 18). The subsequent development of rock over almost half a century has resulted in a proliferation of experiments with the form, and the establishment of distinct subgenres such as death metal, industrial and post-rock. Each of these subgenres can be described not only in musicological terms but also by other codes of practice such as performance style, associated fashions, record sleeve design, and the cultural practices of those who listen to and engage with them (whether at gigs, in record shops or in clubs).

The focus on indie rock allows for an in-depth discussion of music, performance and discursive practices within a more specific generic frame of reference. Indie (sometimes referred to interchangeably as alternative rock) is a particularly interesting case study as it has popularly been understood as being more open to female participation than other rock forms. As Holly Kruse comments, 'alternative rock has provided women with a place where they are freer to write songs, play instruments, form bands, and produce records than has traditionally been the case' (Kruse, 1999: 92). While the participation of women within indie rock will be discussed later, it may reasonably be asserted that indie is not associated with an overt masculinist agenda or with hostility to female participation. There has been a tendency in studies of women in popular music to collect together pieces of information on performers and practitioners across a range of occupations, and from diverse and distinct music genres such as pop, soul, rap and jazz (Thomson, 1982; Steward and Garratt, 1985; O'Dair, 1997). These studies presuppose a comparability of experience based on the premise that all the subjects under discussion are women. While such an approach may offer a snapshot of activity and participation, it ignores differences between women, assumes that they share common experiences, and fails to acknowledge that different music genres carry with them distinct histories, performance practices and discourses that affect how gender is constructed and experienced.

Discussion within this book is chiefly concerned with the day-to-day experiences of musicians performing and producing indie rock, and the related activities of those involved in the production, promotion and mediation of this music. While individual songs, albums and performances will be discussed, detailed musicological or lyrical analysis will not be offered. Analysis of the sonic and lyrical content of music performed by female-centred bands would certainly have produced rich research results, however this type of detailed textual analysis is not the central concern of this book. Discussion will centre on how the culture of the music industry, with specific attention to indie rock, is produced as a *gendered culture* that affects those who work within it. A number of the female-centred bands discussed in this book, particularly those identified with riot grrrl, have written songs that comment on issues of gender and sexuality as related to indie music scenes or to the wider social sphere. However, the concern here is not so much with how artists have commented on gender through their work (although this will be discussed to some extent) as with how they experience gendered attitudes within their working environment.

It has been argued that the sonic characteristics of rock music themselves constitute material grounds that militate in favour of the creation and reproduction of certain gender identities and against the reproduction of others. For example, in a discussion of the overtly masculine performance conventions of ‘cock rock’, Frith and McRobbie (1990: 374) have observed that ‘the music is loud, rhythmically insistent, built around techniques of aroUSl and climax; the lyrics are assertive and arrogant, though the exact words are less significant than the vocal styles involved, the shouting and screaming’. This type of analysis tends to map between an understanding that loud and harsh guitar and vocal sounds signify strength and potency, and that such characteristics are associated with masculinity. This book is less concerned with how rock music might lend itself to be naturalised as masculine than with how the notion of rock as masculine is reproduced, sustained and promoted within rock culture and the wider music industry.

As the central case study is on ‘indie’ rock bands, it is necessary to establish a working definition of this term. The term ‘indie’ is somewhat problematic as its exact definition and its boundaries are open to dispute. Indeed, the term encompasses a wide range of musical expression, which may in turn be broken down into particular subgenres and subgroups. Indie music is associated with certain local and translocal ‘scenes’ or cultures,[5] with independent record labels, distributors and retailers, and with particular (though diverse) stylistic characteristics drawing influence from an eclectic range of sources including electronica, 1960s psychedelia and punk (see Straw, 1991). In the early 1980s there appeared to be a ‘fit’ with the musical style of indie bands and their industrial means of promotion via independent record and distribution companies. However, as Hesmondhalgh has described, the concept of ‘indie’ has changed over time such that it has emerged ‘as a genre, rather than as an economic category’ (Hesmondhalgh, 1996: 131). The investment by a number of major record companies in bands and performers whose music is categorised as ‘indie’ or ‘alternative’ has distanced this music from a tie with independent record labels and systems of distribution. As Hesmondhalgh has more recently argued, indie can now be viewed as a genre that ‘has become part of the “mainstream” of British pop’ (Hesmondhalgh, 1999: 34). There are now a large number of bands released on major labels and not identified with underground subcultures who are nevertheless categorised by retailers, DJs, journalists and consumers as ‘indie’ due to the musical, aesthetic and discursive codes that they tap into. Partly because of its historical association with independent record companies, distributors and promoters, indie has also been tied in to certain notions of artistic autonomy and of opposition to mainstream values and trends. This association has led some supporters of indie rock to suggest that it represents an authentic form of underground music (see, for example, Fairchild, 1995). However, such arguments construct notions of authenticity in particular and problematic ways. Trying to mark out the musical boundaries of indie is fraught with difficulties as the genre exhibits a 'circumscribed pluralism' (Straw, 1991: 380), which borrows stylistic influence from a broad set of references, and those borders are open to revision and debate. Moreover, as Hibbett has observed, definitions of indie are often 'problematically subjective' as 'particular notions of "what is indie" are closely bound to personal experience, as well as age and social class' (Hibbett, 2005: 59).

This book employs a very broad understanding of indie rock. The musicians discussed within it include those involved with indie music at a grass-roots level, such as those involved in the riot grrrl network, who described themselves using a language of opposition and resistance. Some of these musicians are signed to micro independent labels that distribute via DIY networks. However, I also discuss the experience of the members of bands signed to major record companies, such as Pooka (UK) and Kenickie (UK), whose music may be described as 'indie-folk' and 'pure pop' respectively. The reason for including bands who are signed to small independent labels, and who value the notion of the underground, will be self-evident as it is bound up with indie discourse. However, I have also included artists who are not connected to underground labels but whose music, attitudes and image work to categorise them as indie performers. These artists form part of an indie field of reference. They are discussed in music magazines and papers with a bias towards indie and underground music, featured in indie music fanzines and played on indie radio shows and at specialist indie club nights.

A considerable amount of space within the book is bound up with the analysis of 'discourses' within the field of rock music. By 'discourse' I refer in part to types of speech or expression in common parlance within the music industry, paying some attention to the forms of language employed by musicians and commentators. But, my main employment of the term draws on the work of Michel Foucault (1990) as it is concerned with how systems of expression and knowledge hold and imbue power. This analysis of indie rock will consider how written music histories are established and disseminated, how aesthetic conventions are talked about and defended, and how musical performance is discussed and valued. It will explore how these discourses offer an account of the nature of 'indie' music, and will argue that 'common sense' notions of a music genre often serve to conceal underlying systems of evaluation and appraisal. An analysis of such discourses aids the understanding of how certain gendered conceptions of music practice and consumption are reproduced and supported. Admittedly, practices and processes wider than those of discourse and canon formation may well be at play in constituting the gendered character of the music industry and rock music generally. However, in focusing on the discursive practices and processes through which rock music is produced, valued and historicised this book will consider central ways in which gendered notions of rock music and the culture of the music industry are maintained and reproduced.

The concerns of this book can be expressed as a number of key questions: why, despite the number of high-profile female rock musicians, does rock continue to be understood as masculine? To what extent do constructions of gender affect the everyday working relationships between a musician and other music industry workers, such as producers, promoters and sound engineers? In what way do written accounts (such as press coverage and rock histories) produce a gendered rock discourse? Do notions of gender affect professional decision making by personnel within the music industry, such as record company A&R staff and promotions officers? These questions will be addressed within the book by focusing on particular themes and issues including rock press discourse, media representation, marketing and performance strategies. In addition, the everyday working lives of musicians will be discussed through a detailed focus on the experiences of specific performers in indie rock bands.

Commentators have cited the male domination of the music industry as a reason for a lack of female role models and for the perpetuation of a masculine culture (Steward and Garratt, 1985; Frith and McRobbie, 1990; Cameron, 2003). In this respect, the music industry can be linked to a range of other areas of professional practice that are male dominated such as, for example, journalism or law. With respect to journalism, for instance, Aldridge (1998) has commented on how the ‘prescribed behaviour is quintessentially macho, involving any permutation of drinking too much, smoking too much, working too much, turbulent personal relationships and bodily excess’ (1998: 116). This working environment can certainly be cited as an example of a pervasive masculine culture and, significantly, there are few female journalists in key positions within the UK press. Aldridge notes that, by 1998, no woman had worked as editor of a UK national daily newspaper and that the women who had gone on to edit Sunday papers were judged ‘as qualifying for the position by their ability to match the lads’ behaviour’ (1998: 116). Cameron’s (2003) article, looking into the role and functioning of women within the music industry, similarly identifies instances of where the progress of women within their careers appears to hit a glass ceiling and falls below parity with men. He reflects that ‘the position in classical music is analogous to that in the corporate sector … whereby female prevalence thins out as we progress up the hierarchy’ (Cameron, 2003: 915). This book will discuss how the gendering of rock as masculinist has been established and re-established through the intersection of conventions of rock performance and interaction, and through discourses particular to the rock genre. It will examine assumptions about the natural association of rock with masculinity and analyse how they affect female rock performers. Focusing on women performing in rock bands, consideration will be given to how the performance, marketing and consumption of rock music are bound up with a gendered discourse. The book will also discuss how particular modes of behaviour within rock music are informed by a culture of masculinity and how this affects everyday interactions and professional relationships within the music industry.

In researching this book I have drawn on numerous studies (including Walser, 1993; Reynolds and Press, 1995; Whiteley, 1997; Kennedy, 2002; Auslander, 2004) that address how masculinity and sexuality are represented in rock performance, both musically and visually. A number of these studies use examples of ‘cock rock’ (Frith and McRobbie, 1990; Shepherd, 1991: 152–73) or heavy metal (Walser, 1993) as these musical styles present clear examples of male display, employing macho poses and rasping vocals. The traditional notions and rather narrow images of male heterosexual identity and representation within such music have been usefully examined and questioned by scholars such as Gill (1995), Bradby (1993) and Wise (1990). Further useful studies have considered the gendering of rock instrumentation (Bayton, 1997; Clawson, 1999b; Waksman, 1999), discussions about gender and music on the internet (Coates, 1998) and the way in which music technology is targeted at a male audience (Thebérge, 1991; Keightley, 1996). I will discuss these texts in the course of this book, highlighting their relevance to an analysis of gender and rock discourse.

Often detailed analyses of the operation of the music industry have been gender blind or have given only brief attention to the subject of gender (Bennett, 1980; Hesmondhalgh, 1996; Jones, 1997). There are some exceptions, such as Cameron's (2003) article on the political economy of gender disparity in music markets and Dickerson's (1998) book, which considers the practices of the recording industry from a historical perspective by examining the careers of notable female performers over a 40-year period. Other studies have analysed gender in relation to select roles or occupations within the music industry (e.g. Steward and Garratt, 1985; Negus, 1992; Smaill, 2005). Keith Negus, for example, has discussed how few women are employed as A&R scouts within record companies and how women fulfil the supporting role of secretarial 'handmaidens' within A&R departments (Negus, 1992: 57–8). Negus also remarks that while there are few female sound engineers, producers or music journalists (1992: 85, 118–19), women tend to find employment as publicity officers and public relations staff, which 'involves the employment of skills which have traditionally been associated with women rather than men' (1992: 115). These women are responsible for 'looking after sensitive artists, maintaining personal relationships, providing support, and acting as a matchmaker by bringing people with similar dispositions together' (1992: 115). The fact that Negus discusses the issue of gender in connection with publicity officers and public relations staff is suggestive of the view that gender studies are most appropriately applied to studies of women in particular gendered occupations.

Studies that focus *solely* upon women musicians or female music industry workers have, by contrast, often paid little attention to the broader structure and operation of the music industry. Discussions of female musicians have often focused on the male domination of the music industry and have presented the achievements of high-profile female performers as a 'long hard climb' (Chapple and Garofalo, 1978: 269) 'against all odds' (Katz, 1978: 1), and as an attempt to rip 'up the infrastructure of male rock tradition' (Evans, 1994: v). I do not wish to oversimplify the work published on female performers but to highlight the way that this work has often been framed. Such texts seldom discuss how the difficulties encountered by female performers relate to those encountered by all musicians, regardless of their sex, such as difficulties regarding contracts, artistic freedom and career opportunities. Indeed, as Holly Kruse has stated, 'two crucial elements have been painfully lacking from most feminist critiques of popular music: analyses of popular music institutions and economics, and analyses of practice' (Kruse, 1999: 85).

It is noteworthy that the voices of musicians have frequently been absent from studies of the music industry (see Negus, 1992; Hesmondhalgh, 1996; Peterson and Berger, 1975) and so this book addresses the need for further research with musicians,[6] which is contextualised within an understanding of the music industry. Thus it contributes to the small but growing number of academic studies concerned with gender and popular music that draw on field research with musicians. Notable examples of such work are Mary Ann Clawson's (1999a; 1999b) research with male and female bass players, Groce and Cooper's (1990) research with local-level female rock musicians, Helen Reddington's (2003) research on female punk instrumentalists, Leslie Gourse's (1995) book, which draws on interviews with female jazz performers, and Sherrie Tucker's (2000) history of 'all-girl' jazz and swing bands of the 1940s. The doctoral work of Mavis Bayton (1989) represents a detailed academic account of the experiences of women performing in all-female rock bands in the UK. Bayton's thesis is a sociological study concerned with the careers of female musicians, which draws on in-depth interviews with performers at various stages of their careers. Bayton (1998) later updated this work, building in further ethnographic research with female musicians conducted from 1995–96. Bayton is crucially concerned with 'how women become rock musicians' and so offers a discussion of entry routes into musicianship, the constraints experienced by women, and various stages in the careers of female rock performers. Also noteworthy is the work of Carson, Lewis and Shaw (2004), which presents a historical and feminist analysis of women rock musicians over the past 50 years and includes original interview material with US musicians. As the authors explain, they 'privilege their words because their stories are so compellingly told and because they have so seldom been asked about their own music' (Carson *et al.*, 2004: xvi).

There are a considerable number of books and articles that do focus upon and examine the work of female musicians. Whiteley (2000), for example, has explored the changing role of women musicians from the 1960s to the 1990s through a case-study approach, which considers acclaimed performers in the genres of pop, folk and rock. While some studies have examined the work of female-centred bands (O'Meara, 2003) more often academic attention has focused on female solo performers, especially high-profile artists such as Madonna (Kaplan, 1987; McClary, 1991: 148–66; Paglia, 1992: 3–13; hooks, 1995: 318–25; Vernallis: 1998; Fouz-Hernández and Jarman-Ivens, 2004). In addition to this an identifiable body of work has developed that documents, revisits and reclaims histories of female performance. This includes texts that attempt to present a chronological account of the contribution of women to popular music (Gaar, 1993; O'Brien, 1995b; Hirshey, 2001), books that focus on female musicians performing in a particular geographical location (Dreyfus, 1999) and within particular music genres (Kent, 1983; Dahl, 1984; Placksin, 1985; Greig, 1989). These texts may be understood as part of the feminist project to write 'forgotten' women back into history, thus offering more complete documents of female participation in and contribution to particular fields of activity.[7] The texts address the fact that the work of female performers has often been marginalised within written histories of popular music. Admittedly some of these accounts have tended to be celebratory rather than critical analyses of the careers of female performers. Moreover, due to the broad scope of many of these books, they are able only to touch upon the work of some musicians and eras rather than offer in-depth analyses.

Some work has been conducted on women performing or participating in the culture of indie rock, such as Milioto's (1998) account of women in Japanese popular music, which compares Japanese pop (j-pop) performers with contemporary female punk, hardcore and indie musicians. In the past decade, considerable academic attention has been given to the emergence and significance of riot grrrl. Some of this work has considered the beginnings and development of this feminist network (e.g. Taylor, 1993; Gottlieb and Wald, 1994; Cateforis and Humphreys, 1997; Kearney, 1997; Rosenberg and Garofalo, 1998; Anderson and Jenkins, 2001). A number of studies have been concerned with the ways in which riot grrrl was promoted via the mainstream media (Davies, 2001) and through the micro-media networks of zines (Schilt, 2003b). Intersecting with these studies of the mediation of riot grrrl, some critics have traced the incorporation of certain riot grrrl ideas within mainstream culture (Jacques, 2001) and examined how the feminist rhetoric of this network has been repackaged and sold by media industries (Riordan, 2001). Particular attention has been given to the use and impact of the phrase 'girl power' by the British pop group the Spice Girls in the late 1990s, a phrase that had previously been promoted within riot grrrl zines (Treagus, 1998; Davies, 1999; Dibben, 1999; Driscoll, 1999; Hopkins, 1999; Whiteley, 2000; Lemish, 2003; Schilt, 2003a; Fritzsche, 2004; Taft, 2004). The insights afforded by this material have provided useful comparative material to my own research on riot grrrl, which is discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. These chapters update my earlier work (Leonard, 1997, 1998) examining zine networks, and draw on interview material from the early 1990s to the present day in order to consider how riot grrrl has developed over time.

Other studies (Reynolds and Press, 1995; Nehring, 1997) that discuss gender and contemporary rock generally have also been useful in research for this book as they have included interesting analysis of female indie performers and of riot grrrl. In addition, interview material with female indie performers is included in a number of edited books focusing more generally on women in music (Evans, 1994; Raphael, 1995; O'Dair, 1997; Post, 1997; Woodworth, 1998), while further interview material is found in texts specifically focused on indie music (Juno, 1996). These books present the experiences of female popular music performers (including indie rock musicians) in terms of personal histories, making use of transcribed interviews in order to let the musicians 'speak for themselves'.[8] Such texts offer an insight into the way that contemporary female musicians discuss their music and think about gender and, as such, they have provided useful data with which to compare my own research findings.

A number of other studies (e.g. Jensen, 1993; Berry, 1994; Cooper, 1995) that focus on the participation and representation of women in a particular music genre have also provided useful insights for the writing of this book. While I have not directly cited such studies or followed their methodologies, I have nevertheless found them informative in their examinations of the operation of gender stereotypes in popular music. Beverley Skeggs (1993), for instance, has examined the work of a number of female rappers who have confronted and ridiculed misogyny in gangsta rap. Skeggs describes how female rap performers challenge music conventions while working within their boundaries. Hazel Carby's (1990) study of female blues singers from the 1920s and 1930s also considers spaces of resistance in song, examining how some vocalists use songs to express ideas about female sexuality, frustration and relationships. The close readings by Lori Burns and Mélisse Lafrance (2002) of lyrics by four female musicians from the 1990s, two of whom feature within the analysis of this book, explore the disruptive potential of popular song and also consider how songs can challenge discourses of sex, gender and race. While this book does not employ such lyric analysis, it does consider sites of resistance and the way women work within and against genre specific conventions. Other useful studies (Steward and Garratt, 1985; O'Dair, 1997) have highlighted and discussed the predominance of men within particular music genres as well as problematising gendered practices within a given genre (Johnson, 2000). An example can be taken of the 1998 national survey of women and jazz (Huxley and English, 1998), which investigated why fewer women than men involved themselves in jazz performance, education and events, and sought to uncover how this disparity might be redressed. The study considered how a lack of female representation within the field had become a barrier within itself.

In developing a workable theory of riot grrrl I have also surveyed a range of academic work concerned with youth subcultures. Various articles (Lull, 1987; Willis, 1990; Wilson and Atkinson, 2005; Williams, 2006), books (Mungham and Pearson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; Brake, 1980; Cohen, 1980; Thornton, 1995) and edited collections (Gelder and Thornton, 1997; Skelton and Valentine, 1998; Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003; Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004) have provided useful background reading on the ways in which youth subcultures have been theorised. Holly Kruse's (1993) work on identity in alternative music culture and Will Straw's (1991) analysis of communities and scenes are worth highlighting because of the close relation between their topics and the indie music culture under examination in this book. These works have been useful in helping me to consider notions of difference and resistance in relation to youth and gender. However, as McRobbie (1990) has argued, most studies of subcultures deal with 'male youth cultural forms' (1990: 66) and ignore issues of gender. McRobbie's critique emphasises that unless gender relationships are taken into account, 'youth culture will continue to "mean" in uncritically masculine terms' (1990: 68). Recent work, such as Schippers' (2002) ethnographic study of a rock music subculture in Chicago, has begun to take account of the politics of gender and sexuality. The study of riot grrrl offered in Chapters 5 and 6 contributes to the limited, but growing, body of work concerned with gender and female involvement in music subcultures and scenes such as punk (Roman, 1988; Leblanc, 1999; Reddington, 2004), new wave (Blackman, 1998), rock (Mäki-Kulmala, 1995), goth (Wilkins, 2004) and heavy metal (Krenske and McKay, 2000).

Finally, articles that discuss the sociology (Frith, 1981), ideology (Stratton, 1982), everyday practice (Sullivan, 1995), discourse (Davies, 2001; McLeod, 2001, 2002; Railton, 2001; Johnson-Grau, 2002; Kruse, 2002; Feigenbaum, 2005) and industrial context of music journalism (Forde, 2001) have been useful in developing an understanding of the institution of the music press. Studies of audiences and fans (e.g. Lewis, 1992), which have contested and discussed notions of teenage fandom, have also proved helpful in developing a consideration of how meanings are produced by music consumers. Among these, feminist accounts that contemplate their author's teenage years as a music fan (Garratt, 1990; Wise, 1990; Roberts, 1994) have provided useful background reading, highlighting the fact that the responses of music fans are varied and complex.

This book draws on a broad range of scholarship in order to examine the importance of gender within the practice, aesthetics and discourse of rock music and the music industry. Scholarly analysis of the music industry and studies concerned with popular music practice and consumption are discussed in its chapters, with a particular focus on current academic work concerned with gender and music. As I have mentioned, the central discussion of gender and rock is explored using the case study of female-centred indie rock bands. This selected case study builds upon Bayton's (1998) study of women rock performers, not by focusing on how the experience of female musicians differs from that of their male contemporaries, but by examining more generally how gender affects rock practice. The case study of female-centred bands complements literature focused on women musicians, offering a record of grass-roots music making and transient girl cultures. Moreover, the examination of the feminist culture of riot grrrl contributes to contemporary theories of youth subcultures by documenting riot grrrl's ideological agenda, the modes of involvement of its participants and its reception in the media. However, the aim of this study is not to construct a history but to analyse particular aspects of musical practice and discourse. My concern here is to progress from feminist scholarship that has documented and explored the experience of female musicians, to present an analytic discussion of gender and the music industry.

Methodology

In researching the subject of female-centred bands I have used methodological approaches drawn from the fields of Popular Music Studies, Women's Studies, Media Studies, Cultural Studies and Sociology. My research methods are discussed in more detail below.

Textual sources

In focusing on indie music I have drawn not only upon the academic studies discussed above but also on audio recordings, promotional videos, press releases, magazines, web discussion lists, guide books to indie music (Larkin, 1992; Cross, 1995; Daly and Wice, 1995; Weisbard and Marks, 1995; Thompson, 2000), compendiums (Schinder, 1996), journalistic accounts (Felder, 1993; Arnold, 1998) and anthologies (McDonnell and Powers, 1995; Becker, 1998). These sources provided illustrations of how indie rock has been presented, discussed and valued. In compiling studies of the media representation of particular performers I have also drawn on biographical material. For example, in developing a study of Courtney Love (discussed in Chapter 3), singer and guitarist with the US female-centred band Hole, background reading included a cut-and-paste biography by Nick Wise (1995), a more detailed biographical account by Poppy Z Brite (1998) as well as a fictional novel based upon Courtney Love's life (Hornburg, 1995). These accounts helped me to map how

Courtney Love was represented in the public domain. More generally, in researching rock discourse I have analysed a range of popular books (George-Warren and Dahl, 1994), encyclopaedias (Hardy and Laing, 1976a, 1976b, 1976c, 1995; Logan and Wooffinden, 1982; Stambler, 1989; Roberts *et al.*, 1998; Larkin, 2000; George-Warren and Romanowski, 2001), anthologies of rock writing (Heylin, 1993; Kent, 1994; McDonnell and Powers, 1995; Jones, 1996; Evans, 1997; Hornby and Schafer, 2001; Hoskyns, 2003) and biographies (Bowler and Dray, 1996).

My research on riot grrrl has examined how girls discuss and present themselves within self-published 'zines'. As Schilt (2003b) points out, zines are particularly valuable as a research tool as they represent a unique insight into the personal thoughts of girls that may not be accessed in traditional interview situations as 'examining girls' writings in zines is an unobtrusive method that captures how girls choose to represent their lives in writing rather than how they describe their lives to researchers' (Schilt, 2003b: 73). The term 'zine' is used here in preference to fanzine as the content of zines generally departs from the staple fanzine format of music reviews, rants and interviews. Instead zines are often devoted to discussions on gender politics, sexuality, personal reflections, ambitions and relationships.[9] I have consulted a wide range of the literature concerned with zine culture (Duncombe, 1997) and girl publications (Green and Taormino, 1997; Robbins, 1999; Eichhorn, 2001; Schilt, 2003b), as well as books that collect together interviews with zine writers and independent publishers (Vale, 1996, 1997). My interest in the communication networks of riot grrrl is concerned not only with paper-based zines but also the emergence and content of online e-zines. Therefore I have also drawn on academic work concerned with online zines (Smith, 1999), especially that which has centred on the emergence and significance of grrrl zines on the web (Cresser *et al.*, 2001; Harris, A., 2003). My investigation into Ladyfest, presented in Chapter 7, also draws on materials gathered from current and archived Ladyfest websites, online articles and discussion lists. During the course of this research I have collected 162 paper zines published in the UK and the US. The majority of these are directly concerned with riot grrrl although a number of publications collected at Ladyfest events are also included. Most of the zines were published between 1992 and 1994 and were produced as stapled booklets of photocopied leaves. A complete list of all the zines collected, including date of publication and place of issue, can be found at the end of the book in Appendix 1.

In order to examine how female-centred bands are discussed and represented across a broad range of written media I have also consulted a variety of newspapers and magazines. These include national and regional newspapers in the UK (such as *The Daily Star*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Evening Standard*) and the US (including *The New York Times*, *LA Weekly*, *US Today* and the *Washington Post*), and monthly glossy magazines targeted particularly at women, such as *Elle* (UK) and *Vogue* (UK). They also include lesbian-targeted publications such as *Girlfriends* (US), *Shebang* (UK) and *LIP* (UK), and free magazines such as *Ms London* (UK) and *Girl About Town* (UK), which were distributed at London Underground train stations. Naturally, most of the journalistic coverage of female-centred bands is found in dedicated music publications and I have made use of a variety of pop and rock magazines, including *Select* (UK), *Raw* (UK) and *Rolling*

Stone (US), as well as accounts taken from publications specifically devoted to 'underground' or indie music like *Scrawl* (US), *Puncture* (US) and *Lime Lizard* (UK). I have paid particular attention to the writing about female rock performers that appeared in the UK weekly music press (*New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker*) in the 1990s.

Interview material

In addition to these textual sources, the book draws on personal interviews conducted with 88 people either directly involved with the field of indie rock or active within riot grrrl or Ladyfest networks. Almost all of the interviews were with women but the sample does include interviews with four male respondents. Sixty-three of the respondents were musicians, ranging from the amateur to the professional. Some had only recently formed bands, while others were internationally acclaimed artists who had released a number of albums and toured extensively. Many of the musicians interviewed also participated in indie rock in additional ways such as by writing zines, working in studio production, running record labels, working as record label press officers, promoting gigs and managing bands. A large number of these respondents were, or had been, involved with riot grrrl and some had performed at Ladyfest events. The remaining interviews were conducted with festival organisers, zine writers, journalists, a broadcaster and a spoken word performer. Almost all of these respondents were either involved with riot grrrl or with the production of Ladyfest events. The majority of respondents were either from the UK or the US. However, the sample does include performers from Canada, Ireland, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. The discussion of riot grrrl in Chapters 5 and 6 includes the reflections of participants from the UK, Canada, Ireland and the US. Interview material with women involved in Ladyfest covers a wider geographic terrain, reflecting the worldwide spread of these events. This material includes comments from women involved with events in Amsterdam, Brighton, Halifax (Canada), Istanbul, London, Madrid, Manchester (UK), Melbourne, Philadelphia, New York and Texas.

A complete list of interviewees, together with date and place of interview, appears at the end of this book in Appendix 2. This interview material is used to discuss specific issues concerning music business practice and enables a detailed focus on selected performers. The material also contributes to a discussion of rock discourse, which includes analyses of how female performers are represented within the written media. Interviewees have offered insight into common journalistic practice as well as disclosing information about the record industry that is generally absent from press interviews. This approach steers away from generalised models of the music industry, which ignore discrepancies within the industry and ossify industry relationships. By their nature, general overviews tend to present static models of the industry where industry roles are clearly defined and relationships between various industry agencies are concisely mapped. In contrast, case material on individual musicians reveals shifting relationships and balances of power between artists and industry bodies as the career of a band develops.

While not all of those interviewed revealed their age, the bulk of respondents ranged from late teenage years to those in their early thirties. Almost all of those interviewed were white, which is not to ignore non-white participation but reflects the predominance of white people in indie music production and its associated subcultures. This point should not be lost, for while this book is primarily concerned with the interweaving discourses of rock and gender, success and achievement are also mediated through discourses of race and ethnicity.[10] The 'whiteness' of riot grrrl and Ladyfest is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

In all the interviews respondents were asked to answer a series of open questions relating to their involvement with indie rock music. The method and place of interview, however, tended to vary depending on the accessibility of the respondents. All the interviews with established musicians[11] were conducted or arranged while the artists were playing a one-off gig or engaged in a scheduled tour of UK venues. Contact with musicians was generally established through a venue or tour manager, through a personal contact of my own or by direct communication with the artist themselves. Interviews often took place backstage at a venue, offering an insight into the working environment of a touring musician. All of these interviews were semi-structured, with a common set of key questions and issues addressed in each case. Conversational threads and divergences developed from these questions, allowing for anecdotes, reflections and discussion by the musicians around central themes of record deals, working environments, musical training and the lived experience of a rock performer. Interviews were recorded on cassette or minidisc and later transcribed. Over the course of this research some questions were refined, or additional questions incorporated, in order to reflect emphases and issues highlighted in interviews that had already been conducted. In three instances, arrangements had been made to conduct face-to-face interviews but due to various difficulties encountered these were rearranged as email interviews.

Reflections and comments by girls and women involved in riot grrrl were largely collected through postal questionnaires. Respondents were first approached and asked if they would assist with this research. These initial introductions were made either personally (at a gig, riot grrrl event or other social gathering) or by post (on the recommendation of a friend or previous interviewee). If the response was positive, a list of questions was then sent to the respondent. A core list of questions was used but some variations were made to the questions for riot grrrls living in the UK/US and for those whose background and musical involvement were already known to me. All of these questions demanded a detailed response by the respondent rather than a simple negative or positive reply. The intention was to discover the nature of the respondent's involvement in riot grrrl and their feelings and reflections on it. The respondents were encouraged to add their own comments or suggestions as they felt appropriate.

The majority of replies to the postal questionnaires were handwritten but six respondents recorded their answers onto cassette tapes that I had posted to them. This method of recording responses was particularly successful as it allowed for fuller replies, chatty asides and detailed reflections. Some of the respondents included recordings of their own songs on the returned tapes. This method of postal contact seemed highly appropriate given the nature of the riot grrrl network and the fact that many of the respondents produced zines and were thus in regular postal correspondence with other riot grrrls, zine writers and readers. Schilt (2003b) adopted a corresponding methodology of mail interviews in her work with riot grrrl zine writers, commenting that many 'mentioned in their zines that they felt uncomfortable talking to others in person or on the phone. Thus, written interviews seem to be the best option for making the respondents comfortable' (Schilt, 2003b: 74). This method allowed me to contact a broad range of people involved in riot grrrl internationally, including girls who were too young to attend gigs due to licensing laws. Many contacts were made through this method, as names and addresses of other potential respondents were suggested by interviewees. This 'snowballing' effect allowed me to follow the friendship chains of particular riot grrrls as, notably, often the same chains of connection were suggested by girls in different parts of the country.

Interviews with women involved in organising or participating in Ladyfests worldwide were collected between 2003 and 2005. The majority of these interviews were conducted via email. I considered the medium of email to be appropriate for this research as those involved in Ladyfest used electronic communication in order to organise and promote events and to network with others. I initially contacted people using email details available on Ladyfest websites and requested their help with my research. Those that responded positively were sent a questionnaire with around 20 open questions. Not all the people who consented to an interview eventually returned the questionnaire, however the responses I did receive were very useful in building a picture of the committee structures, organisation and rationale behind different Ladyfest events. In addition to this I attended Ladyfests in London in 2002 and Manchester in 2003, and conducted face-to-face interviews with a number of women at the Manchester event.

The relationship between researcher and respondent

During the course of my research for this book I was frequently asked questions, by friends and interested parties, concerning any difficulties I might have encountered in accessing well-known musicians and concerning the nature of their replies. It was commonly supposed that established musicians are both difficult to contact and liable to give stock answers in interviews. Certainly, securing an interview was not always a straightforward process. It often required persistence, travel, numerous telephone calls and extended periods of waiting at music venues. Sometimes requests were met with postponements or refUSls. I anticipated that established professional musicians might be more guarded in their responses than amateur music makers, due to their familiarity with the interview process and their experience of journalistic practice. The concern that musicians might not offer academic scholars frank accounts of their working lives has been expressed by others. David Hesmondhalgh, for example, restricted the number of interviews conducted with musicians for his doctoral work on the premise that 'information about contracts, deals and personal relationships would be extremely difficult for an academic researcher to access, and would result in futile quests for controversial material' (Hesmondhalgh, 1996: 273).

However, while in some cases these concerns proved to be justified, I found that many established musicians were remarkably candid in sharing their experiences and insights. The majority of interviewees greeted my research with curiosity and interest, and appeared happy to contribute to the project. The interviews allowed for detailed discussion of topics that are not generally recorded in newspaper, magazine or television reports. Topics discussed included the everyday working relationships between an artist and their record company representatives, the experience of gender discrimination in spaces of musical production, the logistics of promotion and the staging of a press interview. Interviewees variously discussed the process of gaining a deal, the details of their record contract, the difficulties in finding a good band manager and negotiations with record companies for better record promotion. While not all of this material has been directly referenced in this book, the insights gained into the working lives of female musicians have informed its development. Where, in some cases, respondents resisted certain lines of enquiry or gave predictable answers, I have considered how their answers reflect or reinforce notions of themselves as artists. The interview material is understood here not as a testimony of the 'the way it really is' but as individual and revealing responses by musicians in female-centred bands. In addition, interviewees involved with riot grrrl are presented as providing personal responses to this feminist network rather than as spokespeople for the 'riot grrrl movement'.

In reflecting on the process of this research it is important to consider my own identity in relation to this subject area and how this affected the responses from and interactions with research respondents. I had the benefit of being able to draw on a certain amount of 'insider' knowledge as I have been a participant within indie music networks since I was a teenager. I have attended dedicated clubs, gigs and festivals, regularly listened to indie music radio and television shows, been a keen consumer of the music press, collected many zines and performed in three bands. My experience of performing in two female-centred bands that released records through UK and US micro independent labels has given me a useful insight into the working practices and systems of promotion within indie music scenes. This background, together with my age and sex, enabled me during the fieldwork to be more readily accepted by respondents, with whom I shared some music tastes and an understanding of cultural codes. As Hodkinson pointed out in a reflection on his research into the goth scene: 'holding some degree of insider status can offer important additional benefits and possibilities, most notably with respect to generating of a relaxed atmosphere conducive to open conversation and a willingness to disclose' (Hodkinson, 2005: 139). However, in outlining my participation within indie rock networks I am not attempting to claim the position of a 'true insider'. While I have collected zines and attended numerous gigs by bands associated with riot grrrl, I did not name myself as a riot grrrl or become actively involved in its promotion. Similarly, my communication with those involved with Ladyfest (which I discuss in Chapter 7) has been as an interested researcher not as a fellow organiser. Thus, while I often shared a certain set of musical and cultural reference points with respondents I do not intend to present myself as offering an insider perspective.

As I have mentioned and will discuss in detail in Chapters 5 and 6, the material in riot grrrl zines often departs from the traditional fanzine content of music reviews and information, dealing instead with issues such as personal relationships, eating disorders, sexual discrimination and abuse. In many cases these issues are dealt with on a personal level, with the zine writer disclosing personal experiences or feelings, or narrating events that have occurred within a close circle of friends. This tone of intimacy was also a feature of much of the interview correspondence with zine writers. While I was personally unknown to the women who answered my queries, they invested a considerable degree of trust in me, as illustrated by the nature of their replies. For example, some of the respondents discussed issues surrounding their personal relationships, while others disclosed information about their lives and personal experiences. While I have not referenced any of this material or identified any of these respondents, such replies focus attention on the relationship between researcher and respondent, and on issues of anonymity and confidentiality.

However, my interviews with zine writers and those involved in riot grrrl also raised other issues relating to the relationship between researcher and respondent. Not least of these were the questions of authority and interpretation. Those active within riot grrrl were vocal about the need to keep control of the ways in which their activities were reported and understood. I was acutely aware in my role as researcher that I did not want to impose an authoritative ‘reading’ of this network but to reflect upon the activities and impact of riot grrrl through consultation with those involved. A number of respondents were university educated or conversant with academic frameworks and categories. For example, at the close of each interview I asked respondents to tell me a few details about themselves so that I could better gauge the range of respondents in my sample. One respondent replied: ‘I think I would probably be lower middle/upper working (yes, I’ve done Sociology and it told me that if your mum is a secretary and your father a social worker you fall about there within our beautiful class structure’ (personal communication). Indeed, one respondent actually framed his reply within popular music scholarship. In a discussion on the independent music scene he commented: ‘The way that DIY/underground culture works is based on what Sarah Thornton would call “subcultural capital”.’ He went on to explain that access to the indie music scene was made easier if one displayed one’s knowledge about it through the referencing of record labels, groups, venues and participants (personal communication, 10 November 1999). While such a response does not pre-empt any further analysis, it does register a considerable level of reflexivity and self-awareness by the interviewee. These respondents were participants who engaged with the academic discourse used to describe them, and challenged and worked with the academic labels used to name them.

During the research for this book I developed an awareness of the impact of myself as a researcher on my field of study. An illustration of this can be taken from my research with various riot grrrls. While many respondents were relatively widely geographically dispersed, they were also part of an informal communication network. My interviews and enquiries quite understandably became a source of discussion. A letter sent to me by one respondent (with whom I was acquainted through a mutual friend) alerted me to this fact. She explained that she had recently attended a birthday party of one riot grrrl friend who had also invited quite a number of people that were on the contact list she had passed to me. She commented that my research topic had become a source of conversation. A comparison can be made with the experience of Lori Taylor who, when researching riot grrrl in the US, found herself valorised within a grrrl zine and a subject of discussion within riot grrrl circles. While I can relate to Taylor's embarrassment 'to have been noticed at all' (Taylor, 1993: 14), these instances highlight the dynamics of researching a living culture and testify to the fact that research is part of a process of involvement rather than objective study.

In conducting this research I found that while many involved in riot grrrl expressed a distrust of the media and, as will I discuss in Chapter 5, actually refused to engage with the mainstream press, they were receptive to my enquiries. Clearly, they understood my objectives to be distinct from those of a journalist and offered their insights with a view to building a more detailed picture of riot grrrl than a short press piece might be able to reflect. Their decision to trust me as a researcher also entrusted me with a responsibility to produce an account that accurately reflected their activities and reflected on their concerns. The young women involved in riot grrrl actively sought to control media attention and used their zines as forums in which to discuss and dispute media accounts; they thus presented a very proactive image of riot grrrls as engaged with the management of their own representation. As Anita Harris reflects in her research on grrrl zine culture: 'The act of refUSl to speak to unworthy listeners re-positions young women from an accessible and often vulnerable population to autonomous agents entitled to accountability, self-representation and informed participation' (Harris, A., 2003: 53).

Book structure

I have organised my analysis of gender, rock and the music industry into seven chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the association between rock and masculinity, and explores how the concept of rock as a masculinist tradition is produced and re-established. Rock is discussed here in a broad sense, without division into distinct subgenres. The chapter is concerned with the ways in which the notion of rock as 'male' or masculine is maintained despite the increasing numbers of women performing rock. Gender is discussed in relation to particular rock aesthetics, tropes, histories, canons and sites of celebration. The aims of this chapter concur with Holly Kruse's argument that:

> The important questions to ask now are not merely about whether rock/pop songs are sexist or what characterises male rock/pop versus female rock/pop. Instead, we need to ask how, in very specific ways, popular music helps to construct gendered identities and gendered understandings through both its systems of signification and situated practices. (Kruse, 1999: 100)

By considering the broad rock context the chapter is able to highlight the broad frames of reference and cultural terrain within which indie is situated. Chapter 2 then narrows the discussion by examining the case of indie rock music, which presents certain nuances and divergences from 'classic' rock performances, while also offering certain idiosyncrasies of its own. This chapter examines the popular notion that indie music is a more accessible form of rock for female practitioners. Drawing on personal interviews with members of female-centred bands, the chapter discusses the everyday experiences of female performers within musical 'spaces' such as the tour bus, recording studio and musical instrument shop.

Chapter 3 examines the representation of rock performers in the written media, analysing how journalists employ a gendered language in the construction of performer profiles. Music publications have a clear importance within the music industry as a platform from which to launch new acts, advertise gigs and new music releases, and develop band images. Specialist music publications operate as a key publicity tool for many of the indie rock performers discussed as they attempt to guide and educate the music-buying reader (see Toynbee, 1993). While some niche publications have a relatively small readership, they are strategically important in breaking new acts, defining and influencing taste cultures and conferring cultural kudos. Taking a selection of male and female indie rock performers this chapter examines how performer images are constructed in a range of UK publications including niche rock music magazines (such as *Raw* and *Puncture*), tabloid newspapers and broadsheet coverage. The chapter discusses in particular how journalists work with common narratives and reference points concerning notions of madness and genius.

Chapter 4 focuses attention on the subject of performance. Studies of performance have often attended to particular performance moments such as a promotional video or concert appearance.[12] For example, with regard to work on gender and performance, analysis of particular performed texts has been undertaken, such as the examination of particular song structures and musical materials (Bradby, 1990; Dibben, 2002) and critiques of the performance of gender within promotional videos (Roberts, 1990; Vernallis, 1998; Andsager and Roe, 1999). This chapter will also draw on a series of examples and instances of particular performances, however the emphasis is placed on performance contexts rather than on specific texts. A selection of performance contexts are considered including the stage (of a live music venue) and the screen (for the production of a promotional music video). The chapter explores how performances are presented and understood across these performance contexts. A broad understanding of the term performance will be employed, discussing not only live gigs and video shoots but also other situations where musicians are active in conveying or staging a public personae. The chapter considers, for example, how activities such as conducting an interview or participating in a photo shoot, may be understood as performances as they are methods through which a musician communicates ideas about their image and identity. This stretching of the notion of performance is comparable with Butler's (1990) discussion of gender as a performed identity. These latter activities may more traditionally be thought of as social interactions rather than as performances. However, by conceptualising the press interview and photo shoot as performances I aim to draw attention to the ways in which performer identities are constructed and played out within the media.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine riot grrrl, a feminist initiative that was first promoted by female-centred indie bands in the US and UK during the early 1990s. Chapter 5 charts the emergence and nature of riot grrrl and its publicity in micro, niche and mass media. It considers the gender politics of riot grrrl and addresses how such politics may adequately be theorised within subcultural theory. Chapter 6 concentrates analysis on ‘zines’, discussing the cultural importance and articulations of these texts in relation to riot grrrl. The chapter reflects on the development of riot grrrl as a network, from its establishment in 1991 to activities organised in the present day. The conclusion of this chapter considers how the riot grrrl slogan ‘girl power’ was adopted as the catchphrase of the British pop group, the Spice Girls. The discussion considers how this phrase was presented and given meaning through its promotion by this multi-million-selling act.

Chapter 7 documents and examines the numerous festivals that have been held worldwide under the banner of Ladyfest. Drawing on comments from organisers and participants this chapter traces the growth of Ladyfest and examines the extent to which these events continue the work of riot grrrl by operating with a feminist agenda and creating a receptive space in which to showcase female musicians and artists. It considers how these events act as a resource for female performers and audience members, enabling networking and confidence building, but also discusses the limited reach of these events.

The conclusion to this book draws upon the key points of all seven chapters to make some general observations on gender, the practice of rock and the music industry. Moreover, it assesses the importance of the book’s findings in relation to the body of academic work on gender and music.

Notes

1 Examples of such bands discussed in the book are Hole (US) and Huggy Bear (UK).

2 This is not to ignore the impact of female rock vocalists such as Janis Joplin or Patti Smith but rather to clarify the focus of this study. A brief discussion of how these artists have been understood can be found in Chapter 1.

3 Rock is associated with certain performance conventions ranging from the gestures and mannerisms used by musicians in live performance, videos and promotional photographs to particular uses of instrumental sounds such as distorted guitar and harsh vocal timbres.

4 Rock songs commonly follow the structure of verse-chorus-verse-chorus-middle eight/instrumental solo-chorus-end. This structure is so commonly used that rock music that has diverged from this orthodoxy has often been categorised within distinct subgenre categories. The names of these categories (such as art rock, progressive rock and experimental rock) draw attention to differences in structural composition that distinguish them from ‘classic’ rock.

5 Illustrations may be taken of the ‘Seattle scene’ of the early 1990s, which was identified as the hub of the ‘grunge’ rock movement (see Daly and Wice, 1995: 96–7, 219) or the 1980s rock ’n’ roll scene of Austin, Texas (see Shank, 1994).

6 A good example of such work is the doctoral thesis of Michael Jones (1997).

7 The anthologies of female rock journalism edited by McDonnell and Powers (1995) and Evans (1997) may be cited as further examples of attempts to reclaim ignored histories. As McDonnell and Powers state in the preface to the collection, ‘Both of us felt such a project was a feminist act in itself: a way of breaking into the canon and restoring the women who belong there to their rightful place’ (1995: 1).

8 Karen O’Brien’s (1995) book on women musicians is another example of this style of book, although it is not concerned with indie rock performers.

9 A detailed discussion of riot grrrl zines is presented in Chapter 6.

10 A discussion of issues of race and gender in popular music is offered by Gayle Wald, who argues that: 'the gender transgressions of white rock performers in the 1990s … signal the emergence of new cultural modes of expressing, displaying, and performing whiteness …' (1997: 152). She concludes by arguing that a racialised critique of contemporary white female rock performers reveals that while 'membership in the "boy's club" has its difficulties … [it] also has its privileges' (1997: 165).

11 'Established musicians' can be understood here as musicians who are either professional (whose main paid occupation is the production and promotion of their music) or those who have played and performed music for a number of years and seek to become professional. All these respondents had either produced a record or stated that release of a record was pending. The majority of these respondents were signed to a record label, had released at least one album and had completed national or international promotional tours.

l2 This is not to overlook notable studies that examine different contexts of popular music performance, such as Finnegan's (1989) work on music making in Milton Keynes, Shank's (1994) study of the rock 'n' roll scene in Austin, Texas, and Berger's (1999) ethnographic research on the rock and jazz scenes in north-eastern Ohio.