4   Collecting

From Wright's book (2006: 63), we assume that GAS and collecting gear should not be regarded as identical, although they are likely related. This chapter discusses collecting theories that provide a multidisciplinary perspective to unravel the relationship between the two phenomena further and find possible reasons why musicians feel compelled to acquire gear. It draws on a range of theories and empirical studies not related to music and Shuker's (2010) research on record collecting. Following Shuker, we reject the stereotypical image of collecting as a 'nerdy pastime' in favour of a broader understanding. In our interpretation, collecting is a behaviour that is both deeply personal and communal, which corresponds with general research on collecting and consumption. The purpose of this chapter is thus twofold: to gain a better understanding of the motives and patterns of collecting to draw clearer lines between GAS and collecting and to contribute to a developing theoretical framework for the following empirical investigations.

4.1   Definition and Theoretical Framework

Collecting is a practice that has received little attention in popular music studies, despite the discipline's cultural studies background, in which issues of consumption and the use and re-appropriation of goods in manners not intended by the manufacturer have been explored. One area of popular music studies where collecting is at least recognised is fandom. Traditionally, the industry has viewed fans as hyper-consumers and collectors who seek to buy and own anything released in connection with an esteemed artist or, in the case of music and videos, try to obtain them through unauthorised trading or bootlegging (Farrugia & Gobatto 2010). Fiske (1992: 47) sees 'a constant struggle between fans and the industry, in which the industry attempts to incorporate the tastes of the fans, and the fans to "excorporate" the products of the industry'. Regardless of the legal assessment of these practices, scholars of popular culture fandom agree that consumption is a crucial part of this practice and that it usually revolves around the act of collecting (Brown 1997; Duffett 2013a, 2013b; Hills 2002; Jenkins 1992; Sandvoss 2005). While such research inevitably takes consumption into account, often in contrast to a critical theory perspective in the tradition of Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno (Sandvoss 2005), collecting is rarely explicitly examined (for example, Hills 2002). Shuker (2010: 4) observes in his review of research on collecting that 'general studies of music consumption, especially fandom, provide some insights, but more extended critical discussion is sparse'. In his chapter on fan practices in *Understanding Fandom*, Duffett (2013a) at least includes collecting alongside zines, blogging, fan videos, filking and cosplay as a performative fan practice, with the other two areas being connection and appro-

priation. For him, fans are more than ordinary customers; they are 'networkers, collectors, tourists, archivists, curators, producers and more' (Duffett 2013a: 21). The special issue on fandom in *Popular Music and Society* covers collecting neither in the introduction (Duffett 2015) nor any of its articles. Similarly, in Duffett's (2013b) edited collection *Popular Music Fandom. Identities, Roles and Practices*, Shuker's chapter 'Record Collecting and Fandom' is the only one addressing collecting as a fan practice. Given the lack of monographs, collected editions and special issues of journals, it seems that Shuker's *Wax Trash and Vinyl Treasures: Record Collecting as a Social Practice* (2010) is one of the very few major studies in popular music research devoted to collecting. Beyond the field of popular music studies, extensive literature on collecting exists, dealing with topics such as longing, desire, pleasure, ritual, passion, consumption, prestige and investment (Shuker 2010: 6; Shuker 2013: 346f). These topics overlap considerably with GAS.

Much of the research on collecting comes from the multidisciplinary field of consumption studies. Belk (1995a: 67) defines collecting as 'the process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences'. Accordingly, it is a possessive and materialist pursuit that 'differs from most other types of consumption in the concern for a set of objects, the passion invested in obtaining and maintaining these objects, and the lack of ordinary uses to which these collected objects are put' (Belk 1995b: 479). In other words, while many regular purchases serve a specific, everyday purpose, the acquisition of objects for the sake of collecting is motivated by other sentimental or social objectives (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004). This definition highlights two important points. Firstly, the hunt for 'unique useless objects' can be considered 'luxury consumption' (Belk 1995b: 479), and secondly, *acquisition* is the difference between simply owning a collection and being a collector (Belk 2001a: 66). As Shuker (2010: 8) points out, a record collection does not make a record collector. There is a fundamental difference between simply enjoying music and methodically acquiring it. Yet even amongst record collectors, there are those whose practice is motivated by their passion for music and those who are primarily interested in the size, rarity and economic value of their collection (Shuker 2010: 39). That points to a broad spectrum of motivations for collecting. Moreover, the purposefulness, energy and time spent on developing a collection, regardless of its forms and intentions, make a collection 'more a part of one's self than are isolated consumption items' (Belk 1988: 154). As these purchases and collections are not motivated by necessity, they must be understood as a form of distinction and self-definition. According to Muesterberger (1994: 165), such practice not only reflects individual motives and experiences but is determined by the 'prevailing culture pattern, the mood and values of the time'.

Given the relative lack of research on collecting in relation to music, record collecting seems a useful starting point to study other customs of collecting before

drawing links to musical instruments. According to Shuker (2010: 3), record collecting has become a widespread practice that could only have developed due to social changes in the mid to late nineteenth century. Disposable income, the rise of consumerism, more leisure time and nostalgia made collecting a part of the social identity, at least of the new middle classes of Europe, Great Britain and the United States. Collecting became increasingly important for those who had sufficient economic resources so that today about 25% to 33% of the adult population in Western societies identify themselves as collectors across class and gender boundaries (Shuker 2010: 5). For such a development, the decisive prerequisite is that discretionary time and money are available to the general population and not just the wealthy elite (Mason 1981). Above all, monetary requirements, which are related to age, cannot be overlooked. In the case of record collectors, most develop this practice in young adulthood, not because they were not interested at an early age, but because they lacked the means (Shuker 2010: 53). Shuker (2010: 198) concludes from his study that the diversity of motives and practices allows for no standard definition of the record collector. He suggests instead acknowledging a range of types associated with specific collecting practices, such as 'the record collector as cultural preserver, as accumulator and hoarder, as music industry worker, as adventurous hunter, as connoisseur and as digital explorer'.

One of the main aims of Shuker's study is to break down the stereotype of the record collector as an obsessed middle-aged man who substitutes collecting for 'real' social relationships, ideally depicted in Nick Hornby's (1995) novel *High Fidelity*. His investigation suggests that despite the typical picture of the asocial collector, many collectors are part of a community characterised by diverse practices. While on the one hand, record collecting is the basis for lasting friendships and collegiality; on the other hand, the community is characterised by competition (Shuker 2010: 19). Without a social community, collecting could still fulfil some personal functions, such as the joy of acquiring a complete collection of an esteemed artist, which, however, would miss many of the social and cultural meanings that occur in sharing the practice. It is due to the considerable size of respective communities that collecting has gradually gained greater acceptance in society. Shuker (2010: 199) hence concludes that the term 'record collector', or more generally 'collector', is becoming less and less stigmatised and that collectors do not shy any longer to admit their pastime openly. Shuker's view of collecting as a social practice is consistent with research in social psychology, according to which the friendship and camaraderie of other collectors belong to the most rewarding aspects of collecting (Christ 1965; Formanek 1991; Sherif et al. 1961) with positive effects on wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary 1995) and self-esteem (Linville 1987).

Like in the previous discussion on music technology and popular music, research suggests a gendered way of collecting. The gender differences concern both

the type and preference of collecting (Shuker 2010: 36f; Belk 2001a). Men are considered more prone to so-called *serious collecting* (Olmsted 1991; Webley et al. 2001), expressed in their ambitions of investment and competition (Shuker 2010: 5). Following Baekeland (1994: 207), they also differ from women in the kinds of objects they collect, from stamps and art to guns and cars, and unlike female collections, theirs are more public and often have a clear theme. Women feel less comfortable showing cultural capital in competition and more obliged to invest their money in domestic goods instead of male-connotated technology. Objects such as dresses, shoes, perfumes or porcelain are privately accumulated and rarely exhibited publicly in total, so that these are usually not perceived as 'collections', as per Baekeland (1994: 207). For Belk (2001a: 99), these different practices are consistent with fundamental gender stereotypes. Female collecting seems to be about preservation, creativity and nurturing, whereas male collecting represents competitiveness, aggressiveness and the desire to dominate a symbolic realm. Consequently, women may tend not to practise male forms of collecting for fear of appearing masculine. Although it is assumed that quantitatively comparable numbers, or even more women than men are collectors, their tendency to choose domestically related items is believed to make this practice less visible (Shuker 2010: 5). Regarding music, film and arts, it is not known whether there are fewer female collectors or whether they have not made their pastime public. A non-representative study by Bogle (1999) suggests that the proportion of male and female record collectors is equal, but that women play down the fact that they collect (Straw 1997: 4). Those female collectors who exercise their habit openly are faced with problems: 'There have been times I have had to "prove" to other collectors that I am not a girl who simply likes record collecting because their boyfriend got them into it... It is frustrating and sad' (Shuker 2010: 34f). This experience resembles those described before concerning the difficulties women face in rock bands and the discrimination in music stores. For the same reason, women were found to stay away from record fairs and other second-hand events (Shuker 2010: 38). As far as the collecting practice is concerned, women tend to collect records because of their 'use-value', while men pay more attention to collection size, rarity and value and thus owned more records on average (Shuker 2010: 38, 45). That illustrates the competitive intentions of male record collecting, either rational or as a fetishistic obsession, in contrast to women's more subjective and personal motivations (Shuker 2010: 35). The male dominance of collecting in a musical context is not limited to record collection but is similarly present in the related hi-fi culture (Jansson 2010; Schröter & Volmar 2016: 156).

McIntosh and Schmeichel (2004) provide a rare analysis of the collecting process from a social psychology perspective, which is remarkably similar to non-academic GAS cycles (Power & Parker 2015; Wright 2006). Their model of the collecting process consists of seven phases that overlap and repeat on completion. The first phase is *goal formation*. Collections begin for various reasons; sometimes they are a

deliberate project, sometimes a passionate, spontaneous act. What began as a reasoned pursuit can become highly emotional, and what started spontaneously can become extremely systematic (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004: 88). The goal of collecting is formed, notwithstanding its initial motivation, and it is accompanied by both the accretion and reduction of tension (Danet & Katriel 1989: 264). The goal serves to create motivation for action and to provide satisfactory relief when it is achieved. The second phase is *gathering information* because the collector must have sufficient knowledge to achieve their goal. Becoming an 'expert' is essential, as it gains an economic advantage and allows faster progress. Knowledge is acquired through observation of auctions, dealer catalogues and the Internet (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004: 88f). The third phase is *planning and courtship*, whereby collectors, in their anticipation of purchase, form an attachment to the desired object and imagine how it would be like if they owned it. This phase of courtship is important for the positive emotions attributed to the item. The collectables may increasingly appear as 'talismans' and 'magical' objects (Belk 1991) to their future owners. The fourth phase is characterised by the *hunt*. The collector can experience positive flow states (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) by searching for deals, negotiating and completing the purchase (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004: 91). For many collectors, the hunt is as exciting as the possession (Danet & Katriel 1989). The *acquisition* takes the collector further towards their goal. The 'collector's actual "collecting self" is now one step closer to congruence with his/her ideal "collecting self"' (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004: 92). The *post-acquisition* phase is characterised by the evaluation of one's position in a social group of collectors. Comparisons can strengthen or threaten the collector's self-esteem (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004: 93). The seventh phase consists of *manipulation*, *display* and *cataloguing*. It includes 'possession rituals' (McCracken 1988) and cataloguing to keep track of the collection's goal (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004: 94). Since the collecting process is infinite, the collector either concentrates on a new acquisition (phase 3) or revisits their goal (phase 1).

Several similarities exist between McIntosh and Schmeichel's model and Shuker's study on record collecting. As Shuker (2010: 53ff) notes, record collecting is a process that takes various forms and changes throughout a lifetime. Age, employment and income are key determinants for collecting. Increases or decreases in income directly alter collection goals, means and strategies. Furthermore, Shuker highlights domestic responsibilities that McIntosh and Schmeichel do not consider. Record collecting is a social activity that can lead to the accumulation of social capital used in the wider community of collectors. Yet it can also serve personal nostalgia. Another aspect easily overlooked in a psychological consideration of collecting is the expressive potential involved. As Campbell (2005: 34) points out, the collection is curated with great care and passion to create individual meanings. In this creative process, the collection is shared with other collectors. Not only the artefacts are

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evaluated but also the collector's personality, which is expressed through the unique selection and combination of objects and how they are displayed.

This more 'human' perspective on collection is also reflected in the few classifications of collectors. According to Saari (1997, cited in McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004), there are four types of collectors. The first type is a *passionate collector*. Emotional, obsessive and irrational, they will do anything to acquire a desired object. The *inquisitive collector* sees the purchase as an investment, while the *hobbyist*, on the contrary, collects purely for enjoyment. For the fourth type, the *expressive collector*, items are intricately linked to their self-image. Pearce (1995: 32) presents a tripartite classification that defines the collector's relationship to the object. It can be a *souvenir*, a memorial item of a person's biography, possibly nostalgic. If it is *fetishistic*, it defines the collector's identity, and it can be *systematic*, motivated by a conscious, rational goal, often accompanied by an urge for completeness. In combining these classifications with McIntosh and Schmeichel's process model, we have a useful framework for associating the collector types and their relations to the desired objects with the psychological process of acquisition.

4.2   Prestige and Social Standing

The previous discussion has shown that although a collection is usually owned by a single person, this practice is embedded in a broader social context. It can be as simple as informing oneself about products—a crucial step in any collecting process (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004)—or moving vinyl records from plastic boxes to shelves and shrines for domestic display (Shuker 2010: 131) to actively contributing to online communities where pictures and information of a collection are shared and compared (Shuker 2010: 199). To become an expert, collectors go through several stages, each of them increasingly public. For record collectors, this can take the form of writing for fanzines, music magazines or specialist collectors' magazines, disseminating and demonstrating their knowledge and tastes and possibly sharing pictures or other documentation of their collection (Shuker 2010: 134). The Internet has led to a proliferation of such practices, widening the community and making it easier than ever before to display collections. The more experienced a collector becomes, the greater their 'desire to share and display musical cultural capital' (Shuker 2010: 199).

Such cultural capital in the tradition of Bourdieu has been discussed in connection with musical instruments and music production equipment. All musical practices, such as record collecting, live music performance and record production, take place in a contested field where those involved compete for capital (Bourdieu 1990a, 1990b). The position in the field is determined by taste (Bourdieu 1986: 134f) and habitus (Bourdieu 1991: 77), a mixture of dispositions, values and practices. It is therefore likely that those who share a similar field or social position also share a

taste for similar cultural objects, which makes taste a determinant of social position (Bourdieu 1984: 1f).

In music production, Bourdieu's sociological theories have been applied to analyse practices concerning the possession and collection of analogue and digital equipment. The increasingly widespread availability of relatively inexpensive but powerful digital music production equipment is generally regarded as a democratisation of recording technology (Leyshon 2009). However, as Alan Williams (2015) notes, this has not eliminated inequalities in music production. As production equipment became more affordable, access to valuable items, older analogue gear, remained unchanged and continue to be a means for social distinction: 'ownership of rarified technology bestows (or in the case of seasoned professionals, restores), a measure of elite status. For the rest of us, there's always software' (A. Williams 2015). This view coincides with that of Crowdy (2013: 158), for whom the revived appreciation of analogue gear with the spread of digital technology has strengthened the superior position of professionals for their access to old equipment, an opportunity that most amateurs and semi-professionals lack. Access to analogue hardware at a time when the same sound can be authentically emulated digitally with better functionality thus acts as a mark of social status and prestige (Kaiser 2017). Ownership of such vintage gear characterises social difference, as it shows how much the esteemed taste of equipment decisions is linked to the dominant class of recording professionals. The taste favouring these restricted and limited technologies is significant because it emphasises rare, expensive and inaccessible items that strategically build cultural capital (O'Grady 2019: 131). Hesmondhalgh (1998: 181) defines this 'unequal access to the means of production, distribution, ownership, control and consumption' as 'cultural imperialism'. This uneven standing refers to both social class and access shaped by geographical region. How this is taking shape has been analysed in online message board discussions on studio equipment and production practice (Carvalho 2012; Cole 2011). Foucault's (1980) discourse of power is also relevant in this context. Carvalho (2012) has shown how trade magazines and online message boards for audio recording and production define 'rules of conduct' with a set of rules, opinions and advice on buying, collecting and using recording technology. These rules include knowing the names of a large number and variety of gear, their functions and specifications. Similarly, Porcello (2004) finds that sound engineers must learn to talk about sound to position themselves as 'insiders', a prerequisite for raising their social standing within the recording community.

Bourdieu's capital theory and Foucault's concept of discourse of power are relevant concerning musicians' handling of gear. The common appreciation of vintage instruments, analogue amplifiers and keyboards is not only due to advantages in terms of playability, but also has a status component. Knowledge of the history, main players and technical characteristics of instruments, amplifiers and effects, as well

as their possession or replicas if the originals are unaffordable, allow for social distinction and determine the owner's reputation in the community. The distinctive value of instruments, however, is not limited to vintage gear. Cohen (1991: 50) observes that some musicians regard the 'acquisition and accumulation of such gear as a means of achieving status or success … Most band members showed great determination in acquiring their gear [and] employed considerable ingenuity in raising money to acquire what they wanted'. A gigging musician not only displays their musical talent on stage; the audience may see the equipment as another source of the appreciation of taste, knowledge and cultural capital. Consequently, collecting musical gear appears to be a multifaceted practice related to a variety of musical, psychological and social factors (Cohen 1991: 50) and as such can be read as an accumulation of popular cultural capital (Fiske 1992). For professional musicians, the quantity or quality of collected instruments is a means of distinguishing themselves from 'lesser' musicians as, for instance, fellow professionals or amateurs. For hobbyists, collecting can be compensation for anything missing, be it professional success, recognition or whatever is lacking in life (Belk 1995b: 486). Collecting instruments is an opportunity to gain mastery and accomplishments denied elsewhere (Belk et al. 1991). Thrill, excitement and anticipation are positive emotions connected to collecting, and success in competition with others brings prestige and status (Storr 1983).

4.3   Obsessive Collecting and Hoarding

The competitive nature of collecting practice underlines the inseparable links between collecting and social status. How collectors react to this competition is determined by their general dispositions. There are the ones not having a strong need to raise their social status in general, or their hobby is not so important to them that it defines who they are. At the opposite end, there are those defining themselves through the symbolic value of their collection and the resulting social standing in collector groups. Such collectors are more likely to develop obsessive behaviours.

The literature on compulsive collecting does not paint a coherent picture. According to Belk (1995b: 480), collectors 'often refer to themselves, only half in jest, as suffering from mania, a madness, an addiction, a compulsion, or an obsession'. As he argues, self-presentation can be jocular because collecting is a socially accepted activity that is not stigmatised like other addictions, such as compulsive gambling. Often, collectors even use medical vocabulary to justify their self-indulgence in collecting (Belk 2001a: 80). Other researchers treat obsessive collecting much more seriously. For Clifford (1985: 238), collecting is an organised acquisitive obsession, 'an excessive, sometimes even rapacious need to have [transformed] into rule governed meaningful desire'. That suggests both an uncontrolled, compulsive

urge and a systematic goal system as components of collecting. Goldberg and Lewis's (1978: 94f) assessment is even more severe. They state that

> Obsessed collectors … are driven … Their obsession overrules every other aspect of their lives and they devote every waking minute to thinking and planning how to obtain the next object for their collection or how to display it. Objects ultimately become more important than people, and fanatic collectors progressively alienate themselves from friends and family, occasionally even becoming suspicious that others will take away their prized possessions. They tend to withdraw from interpersonal relationships and often do not concern themselves with everyday problems like paying bills or getting the car serviced.

This statement points to a pathological condition. It is currently unknown how common it is in musicians and other music practices such as record production. Psychological studies indicate that such extreme conditions mainly result from childhood insecurities (Muesterberger 1994), the desire for self-expression, sociability, a sense of personal continuity through meaningful objects (Formanek 1991) and the intention to expand the sense of self (Belk et al. 1991). Because of the seriousness collecting can take, Belk (1995b: 479f) believes that it is motivated by multiple motives.

These observations do not yet reflect all motives for obsessive collecting; many others lie in various psychological needs. In extreme cases, collecting can be

> experienced as a self-transcendent passion in which the collected objects become more important than their health, wealth, or inner being. Collecting … becomes a religion for such collectors, and they envision themselves playing the role of savior of society by preserving all that is noble and good for future generations. (Belk 1995b: 481)

A religious component is also found in another associated motivation, the pursuit of immortality (Behrman 1952; Rigby & Rigby 1944). Some people overcome anxieties of death symbolically through culturally valued activities (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004: 87). They believe that collections, just like monuments, will guarantee them symbolic immortality in the sense of heritage or legacy from which future generations can benefit (Belk et al. 1991). In music, this could take the form of collections of records, vintage instruments or instruments formerly owned by famous musicians. If this is the case, a private collection fulfils similar functions to a museum but with limited access. Their owners may believe that they can preserve the instrument and possibly the 'magic' (Belk 1991; Fernandez & Lastovicka 2011) better than a formal institution.

As McIntosh and Schmeichel's (2004) model of collecting has suggested, the acquisition and collection process is cyclical and potentially never-ending. Their model is consistent with Shuker's (2010: 111) observation of record collection, where acquisition is followed by a new need and a 'return to the chase'. There are several reasons for such a process. For many collectors, extensive research in the

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form of finding out about items and their meanings brings joy, and it is reinforced by the anticipation of eventually adding them to the collection (Shuker 2010: 109). The prospect of ownership can be a major source of satisfaction for a collector (Belk 1984: 291). The cycle starts again directly after the latest acquisition; in McIntosh and Schmeichel's (2004) model, either in the planning and courtship phase or in the initial phase of defining the collecting goal. This frequent revision of goals contributes to the insatiable nature of collecting because once a broad aim is achieved, the focus may shift to details. Collecting is fundamentally characterised by incompleteness; once an object is obtained, new types or variations can be pursued. Collectors of musical instruments would likely switch their focus to new manufacturers, times of production or amplifiers and effects devices. Even for a single instrument model like the Fender Stratocaster guitar, there are hundreds of different versions for which a collector could find justification if they wished to acquire one.

Earlier, we discussed the concept of 'neophilia' as a fetish-like search for objects that are acquired for the sake of buying. Falk (1994) sees neophilia as the underlying mechanism that drives all consumption and collecting and considers it the main reason for the 'insatiability of the collector's urge' (Straw 2000: 167). In Straw's (2000: 165ff) reading of neophilia, collecting is characterised by a 'succession of fetishes'. For him, collecting is far less systematic than for other authors (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004; Shuker 2010); instead, it is an arbitrary process marked by a desperate and irrational desire that in its unending ease is only temporarily satisfied by impulsive purchases. This view coincides with 'hunting' metaphors in connection with obsessive collecting practices (Shuker 2010: 27, 42ff). In a guide for record collectors, Semeonoff (1949: 2) writes, '[o]ne never knows when something one has been looking for months or even years, is going to turn up. There is, too, the chance of finding records one did not know even existed'. This quote supports Straw's claim that acquisitions are unsystematic. Besides, once a potentially meaningful item has been identified and a seller been found, a person prone to obsessive collecting must deal with the uncertainty of acquisition. Unlike standard items, such as a current musical instrument model, which can be purchased in any music store and bought any time the budget permits, most collectors buy rare objects as soon as they become available. Their 'fear that if a unique object is not acquired immediately it will be gone forever' (Belk 1995b: 483) contributes to the obsession and leads to difficult budgetary decisions. Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011) report about a guitar player who, in his desire to buy the Beatles' original instruments, regularly flies from the USA to Europe to visit dealers who might sell such rare instruments. Since success cannot be guaranteed, the instruments must be acquired as soon as they are discovered. As the authors describe, success is not easy to achieve, and so the collector 'has settled for a vintage instrument that plausibly could have been played by a member of the Beatles' (Fernandez & Lastovicka 2011: 283). The collecting behaviour shows a progression; first replicas of Beatles' gear, then vintage equipment that the Beatles

might have played, and finally certified original instruments. This quest has already cost him several hundred thousand dollars. The more ambitious the collection targets become over time, the higher the demand on time and money. Such practice has profound consequences for the collector's social and family life since for everyone but the wealthiest, the money spent on collectables is missing in the household (Belk 1995b: 482). Family members may come to regard a collection as a 'rival' because of the time and affection devoted to it (Belk 1995b: 483).

Studies on collecting seem to be at odds over the degree of compulsive, irrational obsession and the more rational, systematic planning and realisation of collections. While some sociologists (Falk 2004), anthropologists (Clifford 1985), cultural studies scholars (Straw 2000) and some psychologists (Goldberg & Lewis 1978) emphasise the irrational, social psychologists (McIntosh & Schmeichel 2004), the rational nature of collecting is highlighted by some sociologists (Danet & Katriel 1989). There seems to be no disciplinary correlation for the degree of rationality. Shuker (2010: 46) avoids this problem by distinguishing between accumulation and collection; accumulation he views as being characterised by unselected buying and collecting as involving more systematic and selective acquisition. Consequently, collecting would be more rational than the obsessive nature of accumulation. One can safely conclude from the various forms and motives that collecting is too diverse and complex to favour either side. Collecting is probably systematic in principle, but the emotional involvement and the strong connection to a collector's self-perception and identity create desires. Whether or not these can be controlled depends on the individual.

Some further insights into the characteristics of obsessive collecting can be derived from psychiatric research that has compared collecting with hoarding. Hoarding Disorder (HD) is a standardised psychiatric diagnose that has replaced Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (Pertusa et al. 2010) and Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder (Mataix-Cols et al. 2010). Hoarding Disorder is characterised by six criteria: 1) difficulty in discarding possessions regardless of their value, 2) distress associated with discarding possessions, 3) cluttered living areas, 4) distress with the social environment, 5) deviation from other medical conditions, 6) symptoms that cannot be explained by any other form of mental disorder (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Collecting, by contrast, is defined as a methodical pursuit with an attempt at completion and an above-average interest in a topic, which is accompanied by the reading of literature and other information-seeking activities, and it is carried out passionately and becoming persistent over time (Subkowski 2006).

In an overview article, Nordsletten et al. (2013) systematically compare normative collecting and hoarding disorder. As far as object content is concerned, collecting is focused on a cohesive theme, while hoarding lacks cohesion and focus. The acquisition process of collectors is structured by stages such as planning, hunting and organising, which is missing in hoarders. By comparison, excessive acquisition

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is widespread amongst hoarders but not among collectors. Collections are organised and displayed as defining part of the collecting process, whereas hoarders clutter up their possessions. Collectors are rarely distressed about their behaviour, while hoarders do worry about their obsession. Consequently, collectors hardly suffer from social impairment, yet hoarders do. As can be seen from these differences, hoarders rarely part with possessions but collectors frequently trade, as they see it as an opportunity to update and improve their collections (Pearce 1998a, 1998b). However, other research suggests that parting with items is difficult for serious collectors, who will only consider it if they own an item more than once (Long & Schiffmann 1997). Therefore, Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols (2012) distinguish between average and 'extreme' collectors. While both groups have difficulty discarding and feel distressed, extreme collectors tend to clutter, acquire excessively and are more unreflective than regular collectors. Likely there is a spectrum between collecting and hoarding that defies definite clinical diagnosis. Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols (2012: 174) conclude that 'on a majority of core features, collectors—be they typical or extreme—are overlapping with their hoarding counterparts. Indeed, of the six core criteria, the collecting literature indicates that as many as four may potentially be endorsed by the average collector'. While Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols (2012: 174) see no psychiatric problems in most regular collectors, they are concerned about 'extreme collectors' because they are akin to hoarders, as they are prone to distress and social impairment. Regarding the prevalence in the population, the authors estimate 30% as typical collectors and 2-5% as hoarders. The rate of extreme collectors is unknown. Assuming that musicians do not deviate from the general public, the literature suggests that about a third tends to collect or may even be 'extreme collectors'.

4.4   Collecting and GAS

This chapter aims to get a better understanding of the overlaps and differences between GAS and gear collection. According to Belk (1995a: 67), a characteristic of collecting is that acquired objects are removed from everyday use. Hence it is perhaps not so much the object but the way it is used that determines whether a person identifies as a collector. An ardent musician may have accumulated as much gear over time as a collector but is likely to make frequent use of their equipment in contrast to a collector who may not play instruments often or at all to preserve them. Just as for Shuker (2010: 8) a person owning a record collection is not necessarily a record collector, neither is a person having many instruments an instrument collector. Another criterion of collecting is keeping acquired objects (Belk 1995b: 479). Musicians are likely to sell or trade instruments when their preferences change, while most collectors need to accumulate more equipment over time. Belk (2001a: 66) stresses that acquisition makes the difference between owning a collection and being a collector. According to that, collecting requires regularity of additions, whereas a

musician is more likely to acquire new equipment only when the perceived or actual need arises.

As we have seen, there is some disagreement in the literature about the systematic versus irrational nature of collecting. By our initial definition, GAS has compulsive features, while collecting has a rational and strategic side, whether for the sake of social capital, cultural heritage or transcendence. However, collectors' emotional reactions and motivations make it problematic to consider the spectrum of rationality as the main distinguishing factor between GAS and collecting. Both exhibit additional commonalities that show in information-seeking activities, excitement in the 'hunt', flow states, and satisfaction and relief in the event of success. Furthermore, each is a long-term disposition that follows cyclic processes from inspiration and desire to planning and acquisition.

These are not yet all differences between collecting and GAS. Collecting is often a rather serious practice because of the collector's strong tie to self-definition, which becomes apparent from the literature on obsessive collecting. By contrast, the discourse on GAS usually emphasises compulsion in a humoristic manner. Collecting has a stronger sense of purpose, indicating energy and time are deliberately spent on it, contrary to the urge triggered by coincidence when GAS-affected musicians encounter new gear or hear other musicians discuss experiences with their equipment, be it online or in local music scenes. Similarly, the greater purposefulness requires collectors to become experts in gear, while musicians are usually more interested in its benefits for their playing. GAS-affected musicians can, of course, have specialised knowledge of technical details. Another difference concerns the role of exhibiting and cataloguing, which is an integral part of collecting but not decisive for GAS. Collectors often write in fanzines, magazines and on the Internet to get feedback on their collection or gratification. Musicians affected by GAS may proudly present photos and lists of their gear on message boards or on stage, but this is perhaps less motivated by the hope of social advancement than by marking equipment a part of their musical identity. After all, it could be argued that gear acquisition for musicians is motivated by musical necessities, be they real or imagined, whereas collecting is usually more strategic, possibly without any practical musical use. For most collectors, collecting is a social practice, while playing music does not necessarily require other people. Many musicians are not in a band but play their instrument mainly at home, which, however, does not exclude them from being interested in gear and expanding their rig. It is not always for reasons of collecting if musicians do not sell older instruments when they buy something new; the old ones could become useful again in the future, with changing preferences or when needing it for a particular musical project. Also, selling equipment usually involves financial losses unless they are valuable vintage instruments, so musicians may decide to keep them and, over time, build up a 'collection' without strategic deliberations or social motives. Alternatively, they may keep the instrument for nostalgic reasons, especially given the

low resale value. Perhaps it is the strategic intention alongside the use-value that distinguishes collecting the most from GAS. Collecting is often motivated by social reputation, whereas GAS is motivated by the benefits musicians likely presume in terms of their playing and musical identity, which by no means suggests that one group spends less money on their customs than the other.