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In the 1980s, I had strong associations between the *Wizard of Oz* (1939) and a Pepsi commercial from 1986 starring Billy Crystal, telling the soda, “you look marvelous” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFk43F3Glpo). I repeatedly watched the commercial as it accompanied the VHS recording of the classic movie I watched at my grandmother’s. Like for many other consumers of broadcast television, my displacement of time asserted the power of viewers to defy production and dissemination practices of the broadcast media industry. What seems a quaint relic of the pre-digital era, however, according to Eleanor Patterson’s convincing argument in *Bootlegging the Airwaves: Alternative Histories of Radio and Television Distribution*, actually signifies a more complex history of bootlegging that blurs the binary between the forced watching of the broadcast era and the individualistic freedom of consumption of the digital years. Instead, the dusty videotapes and other forms of home-recorded or discarded material formed a different sort of “audience commodity” that shifted focus to the “process of distribution outside of traditional mechanisms for content delivery” that nonetheless “accrue value in ephemeral space” (p. 10). Such distribution was labor that developed its own practices and standardizations, and these are the subject of this book, despite the availability of few centralized archives or traditional sources.

What my consumption of the grainy recording of Dorothy did not replicate are the hidden economies and alternative, informal distribution networks created by bootleggers of broadcast media since the rise of home entertainment. Such “preservation culture” developed alongside mass media itself, connecting to the identities formed in the parlor rather than the vaudeville stage or movie palace or saloon (p. 24). As cultural process and discursive practice, embodied labor of preservation generated its own commodity of classic recordings that became accessible to both collectors...
and radio listeners. Old time radio, in fact, developed its own fandom. The creation of fan cultures and communication networks allowed for the continued interpretation and critique of these products, particularly the racial representations of radio productions like *Amos ’n Andy* (1928-60). Surprisingly, the culture of bootlegging found its origins within industry and technological practices that shaped the consumption of entertainment in the home from its origins, beginning with the phonograph, kinetoscope, and devices designed for amateur production and consumption, but that continued with female-centered cultures around consuming and appreciating buddy cop television shows of the 1970s and 1980s, such as *Starsky and Hutch* (1975-79), which generated conversations and fanzines regarding character relationships and imagined sexualities and sexual fantasies. The expectation of home consumption and control of entertainment—putting the consumption of content in private spaces rather than public entertainments—shaped the culture of bootlegging that would take advantage of new technologies.

Missing from my consumption of Crystal and Oz in the 1980s, however, was the construction of or participation in a powerful network of fans. While I certainly loved escaping into fantasy whenever I was bored, my rewatching habits did not extend to participation in an extended distribution network and deep engagement with cultural texts. In this manner, Patterson’s analysis of bootlegging goes beyond questioning industry logics and private consumption of home entertainment and into a more meaningful discussion of fan power and communication. Patterson does more than challenge the idea that technological change enabled bootlegging to emerge. She also challenges key theories of broadcast’s power and development and makes a strong case for fanzines and nontraditional archives as a way to access these histories and demonstrate the power of fan communities and networks. Not only did these networks circulate cultural productions and find powerful fan communities that likely ensured the longevity of such series as *Star Trek* (1966-69), but they also influenced the development of cable television programming and industry practices. In fact, these dissemination changes formed a “hybrid” form of redistribution and syndication that sustained fandoms internationally and likely prolonged *Star Trek’s* popularity (p. 104).

In analyzing the clearinghouse that developed to distribute tapes of the regional network of amateur and professional wrestling, Patterson finds that tape trading “facilitated intellectualization of professional wrestling for fans” while also doing the work of disseminating and tracking narratives across these decentralized spaces and developing write-ups, reviews, and rankings for the activity (p. 137). Fans “solved” the regionalization problem that inhibited wrestling’s wider popularity and overcome broadcast limitations in ways that “demonstrated a national audience” that would inspire Vince McMahon and Ted Turner to build a national form of television programming via cable (p. 145).

How far that influence expanded into media industries can be debated, and certainly legislation regarding home taping and circulation demonstrated industry concerns. The legalities of bootlegging are not the focus of this work, which instead centers on the embodied labor of producing and disseminating products through these alternative distribution networks. The “audience commodity” becomes, in this rendering, its own site of production and dissemination that challenges the power of broadcasters and industry producers as the site of cultural production and their power as gatekeepers of content. A key valuable contribution of *Bootlegging the Airwaves* is to challenge the notion that only digital media enabled expectations of audience control. In fact, those desires became practices and formed key networks that shaped audience and fan communities and communication and even fed back into the practices of broadcasting itself.
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