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# FAN PHENOMENA

*Decoding cult subjects of popular culture*

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## Project Synopsis

This new series is prompted by a growing appetite for books that tap into the fascination we have with what constitutes an iconic or cultish phenomenon and how a particular person, TV show or film character/film infiltrates their way into the public consciousness. We will look at particular examples of ‘fan culture’ and approach the subject in an accessible manner aimed at both fans and those interested in the cultural and social aspects of these fascinating – and often unusual – ‘universes’.

Each of the subjects we choose have massive visual appeal as they deal with fan fashion, memorabilia, (fan)homages, merchandising and branding that help to create the immersive world that extends beyond the phenomenon itself. The books will aim to exploit this visual aspect to align them with other Intellect book series such as the *World Film Locations* and *Directory of World Cinema* series that make good use of relevant collected imagery.

The series aims to ‘decode’ cult subjects in terms of the appeal and far reaching connections each of them have in becoming part of popular culture. We are fully aware that these are not meant to be comprehensive, weighty tomes on the subject – rather a series of ‘handy’ books that each include a fascinating collection of texts and accompanying imagery which explore a particular area or aspect of the subject’s ‘universe’ in each section.

### IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:

These books **are** aimed at both fans and those interested in the cultural and social aspects of these fascinating ‘universes’  
These books **are** meant to be entertaining, informative and jargon free guides to each phenomena

The book series acts as a more visual, broadly accessible and more topic specific accompaniment to our own *Journal of Fandom Studies* due in 2013.

## Proposed Titles

Buffy the Vampire Slayer  
Star Trek  
X-Files  
James Bond  
Harry Potter  
Star Wars  
Dr. Who  
The Big Lebowski  
Sherlock Holmes  
Rocky Horror Picture Show  
Lord of the Rings  
The Matrix  
Marilyn Monroe  
Zombies  
James Dean  
Quentin Tarantino  
Anime  
Manga  
Gene Kelly  
Jane Austen  
Disney  
Audrey Hepburn  
Twin Peaks

### SUPERHEROES:

Batman  
Superman

### GANGSTERS/MAFIA:

The Godfather  
The Sopranos

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## Book Contents

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### Basic structure

Each book will be an edited collection of texts or essays which allows room for subject coverage specific to each phenomena. The series will retain an overarching consistency by book length (128 pages approx.), number of texts (approx. 10 per book + an editors intro) and design (both cover and text templates).

Suggested topics to cover in each book can be found on the next page. By examining these key aspects of the fan phenomenon, the reader can gain a nuanced appreciation for the content without being overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of any particular social film/television movement. The essays will remain succinct and easily accessible, appealing to a wider audience instead of reinforcing the esoteric appeal of a densely worded, academic approach.

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### Additional content

What we would also like to include are interviews with fans that could act as essay 'breaks' and should relate to particular essays or topic strands. So, as examples: an interview with a writer of fan fiction or fan-film, an interview with an avid blogger, a creator of spin-off videogame, founder of tie-in philosophy ('Dudeism' as an example). Interviews could also be with celebrity fans discussing why a particular phenomenon has had such an impact on their lives. This would help to create a more accessible tone to the books and engage with the actual community of fans that we are discussing – potentially aiding in the marketability of the books.

This additional content is not essential but discussion about its possible inclusion can be had during the process of editing each book in the series.

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## Book Contents

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### Suggested topics to cover

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#### **FASHION:**

This could appeal to the fan's attempted appropriation of fashion or the proliferation of icons (eg Superman's emblem selling millions of T-shirts), the fashion world's reinterpration of cult trends, or a discussion of the cultural impact of style (from the simple and *saue* instinct emphasized in James Bond to the gleeful anarchism of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*). The fan's escapism and reinforcement of a film or show's fictional universe with cosplay would be fascinating as well.

#### **FAN MEDIA:**

Looking at art, fan fiction, fan films, mashups, machinima and other examples of fan responses to a given 'obsession'. This could show the ways in which fans can occasionally broaden the scope of the original source material. This section could also explore copyright infringement and cases where fan media is 'blocked' by the source material creators (George Lucas immediately comes to mind!).

#### **LANGUAGE (parlance/slang/dialect/canon):**

You could take a few different approaches with this topic. You could focus on a literal fictional language (eg *Star Trek* or *Lord of the Rings*), focus on key terminology that a cult interest has inspired (for instance, Zed means zombie), or even focus on something as simple as body language (James Bond and the Dude from *The Big Lebowski* would be particularly interesting to analyze here). Important to focus here on how the source material has been translated, appropriated and developed on by fans.

#### **ECONOMICS:**

This can cover how a cult interest becomes a marketable entity, how characters are distilled into action figures, how a culture of attaining memorabilia rises in an attempt to maintain a tenuous bond with the devoted universe and how brand recognition/re-inforcement is created and sustained. Also, how companies use the pervasive quality of the cult culture to sell objects both directly related to the source material and completely unrelated.

#### **VIRTUAL:**

This would detail how the cult extends into the virtual world, detailing message board culture, videogame proliferation, the creation of avatars, apps, online MMORPG (massive multi-player online role playing games) and so on. Any and all attempts to sustain and experience the source material in digital form.

#### **INFLUENCE:**

Influence could go into reiteration of a film or show's identity into another medium (James Bond becoming a raging homosexual in the 1963 Bond Strikes Camp), or perhaps how one cult movement inspires a series of cult movements to follow (*Buffy the Vampire slayer* as impetus for *Twilight* and *True Blood*) or weakly developed attempts at harnessing a cult trend (*The Golden Compass* trying to follow on the heels of *The Lord of the Rings*). This could also mention a reflexive process for fans who are also accomplished film and television writers (like Tarantino making a Marilyn Monroe reference in *Pulp Fiction* or The Venture Brothers opening up an episode with its characters in full *Rocky Horror Picture Show* drag).

#### **PHILOSOPHIES:**

This topic could go into the basic philosophical themes and tenets a cult phenomenon cultivates, from the bliss of Bond deferring any major moral dilemma to cod philosophies such as Dudeism to the disturbing Disney family ethos. Also, it seems to be a benchmark for any cult phenomenon to justify some publication of proposed philosophical tenets subtly suggested through the course of a film or television series.

#### **CHARACTER/CHARACTERIZATION:**

Character would deal with aspects of character identity within the subject material and with potential fan emulation, where they try to become the character or characters, to adopt specific mannerisms, divesting their own identities, etc.

**Each book has room for flexibility in terms of essay inclusion but an effort should be made to explore as many of the topics listed above where possible.**

**A coherent book outline should be submitted to us by the appointed editor at the start of the process, listing suggested essays in order to agree a working format.**

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## Book Contents (continued)

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### Editor Introduction

Outlining the scope of the particular volume and the aim of the book series in general.

1200 WORDS APPROX.

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### Essays

Editors should commission 10 essays.  
(Essays can include sub-sections but must be broken down using sub-headings.)

Essay contributors should provide accompanying images along with their final text - images should be of a high quality sufficient for print purposes (see content submission page for further details).

Essays should be of a roughly similar text length: 3,000- 3,500 words each

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### Editor & Contributor Bios | 150 WORDS EACH

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### Further reading list

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### Image credit list

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### Bibliography

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\*Written content should adhere to the Intellect style guides, copies of which can be sent through on request.

Copy deadlines will be set once one is established between the editor and series editor Gabriel Solomons.

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## Tone of voice and writing style

It's worth remembering that these books are aiming to target a new audience for Intellect that is not purely academic. The look and feel of the books will be attractive to a wider audience than just pure film/tv/fan culture aficionados.

It's therefore important to have this audience in mind when writing and commissioning content for these books. The content needs to be accessible and not use jargon that feels too esoteric: Finely written, intelligent and accessible books, eminently readable and unpretentious.

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## Editorial Responsibilities

Volume editors will need to operate as managers in terms of ensuring communication is clear and open and that deadlines are clearly set out - and met.

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### Create and manage team of contributors

These will include essay writers and any other specially commissioned writers.

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### Oversee content creation

Volume editors are responsible for outlining the basic content structure for their book, which may include a specific list of essay titles and supplementary content.

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### Stick to deadlines

Volume editors need to be aware of all deadlines in order to allow for necessary proofing and copy editing prior to final printing.

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### Utilise social networking and marketing strategies

Title editors are encouraged to help 'spread the word' to promote a community of interested (and potentially) useful readers/followers.

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## Key Words

Facebook  
Twitter  
Blogger  
Mubi  
The Auteurs  
World Cinema Foundation  
Social networks  
Secret Cinema

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## Key References

Google:

[How to Use Facebook: 5 Tips For Better Social Networking](#)

[ABC's of Using Twitter Effectively](#)

[What Is Social Networking?](#)