

Decipher the “Indie” code: a social semiotic analysis of Frankie



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Overview



- Research Rationale: “Indie” Culture & Frankie
- Theoretical Background & Methodological Issues
- Frankie
 - Overview: Personification
 - Overall structure: topics & text types
 - Frankie bit: layout, genre & discourse strategies
- Implications

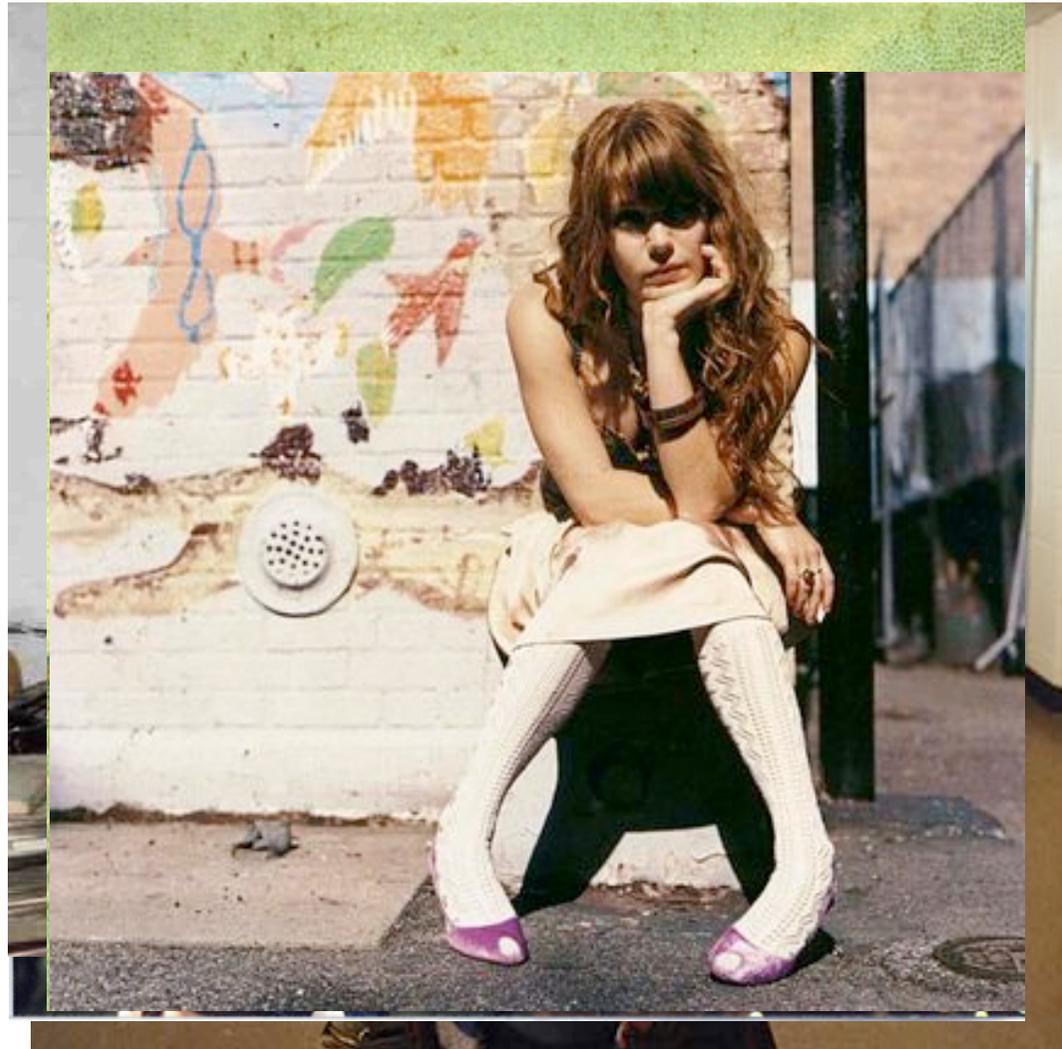


Indie Culture

101

Independent
(Alternative)
Youth Culture

“music, film,
literature or
anything that fits
under the broad
banner of culture -
created outside of
the **mainstream**
and without
corporate
financing”



Indie Culture: Why



- The characteristics of indie culture (external rationale)
 - Close relation with digital technology: born out of the WWW boom mid-late 90s (e.g. Pitchfork Media: 1998-)
 - Elitist: predominantly middle class, white, male
 - Entering commercial mainstream in the past two years
- A process perspective on culture (internal rationale)
 - Gap between textual analysis and contextual (cultural) interpretation in SFL tradition
 - Time-based model for MDA as a complementary approach



Research Data: Frankie

- National Bi-monthly
- November 2004-
- Circulation: 47,000 approx.

**vogue: 55,000 approx*

▪ One of the fastest growing magazines in Australia

▪ 18-35 (female/male)

**Based on Australia Bureau of Statistics figures source: ABC Homemade magazine bucks the trend <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/09/2922264.htm>*



12 Issues: 24 (July/August, 2008) to 35 (May/June, 2010)

Theoretical Background



- **Post-structuralism:** Barthes (1964; 1990; 2006)
- **Genre Theory:** Bakhtin (1986); Martin & Rose (2008)
- **SFL oriented DA/MDA analytical tools:** Halliday & Matthessien (2004); Martin & White (2005); Kress & van Leeuwen (2006)
- **Studies on traditional women's magazines:** e.g. Ferguson (1983); Hermes (1995); McCracken, (1993); Winship (1987); Gough-Yates (2003); Machin & van Leeuwen (2007)
- **Bernstein (1971)** Coding orientation, **Bourdieu (1984):** Symbolic capital

Research Procedure & Methodology



Stage 1

- Content Analysis (Goffman, 1979; Bell, 2001, Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006): “Conceptual”, e.g.
 - Types of Participants: Human (named vs. generic) vs. Objects (types of objects)
 - Types of settings: Domestic + Public
 - Commercial (Product endorsement) vs. Non-commercial

Stage 2

- Qualitative: Social Semiotic
 - Elementary Genres (Martin & Rose, 2008; studies on traditional women’s magazines, e.g.)
 - Visual Layout (Kress van Leeuwen, 1999, 2006)
 - Appraisal (Martin & White, 2005)

Stage 3

- Quantitative ???



Frankie

Personification

Blurring social boundary between reader and the magazine: back-grounding (?) institutional role



“aimed at **women (and men)** looking for **a magazine** [[that’s as **SMART, FUNNY, SARCASTIC, FRIENDLY, CUTE, RUDE, ARTY, CURIOUS and CARING as they are**]].”

- Appreciation (evaluating entities) = Judgment (evaluating characters)
- Target of appraisal: Interchangeable



Frankie Homepage

Blog: "Individual",
"Chronicle": New post
everyday

Personification

Blurring the *time*
boundary: magazine
consumption as
daily activities



- home
- this issue
- past issues
- shops we love
- shop
- subscribe
- forum
- wallpapers
- links
- about us
- contact us
- advertise
- submissions
- event gallery
- faq
- jobs
- myspace
- facebook
- twitter
- join newsletter

stately pillows

written by holly mccauley
Thursday, 18 November 2010 09:00
Wow, these are pretty neat. Hand embroidered cushions of all the US states. We're wishing for an Aussie version of these to proudly perch on our couches. Nice nice nice. By [Uncommon Goods](#).



SHARE [uncommon goods.](#)

frankie magazine is a national bi-monthly based in Australia, aimed at women (and men) looking for a magazine that's as smart, funny, sarcastic, friendly, cute, rude, arty, curious and caring as they are. [subscribe here](#)

PLUS STUDENT discounts everyday
*can't be used in conjunction with any other offer
design for creatives

do you currently own or are you looking to buy an ipad in the next 12 months?

yes
 no
 i wish





Frankie in Social Media

Facebook: joined at Jan 2008, friends: **80,319**

Twitter: Joined at March 2009, followers: approx. 20, 890

Myspace: 12,666

Personification

Blurring the *time & space* boundary: magazine as extended social network





Frankie Bits

4 spreads of promotions

Musician/band interviews: 57

Cultural/social events, (exhibitions, concerts, fairs, charity): 19

*Products: 341

Frankie Bits



A FRANKIE BITS COFFIN WITH ... OF BALD ...

What's the Frankie concept? The main part of the Frankie Bits concept is to have a space where artists can ...



FRANKIE BITS

It is both a monthly and a weekly event. It is both a monthly and a weekly event. It is both a monthly and a weekly event.



FRANKIE BITS

It is a concept of a t-shirt for the event. It is a concept of a t-shirt for the event. It is a concept of a t-shirt for the event.



WHAT'S WITH ...

What's your favorite Frankie Bits? I love the Frankie Bits concept. I love the Frankie Bits concept. I love the Frankie Bits concept.

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Features:

Letters to editor

Product reviews

Recipes

Witness/personal story

Backgrounder (history)

Art Reviews

Photo Editorial



Dear frankie, I so enjoy your yummy recipes. I decided to make the golden granola from the last edition and you weren't kidding when you said it's sunchiny! My hubby and I fought over it for the few days it lasted in my house. My growing little human loved it too! Ruth xx

Dear frankie, Last Christmas, my name posted me a card containing a crisp \$50 note. After a couple of weeks of pondering how best to spend my present (a new pair of shoes or dress?), I decided the best investment was to subscribe to frankie. After reading the magazine for a couple of years and never being disappointed (only when my local newsagent runs out of copies), it was clearly the right choice. So thanks Nana and thank frankie. Sarah

Dear frankie, A couple of months ago I was feeling a little sorry for myself. I had finished my visual arts degree, was stuck in a retail job, and wondering what I was going to with my life. Then I picked up a copy of frankie and was amazed at what I saw. I instantly got my notebook out and started writing down ideas that came flooding to me. In the weeks that followed, I turned my spare bedroom into a studio which I now share with my cat and starting chugging again, and even decided on a major career change. I truly believe that it was frankie that got my creative juices flowing again. So thank you for giving me my inspiration back! Kathryn xx

Dearest frankie, Thank you to Benjamin Law for his brilliant article, "Bigen or Gay?" I loved loved loved it. Did I mention I loved it? Being a homosexual, growing up in a remote Far North Queensland town, where shuffles were mandatory, I can fully understand and appreciate everything Ben wrote. I couldn't put the article down - the phone even rang, but I had to ignore it, I was in fits of laughter and in no sane state to take a call. Many thanks, Homodoggy Mac

Hi frankie, I'm not surprised that Benjamin Law (Nov-Dec edition) found the Holiday board game so tedious. I wanted it to entertain young children. Mr Law would probably be bored by the Wiggles too. For the record, the idea arose after I suggested the idea half-jokingly in a newspaper column in the Melbourne Herald. Holiday board game Monopoly when first released in Christmas 1981 and was a top-seller for a decade. It was taken up by Thomas Hobbesworth in New Zealand and sold throughout the South Pacific, too. It put both my kids through private school. Update: my daughter Sam, who came across Mr Law's article at the hairdresser's, is now a mother of three kids herself. And I'm still writing newspaper columns 29 years later, now in the Melbourne Age. Cheers, Lawrence Money

Dear frankie, I read the article in your last issue, "Sold Gold", and it brought back so many bedtime memories, it enticed me to open all the boxes of children's books in the house. I found my beloved Little Golden Books, as well as the Enid Blyton Magic Faraway Tree Series. I was lost in the words for hours. Nadine xxox

THE LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS THIS PRETTY SWEET NOTHINGS BAG, \$79.95, FROM OUR FRIENDS AT URBAN ORIGINALS. WWW.UO.COM.AU

Dear frankie, I recently moved to Sydney for the love of my life, and despite being showered with love, I'm missing the friendship of many wonderful people I left behind in Belgium. I felt lonely, dark days, but then I met you, frankie. Each page felt like seeing a dear friend, or having tea with my mum, or finding treasures in grandma's attic, or old, baby pictures. I think I'll start a pile of frankies. They'll look lovely next to my self-made newspaper flowers and paper cranetail chandeliers (read: lonely first days in Sydney with lots of time on my hands). Here's to a new friendship Love, Lone x x



diy town PORTLAND, OREGON

DIY TOWN: MARIANNE BISHOP
An entrepreneur's guide to all things urban...
Portland, Oregon, is a vibrant city...
Powell's Books is a must-visit...
The city is full of life and energy...





Frankie Bits Layout

“Accumulative” layout patterns: strong framing, square, large empty white space

Stylistic association (?): Modernist (e.g. Bauhaus), Minimalist (e.g. Scandinavian) Design, 80s Polaroid

frank bits



FAVOURITE THINGS WITH ... KEVIN PARKER FROM TAME IMPALA

Classic album: It's far from a classic but the album that springs to mind is Sunk Loto's Big Picture. Let's pretend to listen to it every moment. I could be lying. It's lying in the shell out the back of my mum's house and I've nearly sucked and when I listen to it now I'm almost right back there. Funny how music does that. **Thing to do on a Sunday:** Beach, otherwise nothing. As in, not doing anything. Sunday is the day on which I feel the least guilty about doing nothing, or going to the beach for that matter. **Result:** Loner. I find that calling someone a loner cuts right to the bone, depending on how casually you say it. Also, used sparingly, calling someone a sphincter is pretty hilarious. **Thing about being in Tame Impala:** We seem to have earned a reputation for being general, dopey hippie boys. The works well for me in that all I have to do to drop up for shows, press and meetings is to wear the same thing I've been wearing for the past week for one more day. **Song from the new album:** Why Won't You Make Up Your Mind? It's the song that is the least like a song. It has the same chords running throughout and melodic and soul lines just fade in and fade out. I find it's the most hypnotic. **Superhero:** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles! My gosh, they raise the way they fought magic, and there were four of them but they moved as one, whilst constantly making awesome calls. I'm pretty sure I spent a good portion of my childhood actually pretending to be them. **Historical era:** Neanderthal man. Does that count? I only could meet a Neanderthal man or woman, I would have so many questions. Like what kind of music do you like? **Place of dining:** I've pretty much been ownership of this grid designer that my girlfriend has for half. It goes down to my knees and makes me feel kind of holo/glam/dragqueen. It's one of those expensive designer ones for the record.



THE CUPCAKE WRAPPER CO

Have a look at this little piece of water-inspired engineering. The Cupcake Wrapper Co makes reusable wrappers to place or pour your cupped after they're baked and used, putting up your trash and possibly disgusting the cat in your cup one at a time. It comes in 12 designs and four colours, and each pack of 12 will set you back \$14.95. www.thecupcakewrappercompany.blogspot.com.



WHAT A STIRRER

Too free. Take a look at these willy little Stirrer spoons from Christchurch crafts. **Mel Bowers** (inspired from old spoons), they're around \$17.95 from www.blackstump.com.au. Because that's such a generous price - we have five of the little spoons to give away. Email your details to shop@blackstump.com.au in the header if you want to win one for your very own.



WHERE CRAFT MEETS BOSS

Here's a guide for Melbourne readers. **Borders** book store at Carlton has started up a little craft market that runs once a month with local makers. Our **Sweet William**, **Frankie Curious** and **Anna Boyd** selling their sweet wares among the bookshelves and generally reading awesome. DIY shops throughout the metropolitan area have a look for yourself the first Monday of every month from 10am at Borders Carlton.



DISBAND

A quick round of applause, please, for **Leleup's** newest creative venture. To mark the 40th anniversary of the Beatles calling it quits, they've gathered a whole bunch of young Australian artists to create works based around the theme of ending relationships - romantic, musical or otherwise. The exhibition, **Disband**, will offer art for sale and also a little Leleup pop-up store for some extra crafty goodness. Runs May 27th to 30th at **Spidey's AMESB gallery**. For more info, see www.leleup.com.au.



THERE, I FIXED IT

Merrily, you won't have to stand on your head to rock this guy. **Upstate Down Trouser** Top from **100%**. All you'll have to do is log onto www.thehouseandshop.com.au, front up 192 bucks, and marvel at the swiftness that's issued forth from this collaborative art and design project between crafter types in Berlin, Hong Kong and New York.



WHATSOEVER HEATHER

Designed and made with love in a little atic studio in South Herts, jewellery label **Whatever Heather** is inspired by "manlike" love, pure form flowers, hair, hair and chandeliers", says maker **Shannon Robertson**. And, since Shannon is such a nice lady, she's given us two of her Night Owl necklaces (worth \$19.99 each) to pass on to lucky readers. Email your details to shannon@whateverheather.com.au with 'Whatever Heather' in the header to win. And, pop online at www.whateverheather.com.au to see more of the good stuff.



LIKE A BOSS

At some point in human history, somebody let's call him 'M-X' decided that all that was real (or huge jumps) was inspired rather designed to make their owners look like they're off to a How to Be Boring convention. Well, here's to give a big tip-tyers to M-X, because the good people at **Blackstump** have crafted up something a bit special. Their Retro Belugas are hand-made from quality canvas and recycled timber and they're only \$50.00 each. pop. Have a look at more of their spiffy wares at www.blackstump.com.au.



FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH ... CARRY NATION AKA JESSIE WARREN

Hello, my name is Jess, but you can call me ... Ah? I come from Brisbane, which if that's to describe in three words, I'd call 'lovely, small and blessed' but life is to go when I have a glass of red wine in my hand and so nothing nice to think about. I make girly folk music, which is best listened to while drinking or going to sleep - but not at the same time! I'm a bit excited because my housemate's cat is finally sleeping in my bed tonight and has been trying to win her love for months. The best thing I've learned in the past couple of weeks is that the grey whale has two blowholes on its head, not one. It also lacks a dorsal fin. The last time I laughed was about 20 minutes ago when I read a haiku about bread. It was very precise. The best present I ever got was my guitar - she's new to me but was actually made around the same time I was born. Five minutes ago I was watching Planet Earth with David Attenborough and five minutes from now I will attempt to pack my bag to go on tour, but honestly - it's probably just me and watching Jurassic Park again. My words of wisdom for Frankie readers are the more you think the more you stink.



SHOE THE BEAR

OK, here's an inspiration board we'd like to see. Designers **Thomas Frederiksen** and **Jacob Fuhsang** founded **Shoe The Bear** in Denmark only two years ago, and they've made lots and lots of ultra-embellished shoes then. Each season they team up with an artist to collaborate on their range and for AW10 they've joined forces with Iranian creative **Samed Padoo** to make a range inspired by the busy landscapes of Mexico. Yep, that's right - Mexico via Iran and Denmark. Whatever else you know it's gonna be interesting. We have three pairs to give away - hurry! Email your details to shop@shoethebear.com.au with 'Shoe The Bear' in the header to win. See more at www.shoethebear.com, or call (00) 1058 2711 for local stockists.



Frankie Bits

Genres

Product promotions

Heterogeneity

Basic structural
element: product,
brand, [price] and
stockist

Holy Crap! How good is this? Pretty up your pushie with a **Carrier basket** from **XXX** and you're sure to be the envy of bike-loving fold everywhere. Inspired by intricate Swedish crochet, it comes in white, green and black and will sent you back **\$ 149** from www.XXX.com.au



Frankie Bits

Genres

Product promotions

Heterogeneity

Extensive use of contextual metaphor

“Darling, I’ve got to tell you something.”

Name? XXX

“What is that, dear?”
Position? Team manager (skate)

“All these years I’ve been living in a” Australian knit
What’s the XXX store in a few words? Out of LA. Young, fresh

“What’s the XXX?”
What’s the XXX? XXX. My designer, XXX, is really into

Production? Italy. But a high-quality hand fair trade, so I was

Who made it? Peru
Who made it? Peru. Savers and artisans

Who should we party with on our 10th anniversary?
Who, Argentina? I wish you both the practice and the

Best money ever spent.
“It’s a small baby, I hope \$500 to \$2.5 from .au

Three words to think of when you think of XXX? Your next
XXXX. I brought it online at XXXXX.
shoes!

“That was surprisingly informative summary. Thank you.”
Complete this sentence: You should wear our shoes

“I spent the last four savings on it.” of course, skateboarding.

“Oh”.



Personification

Commercial Promotion
as a process of
exchanging emotions

Frankie: Affect as
main strategy of
'institutional
evaluation

Reader: consumption
as Affect

- Ooh-we covet the new AW range from XXX. We covet) it.
- We are a bit fond of these new wooden XXX from XXX.
- Feeling the need to express your love for the Victorian capital in pillow form?
- It's no secret we've been squealy little fangirls (Affect: Inclination) of XXX for a good long while now...but we are particularly fallen in love with this super deluxe XXXX.
- Frankie is proud as punch to be helping launch the new summer 08/09 range from the super lovely types at XXX.
- We are liking it so much that we're telling you it's back in shops for another round.
- ...because just about everything in it makes you want to grin with joy and hug passer-by.
- Feeling the need to express your love for the Victorian capital in pillow form?
- If you fancy wearing your intellectual heart on your sleeve...
- Proclaim your love for all things carb-laden with this delightful XXX.
- Bit we in Australia shouldn't despair because XXX also runs a website where you can enjoy the itty-bitty experience online and order your very own XXXX.



Re- contextualising consumption

Consumption of
'creativity'

Design as main target
of evaluation

Designer as target of
evaluation (AFFECT)

Foregrounding
designing process

- Something about **the world's favorite alien dressed up as Mr T** tickles us no end.
- If you want to show off your **love for the breakfast of champions**
- There's a lot of **love** going behind the scenes at XXXX. The design trio behind the brand –**Kelly Davis, Scoot Davies** and **Maya Clemmensen**-are three kinds of **happy** with each other, being siblings (**Kelly and Scott**), partners (**Maya and Scott**) and best Friends (**Kelly and Maya**) .There's a lot to **love** in their clothes as well.
- “Once upon a time there was a girl in a house who **loved** to draw. It wasn't long before these drawings became an **obsession** and she **lived for her creations**.” This is the story of **Ali J**, a talented illustrator.....
- **Jessica Sutton**'s toy and accessory label XXX came to life during a cold Canadian winter, when the Sydneysider was spending time in Northern Alberta. To keep her hands busy, she started turning out sock puppets, vinyl pencils cases and wallets, eventually turning to plush bears and other cutesy critters.



Re- contextualising consumption

Evoking cultural memory
(cultural references)

Creating the “indie”
lifestyle

- “Whoa, whoa, take a...take another little piece of my heart now, baby”. We can’t say for sure if the designers at XXX were listening to Janis Joplin when they came up with this little number...
- XXXX makes us want to sing that “In an English Country Garden” . Not the naughty version though.
- Is it possible to theme your life around your feet? Please say yes, because we suspect that wearing these pretty Adella shoes from XXXX would **lead to** an existence full of dainty tea parties, scratchy gramophone recordings and dancing the Charleston till dawn.
- Is it wrong to admit that we have often **fantasized** about running away to some snow-bound chalet in Switzerland and surrounding ourselves with beer steins, melty fondue cheeses and cuckoo clocks? Sort of like crazy old cat ladies, but with wood-based timekeeping machinery

Implications



- **So what Frankie tells us about ‘indie’ culture in 2010?**
 - Coding orientation: highly elaborated code (Bernstein, 1971)
 - Consumption as a naturalized and stylized activity
 - Blurring boundary between public/private
 - At this stage: a closed community: non-negotiable cultural values?
- **So where do I go from here?**
 - Bridging to other site for indie culture (e.g. pitchfork): focusing on interviews of musicians
 - Detailed profile of types of social/activities and objects (visual/verbal) associated with indie lifestyle
 - Fashion editorials comparing Vogue, W, etc.
 - Suggestions....