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CMNS 3160_01

Fandom Paper

November 30th, 2023

Five multi-platinum albums, Billboard Hot 100 hits, sold-out stadium tours, named one of the biggest boy bands, causing worldwide hysteria for over a decade. A new wave of the British invasion, being compared to the next “Beatlemania” this band sure had big shoes to fill, and a lot of ground to cover, and did they ever. British boy band One Direction was, and is still a force to be reckoned with, even after an eight-year ongoing hiatus to focus on solo ventures. Known as “Directioners”, fans of One Direction became well known for their diehard attitude towards Harry Styles, Niall Horan, Liam Payne, Louis Tomlinson, and Zayn Malik. Teen girls threw themselves at each member whenever they got their chance to, it was a new wave of boyband mania, and there was nothing like it. Well, of course, there were things like it, but the “One Direction Infection” was one for its time. From their early days competing on the popular UK television program *X-Factor*, they had an immediate following right from the get-go. Young girls follow them through the streets of London on their way to rehearsals, or standing outside of the soundstage to catch just a glimpse of one of them leaving. To sell out stadiums worldwide, the band was truly a force to be reckoned with. Immediately, fans were captivated by the thought of a new boy band about to be hot off the press. Young teen girls, from ages 13-17 were enthralled with the thought of a new boy band, from their baby-faced looks, gorgeous locks of hair, and of course the captivating British and Irish accents. From their early days on *X-Factor*, there was an instantaneous following from these young ladies pursuing to get these young men into the finals to help them win the competition. Fan culture and the community of One Direction was no joking matter, these girls made it their mission to have One Direction win the

whole show, week after week, votes would flood in, to get the band to the next stage of the competition. After many weeks of voting and keeping them on the show, they eventually fell into third place over both contestants. However, this was by no means the end of One Direction, it was just the beginning. Social media instantly blew up with overwhelming support for the band, and the boys individually. It wasn't long before former manager, Simon Cowell, was inviting the members into his office at SYCO to sign a record deal that would change each of their lives forever.

Calling themselves "Directioners" fans of this teenaged sensation are diehard "fangirls" Notably, the terms "fangirl, fangirling, and fangirls" became popular during the time of the band's active years. In an article titled "*Schooling the Directioners: Connected Learning and Identity-Making in the One Direction Fandom*" They define the term "Fangirling" as such: "*Fangirling is... uh... like going crazy blushing and jumping around on the mention of one's object of desire... One Direction.*" (Korobkova, 2014) To make a long story short, they go crazy at any thought of One Direction. More so, constantly being set apart from others, many fans of One Direction would walk to the beat of their drum, I can specifically remember being in elementary school and anytime the words "One Direction" were voiced, I immediately had other peers looking at me, making jokes, and more, as at the time, I was the resident One Direction fangirl in my grade seven class. No regrets, Anyway, I digress. Fans worldwide were all over *Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr*, and many other social media websites promoting these boys like it was their nine-to-five day jobs. Blog posting website *Tumblr* is an important component of the One Direction fandom, many stans used Tumblr to create fan imagines, fanfiction, and all sorts of fan-generated content. Most importantly, these fans were also taking over the popular writing website *Wattpad*, where fans and stans alike could go in and write their fanfictions, romantic and

non-romantic about the band itself, or an individual member. Fanfiction in this community was not uncommon but became more prominent when Wattpad became the main source to locate and read it. One Direction fanfiction became so popular on Wattpad that one fan, Anna Todd had her popular fanfiction “After”, which was written about band member Harry Styles at the time, published into a five-book series, and was eventually used to turn into a movie series. The impact that social media had on these young girls was unprecedented for its time, having the band trend at every waking hour of the day was something the older generation of boy band fans had never seen before. I mean, could you imagine if BeatleMania was around at the height of social media? Changing the face of fandom forever, Directioners were set apart from different fandoms of that era, due to the ongoing hysteria the fans would go into over many things the band was doing. Like any popular celebrity, these boys' every move was being watched under a microscope every single second of the day from being spotted at the grocery store, to walking the streets, they lived under the Directioner microscope. For any award show nomination, the fans would be up day and night voting for them to win, camping outside of stadiums waiting for their tour bus to arrive, they were anywhere and everywhere, all at once.

For many years, the public reaction towards One Direction, and their crazed fan base was certainly one for the record books, people hadn't seen this much hysteria over one boy band before. However, minus the negative comments from middle-aged men bored behind their laptop screens, nine out of ten comments were usually pretty positive. Of course, many negative comments were outweighed by Directioners sticking up for the band, or the individual member the attacking comment was made for. Stores were lined with merchandise head to toe, people couldn't seem to escape these five guys! However, the clean-cut good guy persona was of course keeping fans on board, these cute, fresh-faced, barely in their twenties, teen heartthrobs

captivated the audience of every teen girl, the excitement was palpable! Moreover, people over time became annoyed with the sensation of this band, of course, many people's young teen daughters were obsessed with One Direction, so it would be constantly talked about in the home. Side note: my parents would know, I was the young teen daughter obsessed with One Direction. Again, I digress. Now, one of the biggest headlines that came through was on March 25, 2015, when member Zayn Malik announced his departure from One Direction. "*My life with One Direction has been more than I could ever have imagined.*" (Malik, 2015) Malik states in a post on the One Direction Facebook page, that he continues in the post by saying "*I am leaving because I want to be a normal 22-year-old who is able to relax and have some private time out of the spotlight.*" (Malik, 2015) Malik has continued to speak out about the pressure that came with the fame and stardom surrounding One Direction. All members of the group have spoken about the pressure they were put under to maintain that clean boy band image, especially as they got older. All of the members of the group have voiced and spoken about their time in the band, many of them calling it life-changing, as it was, of course. Reception of these comments is always positive because it gives fans hope for a future reconciliation after an extended hiatus.

Of course, like any band or celebrity, there are positive and negative effects to being in a fandom. People love to defend the people, and things they love the most, which is a completely valid thought. Now, there isn't a definitive answer as to whether the negatives outweigh the positives in the One Direction fandom, but what can be said is that the band has had and still has long-lasting effects, especially on long-term fans. With the announcement of an official hiatus on August 25, 2015, after months of speculation, especially after the devastating departure of Malik. Still expected to release their fifth studio album, *Made in the A.M.* that same year, the band had no immediate plans to share what was next after the release of that album, not even a hum of

another likely sold-out worldwide stadium tour... Young girls far and few in between crumbled at the minor thought that their whole world was crumbling down at the announcement that their favourite five, now four-piece ensemble would be no longer, no more albums, no more tours, tweets, Instagrams, it was all coming down in the blink of an eye. This of course generated a huge negative reaction among all One Direction fans, however, people need to understand that although a good thing was coming to an end, the band had released five studio albums and then did five worldwide tours in five years. Mental exhaustion was imminent and the boys had no more to give at that point. In an original announcement penned by Horan on Twitter (X) "*We are not splitting up, but we will be taking a well-earned break at some point next year.*" (Horan, 2015) This continued from statements from the rest of the band confirming a break in 2016, but nothing indefinite, some time to rest and looking into solo ventures, outside of the four-piece ensemble. It was originally stated that the group was expected to take 18 months off and would circle back to a reunion in that time. But as expected, that 18 months came and went and there was no peep of any reconciliation for the immediate future. The following year, solo projects started to debut and fans of course supported these new ventures. These solo projects skyrocketed them into other opportunities that have only enhanced their careers. As of the present day, Harry Styles is one of the most successful male artists in the world, breaking records and selling out arenas and stadiums of his own. With Niall Horan following close behind, releasing two albums and has done two successful arena tours of his own. Horan, who is also a coach on the popular competition show *The Voice (US)*, went back to his roots and mentors up-and-coming singer/songwriters with a chance to give them a record deal to kickstart their singing careers. Payne, Tomlinson, and Malik have also debuted solo work, and have toured in smaller venues and arenas, yet remain relatively quiet for the most part.

At the height of fame, the members of One Direction never seemed to back down from a challenge. Fans have kept them in it for many years now, even after the hiatus began, they were still getting nominated for various awards, to which the fans, of course, voted until they couldn't any longer. The support that is still generated from that fandom is unfathomable, people are still commenting on inactive One Direction social pages to this day. Of course with the rise of their solo careers, the fans have followed them into their current projects and have continued to support them on those ventures. As previously stated, Harry is one of the most successful artists to date and has generated the biggest following since, with his three studio albums, respectively. It has not been said if any of the members see each other, but all have spoken out about one another in a positive light, as they all lived the same lives for five years. Although no longer an active boy band, the five years that they were an ensemble brought light to so many people. Fan projects for concerts were started very quickly after the release of the band's first album and headlining tour, these projects continued into all shows, with fans showing posters of how much the group means to them during specific songs. When we think of fandoms, we usually redirect to television shows, movies, and most commonly bands and artists. And, of course, one of the biggest boy bands of the 20th century comes to mind when we think about fandom in today's day and age. Not to ever be forgotten by young girls and teens alike, One Direction was, and is one for the history books.

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