Analysing digi-pack covers

When analysing any digi-pack cover, consider the following points:

- **Genre:** as well as considering the genre of music that the digi-pack belongs to, you must also consider the **generic conventions** of the digi-pack cover itself: what goes on a typical digi-pack cover? Consider how the front and the back are different and contain different sorts of information: why is this? Remember, on a shelf in a shop, people are attracted to the cover first, then turn it over to read the back. On the front cover, digi-pack covers will typically have the artist or name of the band, the name of the album, an image and stickers (such as **parental advisory**, or announcing a particular well-known track). What purpose does all this serve? If some digi-packs deviate (veer away) from this **convention**, why is this?

- **Lettering / font styles and sizes:** how does the lettering fit with the genre of music or design? For instance, Marilyn Manson's greatest hits digi-pack uses gothic font to complement his style. Some punk bands have very basic handwritten type styles to fit with their 'basic' or anarchic image.

- **Image:** what picture is on the cover? Is it a design or artwork? Is it a photograph of the artist? Look at the **mise-en-scene** (how the scene is set). This includes colours, props, lighting, make-up and clothing, how the star or subject is posed (eye contact, facial expressions etc). Consider the messages given out by choices of colour and **connotations** (associations) gained. How will the audience react to the digi-pack? Do different people receive different meanings? If so, how and why?

- **Stars / icons:** is this image of the artist one you'd expect to see? For instance, a star like Beyonce always has an image constructed on glamour and sex appeal whilst a punk band like Green Day tend to focus more on social issues to sell digi-packs. Do bands or artists have particular props, costumes, dress, fashions that are instantly recognisable? For instance, Eminem's hair colour, Marilyn Manson's contact lens and metal teeth or Slash's top hat? Some stars constantly challenge their audience's expectations, like Madonna. Her digi-pack covers reflect the new image or re-branding that she is going for.

- **Representation:** look at how bands or artists and the genre are **represented** and how the audience will react to that. For instance, hip-hop stars have been criticised for portraying guns, cars and 'gangsta' images. Critics say this presents a negative image for young people to follow and also sets up **stereotypes** of black culture. This type of music has been criticised in portraying women as sexual stereotypes. If your digi-pack either challenges or reinforces stereotypes this may be something to comment on too.

Conventional features of a digipak.

- Image
  - Type
  - Symbolic Objects
  - The Star / Band
  - Effects
- Copy
  - Album Title
  - Name of the Band / Star
  - Typeface
- Colour Scheme
- Bonus Track / Features Sticker
- Spine
- Logos
  - Artists
  - Record Label
- Copyright Information
- Barcode

Conventions of the back of a digi-pack cover include: track names, amount of tracks on the digi-pack, running order of tracks, image, colour, logo of the band

The spine has the name of the album and the artist's name: practical reasons for when it is on a shelf. The clenched fist logo is a universal symbol of power and protest which reflects the band and the album.

The font style is block capitals and looks a bit jumbled to reflect the punk genre: non-conformist?

Image: a magnifying glass perhaps suggesting the band are looking closely at issues or are socially aware? Or ring pull from grenade(front cover image) suggesting destruction and

Track listing (on cover):

1. AMERICAN IDIOT
2. JESUS OF SUBURBIA
   I. JESUS OF SUBURBIA
   II. CITY OF THE DAMNED
   III. I DON'T CARE
   IV. DEARLY BELOVED
   V. TALES OF ANOTHER BROKEN HOME
3. HOLIDAY
4. BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS
5. ARE WE THE WAITING
6. ST. JIMMY
7. GIVE ME NOVACAINE
8. SHE'S A REBEL
9. EXTRAORDINARY GIRL
10. LETTERBOMB
11. WAKE ME UP WHEN SEPTEMBER ENDS
12. HOMECOMING
   I. THE DEATH OF ST. JIMMY
   II. EAST 12TH ST.
   III. NOBODY LIKES YOU
   IV. ROCK AND ROLL GIRLFRIEND
   V. WE'RE COMING HOME AGAIN
13. WHATSERNAME

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

PRODUCED BY ROB CAVALLO AND GREEN DAY
MIXED BY CHRIS LORD-ALGE

WWW.GREENDAY.COM   WWW.REPRISERECORDS.COM

Band's logo: not complex, part of the band's use of white, red and black.

Record label logo

Parental advisory sticker: the industry regulates itself. This gives a warning to whoever buys this digi-pack that there may be language and content that could cause offence.

Looks like a warning sign. Fans can decode the 'danger' element. This fits with the band's rebellious protest or political edge.

The production details: in small print as this isn't so important to the fans. It contains the necessary details and legal information such as copyright, production team, record labels etc. The band's web address is slightly larger and uses red font as fans may want to access this: another part of the way bands can be marketed today.

The use of colour is very basic: black, white and red. This suggests that it isn't a pop album! The colours are reflected in the band's clothing too and are part of the image. The lack of polished, glossy designs fits with the rebel or punk idea that the band are trying to put across.

digi-pack covers

The image is the largest, most eye-catching part. The star is the unique selling point and one of the reasons fans will buy this digi-pack. The horns give a clue as to the nature of the star's perceived image: rebellious, satanic, evil, rebellious etc. The fans like to see themselves in this way too.

Main conventions of a digi-pack front cover are seen: an eye catching image, colour, name of artist and name of the actual digi-pack album.

The digi-pack cover flatters the audience and makes them feel special as the 'real' fan will deconstruct the image, colours, lettering and initials and realise who the artist is. It excludes people who aren't fans: they aren't part of the exclusive club! This refers to the 'uses and gratification theory': people use the media to make sense of the world and like to feel that they 'belong'.

Gothic font: this gives a clue about the genre of the music.

Religious imagery: the devil. Suggests rebellion?

Not the artist's full name: the fan will recognise the image and the initials.

Archaic, religious language, linking in to Goth rock imagery. Font isn't neatly done either: seems jagged or slashed…

Abstract images: the artist likes to defy convention and exude an air of mystery.

Use of colour black for border: this also gives clues to the music genre.

The star has pale face, dark eyes and lips. He isn't smiling. This gives a ghoulish, 'un-dead' feel to the picture. It would go against the star's image to smile! The picture isn't stereotypical in terms of sex appeal or attractiveness!

The left eye is clearly seen. In Manson's videos and pictures he wears a contact lens to make him look unusual: he again defies convention and his fans will recognise this as part of his image. The make-up (big dark lips) is also part of this challenge to convention.

Parental advisory sticker: industry regulates itself. This gives a warning to whoever buys this digi-pack that there may be language and content that could cause offence. Always seen in the bottom right hand corner on the front

digi-pack cover © Marilyn Manson
The cover is an edited version of Manson's own painting, entitled 'Experience is The Mistress of Fools' -
http://www.marilynmanson.com/art/index.html.

Images and Image Manipulation

- What elements of the photography and photo manipulation bring meaning to the text?

    o What features (mise-en-scene) suggest that the band / artiste performs a particular style of music

    o What are the predominant colours in the image and what do these colour suggest (connote / denote) about the nature of the band and their music.

    o How have the images been taken which adds meaning to the band member(s) and objects?

    o Which images have been selected and what meaning might an audience attach to these people, objects or places?

    o How have the images been manipulated (e.g. filter effects / lighting effects) and what meaning does that bring?

Copy, Layout and DTP

- What elements of DTP (copy and layout) bring meaning to the text?

    o What copy has been used and what do the words suggest about the nature of the band and their music?

    o What design has been applied to key parts of the copy, like the title of the album / name of band, and what meaning might this signify?

    o How have the band members and objects been positioned in the frame and in relation to each other which might suggest meaning?

Impact on Audience

- Overall how successful has the magazine ad / CD cover been in communicating meaning to an audience?

- What suggestions might you make for improving communication with an audience?