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## Intimate live girls

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## Intimate Live Girls

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### Abstract:

The arena concert requires a particular type of liveness of performance in order to transcend impersonal mass entertainment. Liveness here looks to authenticity and happenstance, privileges personal communications and seeks to live in the moment, and in this way the live performance then meets and matches or even surpasses the virtual life of the artist or group. The concert must be both mass spectacle and an individual and singular experience for those witnessing and participating in it. Without these latter essential attributes, which can be read as the auratic and authentic replacing the virtual, the arena concert falls short of ontological expectations of live music.

In recent years the *mise-en-scène* of the arena concert has become calibrated to female artists with, seemingly, a concomitant feminisation of the event. In this, the space is often given over to intimacy, empathy, and presented as an insight into the life, and even philosophy, of the performer. This chapter discusses this feminine turn with respect to early intimations of this era (Debbie Gibson and Tiffany) and contemporary manifestations (recent arena tours from Kylie Minogue, Alicia Keys, Katy Perry, Lady Gaga, Peter Gabriel and Girls Aloud), and considers Miley Cyrus's use of arena technology to ensure that those present for her *Bangerz* concerts jointly created, and shared in, intimacy. Questions of liveness and intimacy are considered in respect to sexualised performance, affect, Benjamin's notion of the auratic, Renaissance images of the infant Christ's genitals, and in terms of music festivals as germinating alternative lifestyles in the 1970s.

## [B] Intimate with Miley

That essential experience, or even just ambience, of intimacy, is endangered in the transition to arena concerts.<sup>1</sup> As the concert is, as it were, “supersized” – in terms of audience members, and of the spectacle that is expected by those amassed fans, and the business and consumer environment that services the event – such intimate moments, which presuppose smaller scales, are seemingly rendered unobtainable. Even just one comment beyond just the generic “Hey [insert host city name]!” on the part of the performer can go some way to personalising, and so redeeming, the spectacle that is being consumed by reminding those present that they are all living in this particular moment, and so share feelings about the weather, or local sports results, or understand where an observational quip is coming from. The missteps and resulting corpsing of Kylie Minogue’s dancers during the X tour, and her comments directed at audience members related to members of her band, or spying t-shirts and posters from previous tours in the audience and commenting accordingly, or taking song requests and delivering a few bars unaccompanied, added just such a human element to an otherwise slickly predesigned, pre-cued, and so pre-ordained and impersonal, spectacle.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Katy Perry’s inter-song comments about “going through crap” (“feel[ing] alone in the situation – he’s not texting back, you understand, right? There’s light at the end of the tunnel if you put one foot in front of another”), trying locally-produced pies, and then downing much of a pint of beer (the remainder handed to an audience member to finish), sounded scripted, even rehearsed, and so raised suspicion, while her shilling for an underperforming Hollywood film of the moment, and general product placement, was just contemptibly opportunistic.

Without such redemption, and with the spectacle itself as the entirety of the show, a sense of disconnection occurs: the experience becomes that of the star parachuted in, to perform and talk here, on this night, much as in any other arena, and as on the nights before and the nights to come, with choreography and cues delivered as rehearsed. And where lip-synching is also deployed, or partially deployed (as with Britney Spears, but also Katy Perry), problematic ontological questions arise in the audience, who can feel themselves as passive consumers of mass-produced product rather than engaged spectators of, and even participants in, a one-off and human moment. Or, even worse, to find themselves unwittingly cast as paying extras in some further promotional filming for the singer, with photocopied notices of assumed binding legal import (“by attending this concert [...] be aware that you may be filmed [...] agree to the inclusion of your image [...]” etc) pasted up on entrance doors. So Perry, along with Keane and Lady Gaga, included segments of quieter and more intimate music, often acoustic, often with the singer playing an instrument with the huddled group of musicians, and the songs perhaps introduced as having personal meaning, and so shared now with the audience, or reflecting a difficult time in the band’s past, and so on. Or, as in the case of Alicia Keys, offloading the band for a stretch while she played and sang alone in sympathetic and intimate lighting. Perry even articulates the problem: “there are 12,000 people here but it’s so weird: sometimes I feel like I’m singing to five ... We have a special bond, don’t you think?” More arrestingly, Peter Gabriel began his Back to Front concert by ambling on stage, unannounced and with no dip in the house lights – so that it was only the whoops and clapping prompted by startled audience recognition that marks the start of the evening – in order to apologetically talk about a still incomplete new song, which he then nevertheless delivers solo, accompanying himself on a piano. Others simply

perform, or intimate, an assumed intimacy: Kylie's signalled her home life (stripping and taking a bubble bath on stage, while singing "I Should Be So Lucky", during the Kiss Me Once tour) while Britney's signalled her party life (selecting a male from the audience who is then tied to a car on stage, whereupon she pole danced for him in sparkly hot-pants).

Intimacy has the potential to cut through the spectacle, which is the achievement of a team of often anonymous collaborators, and restore communication with the individual star: to put the show, and even the business, to one side in order to speak as if in a one-on-one moment. That moment looks to be, and indeed sometimes seems to be, authentic. For Barker and Taylor, MTV Unplugged is presented as just such an essential mitigation a "the quest for authenticity in popular music" that has been waylaid by spectacle: this broadcast series of "stripped down" and live concerts, often acoustic and with the studio audience in very close proximity to the performers, "was conceived as a response to the public perception that the contemporary music scene was obsessed with image rather than content [ ... as... ] people want to see artists in 'real' conditions." (Barker and Taylor 2007, 5) Kylie Minogue's entire 2002 Anti Tour was structured around this aspiration, but now with long-forgotten B-sides rather than international hits in the setlist, performed by a small band, with a minimal set, and plenty of between-song reminiscences.<sup>3</sup> And, ultimately, the balance between spectacle and intimacy is one that needs to be struck in terms of covering the full spectrum of experiences of exposure to contemporary pop: a fan may well later recall both the moment of high spectacle (say, the grand entrance of Girls Aloud, with each mounted on ten foot high letters spelling the band's name, moving through the air above the stadium audience via guy ropes), and the moment at which one of the Girls recalled nervously first auditioning on that same stage years before achieving fame,

with equal fondness. Both denote the evening in its ebb and flow of spectacular and intimate elements.

Intimacy, additionally, is the very currency of contemporary popular stardom: the minimum expectation is that the private becomes the public, and that art and life are played out equally in the public eye – even to the extent that the two become inextricably entwined. The arena concert film *Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds* (Bruce Hendricks, 2008) begins backstage, cinéma-vérité, with vocal exercises for Miley and attendant make-up artist. And innumerable television talent show competitions chart and co-opt the emotional journey and often troubled back stories of the competing singers as they rehearses and prepares, as narratives which then contextualised the performance's success or failure.

All this seems to be a radical reversal of old models of popular music stardom, where one variant of the myth of celebrity concerned those unheralded or largely unseen, only to be belatedly (even posthumously) discovered and acclaimed, and so seem to appear from nowhere, and retain their mysterious and impenetrable persona, even to the point of collaborating in outright falsification. This earlier sense of the star as fundamentally unknowable is found in *'Round Midnight* (Bertrand Tavernier, 1986), in which the poky French jazz clubs in which the exiled saxophonist is seen to perform give way, in the film's final seconds, to a posthumous tribute concert in front of a massed audience. And it is found too in the concert documentary *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (D. A. Pennebaker, 1973), in which the “real” David Bowie, although ever present, seems an absent presence throughout – obscured by make-up, performance persona, and self-conscious quipping backstage. And even films that sought to document intimacy once tended to circumnavigate the matter: the buffers of the comedy turns of the Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night* (Richard Lester,

1964), or Abba as, tantalisingly, just beyond the reach of the camera crew, and journalist pack, of *ABBA: The Movie* (Lasse Hallström, 1977) and the use of stand-ins rather than stars – partially (the impromptu punk group Terry and the Idiots in *D.O.A.: A Rite of Passage*, Lech Kowalski, 1980) or wholly (the Barbie doll cast of *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*, Todd Haynes, 1987). At this time, such aesthetic or structural strategies may have been in operation not only to simply shield stars from the curious, in relation to matters of sexual and narcotic preferences, or mental health issues, but also to maintain the illusion of men of the people, and so “one of us”, despite the enviable lifestyles of the rock aristocracy. But by the point of the melding of pop with Reality Television, the music seems secondary to the persona, amplifying the trope of “famous-for-being-famous”, and a full media spectrum domination of the private and the personal occurs: distress and intoxication in public, leaked sex tapes and even, as the persona wrestles back ownership of this narrative, the sober and tearful public confession.<sup>4</sup> That component of “reality” itself becomes an aesthetic vernacular. *Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds* and *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* start in completely identical ways: a few candid documentary seconds of star and entourage in a scruffy green room, not yet dressed-up or fully made-up, and preparing to perform. But whereas Pennebaker sought to document a cultural phenomenon (and with its attendant “shock of the new”: Bowie’s comment “Well, you’re just a girl – what do you know about make-up?” carries a payload of subversion), Hendricks seems to simply recreate or restage such a moment. And whereas Bowie seem stressed, disorientated and maybe even hallucinating, and the air around him is thick with cigarette smoke, Cyrus seems mid-work out, loving life, and thrilled by the actualité of herself being such a successful entertainer. Reality, in this latter sense, is not only an aesthetic vernacular,

but a proviso that works to announce the healthy and conservative cultural nature of the entertainment to come – at least, in respect to Cyrus in 2008.

“Intimate”, however, is also a style of music, and in this respect it is possible to trace the development of an ambience – and a gendered ambience at that. Larger venue concerts in the 1970s were often a matter of a kind of enormity of performance: the larger-than-life, in theatrical terms (Genesis and Elton John, for example), and in maximal, sonic terms (The Who, Queen, Led Zeppelin and their heavy / hair metal disciples), or even a blend of the two. The grand piano laboriously, and ridiculously, shifted onto the stage, and then directly off again, for the sake a few dozen bars of playing during a Guns ’n Roses gig, is therefore best considered as a theatrical prop rather than musical necessity. This maximal grouping, in particular, can be read in terms of a presenting a direct correlations between masculinity, musical prowess, and the “alpha male” mastery and dominance of the space of performance. The music and performance expanded to meet and match the size of the venue. But the necessity of the introduction of enormous video screens in order to allow ever-expanding audiences to actually see what they had come to see, also marked the point at which the idea of intimacy could be regenerated. And what then occurs, in terms of young girl pop, which is the concern of this chapter, first prompts a retrospective note of what could taken as a parallel and mostly marginalised music history – one of intimacy rather than pomp, and of immediate personal space rather than domination of the space of performance. It is possible to chart a certain trajectory in this regard, from 1970s female singer-songwriters (themselves and their guitar or piano, often imagined in close surroundings, bare feet as if comfy at home, performing as if just for you), and a latter generation of female pop: Tiffany performing for teen crowds in shopping malls, and Debbie Gibson on her bed in her bedroom.<sup>5</sup> These are their

places, not public spaces: the viewer is invited into the sixteen or seventeen year old's bedroom, listens to their "telling secrets", and enters the revelry with them: "Only in my dreams / as real as it may seem / it was only in my dreams".<sup>6</sup> The private then becomes an element of the performance, which seems to be circumscribed within the immediate sphere. There is an echo of this in arena concerts, in the tendency to confession: Minogue on her breast cancer, Alicia Keys talking about, and playing, the formative R&B music from her childhood, Tom Chaplin on the troubles he had caused for his group, Keane, Morrissey on feeling slighted by Manchester City Council, Lady Gaga imparting life lessons, and often a tendency, as with Lady Gaga, for female artists to start weeping during such moments. The problem, for historians of popular music, is that the intimate, at the juncture at which Gibson and Tiffany can be found, often gives way to trivial and banal romantic concerns. The individuality of the 1970s female singer-songwriters seems to find a surer path, for writers such as O'Brien (2012), through female-fronted punk and post-punk groups, and their belated refrains in gobbier female pop stars of the 1980s, and Riot Grrrl. The latter's manifesto was clear on such romantic matters: the danger of pop conformism as one of "assimilating someone else's (boy) standards", waylaying the need to "create our own moanings", (Anonymous, 1991).

In this regeneration of the close encounter is a kind of contrarian movement: at the point at which the increasing size of mass entertainment prompts the creation of technology to further enable that reach, the technology in turn allows for this bignesses's very obverse – the fruition of a *mise-en-scène* of intimacy, of smallness, and of confidences, allowing for a feminisation of space, even the vast space of the arena. And this *mise-en-scène*, now, speaks of and to the very origins of young girl pop: no longer the mass-release of an album, singles climbing in the one national

chart, trailed appearances on must-watch broadcast television programmes. Rather, the grass-roots selling of the pop star, via individual downloads, or YouTube views, takes the product straight to the bedroom, and private spaces – and perhaps with an entrée endorsed by familiars: emailed MP3s, or via the Facebook “likes” of friends, or friends’ friends, or via Spotify’s Artificial Intelligence-mimicking algorithm declaring that a certain piece of music is to your taste. In this way, the intrusion of the new song occurs on the individual’s terms, and into that intimate sphere of being, “wired up”, “in the zone”: headphones on while computing, isolated mentally and aurally from the outside world.

One promo video for Cyrus’s “Wrecking Ball” (2013) is perfectly calibrated in these respects: the official released version is pretty much entirely contained within a box. There is no narrative that needs to break the oblong framing, or requires much expansion for the viewer to “get” the concept. The promo fits exactly and neatly into that reduced space that the eye scans in the Facebook embed. Its concept is immediately graspable: Miley Cyrus, in ever-further states of undress, sits atop a wrecking ball that smashes into a wall of concrete slabs, or is seen with walls smashing behind her, all intercut with a medium close-up head shot. And, of course, despite the nudity, in this strategy is a not quite NSFW (“not suitable for work”) peepshow: it’s “not not” – that is, it is safe for titillation at work. The promo seems tailor-made for YouTube and social media dissemination, and so functions as akin to snatches of intimacy available via user-generated image content on Facebook.

And, just as this version of the promo video trades on the intimacy of nudity, there’s an a complimentary “director’s cut” version in which Miley looks now straight into the camera and delivers the song in a pained, emotion-filled way: tears and nasal mucus stream down her face, her tongue and teeth show excessive spittle. This latter

version concludes with the video's director in the frame, with Miley, and indeed both videos are "signed", on-screen, by their director: celebrity photographer Terry Richardson.

This is the access afforded by intimacy. The use of Richardson here, and in more general terms the inspiration from Terry Richardson that seemed to be in Miley's post-*Hannah Montana* work and persona, functioned to reinvent the star.<sup>7</sup> Post-Hannah Miley is "ugly" (in the sense of gurning, un-girly, even aspiring to the grotesque), self-consciously edgy (achieved with nudity or state of undress that flirt with the pornographic or paedophilic; and drug paraphernalia), a presence lacking in sentimentality, and presented as a commercial prospect via Warholian tropes: a sheen and glamour, and often the subject as pinned down, or backed-up against a wall, or enclosed within a small space, for forensic examination (as with Warhol's *Screen Tests*, 1964-1966). Richardson's images – controversial in themselves, and for some redolent of a working method that has been met with accusations of sexual assault – talk directly to notions of self-authenticating presentation, not least in terms of Richardson's own deracinated image appearing in so many of his photos. The 2004 exhibition (at the Deitch Projects gallery in SoHo, New York) and collection, *Terryworld*, anticipates the intimate performance of the sexualised self, for social and private media: for "chatroulette" via self-taken, sometimes mid-intercourse, shots; reportage "camwhore" snapshots of a certain party atmosphere; and, perhaps in its "selfie" and Snapchat manifestations, in the illicit, individualised come-on or invitation.<sup>8</sup> For much of *Terryworld*, the use of underage-looking models seems in dialogue with an underage-looking sexualisation of the popular culture – the ground on which most of Miley's critics assemble. Is popular culture, and girl pop culture, then, just the cleaned up version of this? Or is this the degeneration inevitable in the

direction (or just the imagined underside) of girl pop culture? Or does Richardson just shoot the status quo: that the condition of tweens is in itself sexual, and that this is what teddy bears and lollies, and so on, are actually now all about? Or are these images merely outriders to an emergent genre: the social media selfie as evidence of wild times, and a way of self-documenting (as the photoblogger Merlin Bronques puts it for his 2006 collection), last night's party.

What is arresting in Richardson's images is that, unlike the typical "good girl gone bad" narrative of contemporary pop culture, where "papped" photos evidence the decline and fall of former Disney pop princesses into the Spring Break / "Girls Gone Wild" excesses of "raunch culture" (as identified by Levy, 2006), Richardson's photographs actually are the "going bad". The straitened aesthetic, often flatly (or even flash) lit and so lacking in depth, simply underlines the straight reportage of the image, or evidences the event: her, back to the bare wall, actually "misbehaving"; her, on her bed, fully adopting a pornographic pose for the camera (as if a photo from a cheap 1970s porn mag); her, eroding her media respectability, partially or fully nude. In this respect, these enclosed spaces favoured by Richardson seem a kind of laboratory for intimacy: the camera lens as microscope, and the photoshoot designed as a provocation to the model to go ever further, and then an index of just how much further. And in these straitened circumstances, the tongue becomes all important: as used for an infantile gesture of facial distortion, or an invitation for or mimicking of (or just actual) fellatio – edging towards the moderately extreme, silly pose adopted for mid-party or nightclubbing photos for social media. In Richardson's work, the tongue is a kind of chute to the plughole of the post-ejaculatory moment – the face wet with liquids, as with Miley's tears and mucus and spittle.

*Terryworld* was published a decade before the *Bangerz* album and related tour (2013; 79 public concerts, February-October 2014), and Richardson's vision took some time to be considered palatable for, and to some extent filter into, fashion media. *Bangerz* mined this seam (as well as many other seams, and modish memes) to find its own character, and the tour was advertised and merchandised with a Richardson image: Miley pressed up against her own reflection, a homage of the auto-homo-erotic narcissus of Jean Marais in Jean Cocteau's *Orphée* (1950), albeit with added tongue. Part of the use of Richardson comes in the sense of the invention of an identity through the killing of innocence, and the innocent that is killed is the virginal Disney alter-ego, Hannah Montana, to allow the emergence of an urban/indy pop girl, Miley Cyrus. The CD album of *Bangerz* even comes with stickers for iPhone customisation, including a marijuana leaf, an amended Acid House smiley face, and a topless Miley covering her breasts. The tour, on the back of a much-discussed "twerking" incident at the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards show,<sup>9</sup> included simulated masturbation (included with outsized foam "hands") and group sex (consciously "edgy": interracial, including a person of restricted growth, who was also in the dance troupe), with an "explicit" version of the tour programme containing endless images of Miley miming fellatio. And, as with the scrap-book aesthetic of the *Bangerz* inlay, and the projection design of the *Bangerz* concerts (which often looked as if created by like a hyperactive teenage designer, cramming everything possible into a freeware-generated animation, including then passé memes of singing cats for "We Can't Stop"), the new look, and persona, was one of happy amateurism.<sup>10</sup> Thus there was something terribly karaoke-like about Miley's renditions of The Smith's "There's a Light That Never Goes Out", The Beatles's "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" (as a duet with Wayne Coyne, fumbled first time, unsatisfactory for Cyrus

the second time, and so played three times in a row, with apologies to the small segment of the audience able to see that particular stage, since this was for outside broadcast) and Dolly Parton's "Jolene" (which was so ineptly played that the song petered out before its conclusion).<sup>11</sup> But, at the same time, the intention itself was enough: not only in terms of actually singing (rather than lip-synching), but in terms of achieving a sense of a spontaneous event, and of those gathered sharing in one seemingly off-script (or, at least, counter-expectations) moment. This was the art in the age of digital reproduction, to paraphrase Benjamin's 1936 essay: the auratic presence of actual and unmistakable Miley. Put in a much cruder way, Miley's spitting of water over the front rows of the audience – to see how far she could project the water, she said, and trying to out-spit her previous personal best – works in a similar fashion: to cut through the hype of the event, the starriness of the persona, and the engulfing mediascape of the arena concert, for a "real" and human moment, of being there, with Miley. It is a matter of actually achieving intimacy rather than just intimating the liveness of her actual presence: to be intimate rather than to intimate her closeness. (Prince's inane version of this was to ban, and have than ban swingingly enforced, the use of any camera device on the grounds that it distracted from the music). In terms of the pop star herself, in respect to appearances in the global nexus of arenas, such liveness cannot just be a matter of Barker and Taylor's "quest for authenticity" (2007, 5).<sup>12</sup> Liveness is also a matter of mitigating the hyperreal or digital realms in which the pop star mostly exists: of finally offering the referent of the endlessly digitally reproduced image. This moment suggests a reversal of the old maxim that you should never meet your heroes: the heroes have to be met, in order to have their heroism actually validated, along with the validation of the esteem in the fan holds them.

In this respect, a sense of a biological presence, rather than digital presence or avatar, is all-important. When this is achieved via the routines of sexual arousal (in the feigned orgy, in her feigned masturbation, and in the fetish-like outfits she wears), so that the intimate is equated with the private, the connection seems clear, and would prompt a turn to theorisations of striptease and burlesque. (Or, diagnostically, psychoanalysis: public masturbation held as a very typical sign of mental disorder). But the materialisation of sexuality in this manner is writ large, across towering video screens: this is not the strip club with its private booths and private dances, but a cultural event with the scope and space of a football match. And the spotlight that follows our star as he or she walks the promenade, and so seems to walk on the crowd, as Christ seemed to walk on water, is suggestive of the divine light, often a golden beam from heaven, that illuminates the deity as he walks in the fallen world, across centuries of Western painting. The materialisation of sexuality in the arena may be said to work in just such a manner as the materialisation of the infant Christ's genitals in Renaissance art, for the unbelievers: genitalia as the final proof of the absolute presence of the biological (rather than digital, or ghost-like vision) human figure.<sup>13</sup> Christ has walked among us – even if, as with the arena experience, only to be seen and heard from a distance (as with the Sermon on the Mount); and Miley has walked among us – as apparent in the fleshiness that she displays, and integrates into the performance, and as part of the whole spectacle. Steinberg's "plausible theological grounds for the genital reference" (1996, 3) need not be much updated: the deity-like superstar is now manifest in her presence, along with gathered disciplines, and to answer Doubting Thomases ("can she actually sing?") and the Pharisees of the commentariat ("this isn't good music", "this isn't a good role model") alike.

Richardson's tongues function in such a way too: a muscle movement that, unlike a facial expression, illustrates desire and intent, and a sensual reaching out into the world for experience and sensation. Miley's tongue is similarly cast: a star of the show. Compare this to John Pasche's famous "tongue and lips" Rolling Stones logo: more of a distillation of the essence of the vulgarity of the band, minimalism in the manner of Samuel Beckett's *Not I* ("Stage in darkness but for MOUTH, upstage audience right, about eight feet above stage level ...", Beckett [1973] 2014, 13), than the Richardson / Miley appropriation of the blunt semiotics of porn. In fact, the show begins with Miley sliding down the enormous tongue that protrudes from the backdrop image of her face. But Miley's tongue, and Richardson's tongues, are only a fraction of the matter in terms of the Bangerz tour.

#### [B] Snogging With Tongues

After a tribute to her newly deceased dog, Floyd, of "Can't Be Tamed" (a towering statue of Floyd is wheeled on and off stage), Miley introduces a rendition of "Adore You" by exhorting audience members to "make out" once the "kiss cam" is on them, and being "sluttier than America" (the previous continent for the Bangerz tour). The images from the "kiss cam" are projected behind her as she sings. Roving cameras in the audience, with feeds on video screens, are far from unusual – allowing for cut-away shots of audience members, now incorporated into the spectacle. During a sort of rave-themed interregnum during Perry's show, with Perry and her troupe dance freely on stage, the instruction "Dance" appears on the video screens, with shots of compliant audience members and groups doing just that (with the biggest cheers from the audience reserved for dancing dads). In this, Perry adopts a DJ/conductor role: instructions to be followed, with her example offered. But the loop

is uncertain: do the dancing audience members perform for her, or – with respect to their fleeting inclusion in the show – for others: this audience? or the future audience for a commercial transmission or release of this show? Many of them, once they become conscious of the broadcast of their images, begin to take photos of themselves on the big screen, capturing the capturing.

During the first few minutes of the kiss cam feeds, it was mostly young girls “snogging” each other, egged on by their friends (the audience seemed to consist of many parties of young girls) – demonstrably with tongues, but not always in a way in which is typically read as bi- or homosexual, but more just a youthful affectation, and often adopting “selfie”-like poses.<sup>14</sup> But as men, this time seemingly partners, were also picked up and broadcast, and kissed deeply and with gusto, enormous, arena-shaking cheers broke out from the whooping audience. Such a celebration of difference, in an area that is not typically read as given over to gatherings of that class (the British middle) who have attempted to annex the righteousness of liberal mindedness, was striking.

Months later, Peter Gabriel ended his Back to Front concert with the 1980 single “Biko”, introduced (“for those young people around the world, [who currently] are fighting oppression and injustice”; “as always: what happens now is up to you”), and performed, in an appropriately serious and unshowy manner (as Gabriel has done over the decades with this song), and with an image of the murdered anti-apartheid activist projected behind the stage as the song ended.<sup>15</sup> The outro’s chanting, as orchestrated by Gabriel, included the audience, on its feet, returning the raised fist salute of, in this context, solidarity with the historic struggles of the African National Congress. Gabriel finally twisted the microphone around to catch and amplify that chanting, and discretely left the stage as the music played on. This twisting and exit

perfectly dramatises Gabriel's position of "what happens now is up to you." The Back to Front tour itself seemed to reproduce the aesthetics and technology of state surveillance and state intimidation: blindingly bright white mobile search lights, moving threateningly onto the audience, and at times the singer himself, whose fearful image (sometimes in close-up, sometimes as thermal imaging) was projected onto the back screen. In this context, the concluding dynamic of "Biko" was a resounding retort, and a moment of inclusivity (and education) for the audience, in the continuum of the narrative of the fight for democratic representation. And yet, the moment was, ultimately, gestural. Miley's stratagem, on the other hand, was affective. And while few would now argue against the spirit of Gabriel's position of "Biko" (and the comparison engendered by the line of argument here, comparing tributes to the late Floyd and the late Steve Biko, seems in terrible bad taste), Miley's position remains vexed. Such a "promotion" of homosexuality to this predominantly young audience would have been, under British law, technically illegal only some ten and a half years before.<sup>16</sup> And, even in the heart of Western metropolitan centres, same-sex / "alt-sex" relationships continue to meet with discrimination, both in terms of queer-bashing on the street, and in terms of public and private sector discrimination and marginalisation in the institutions of state and its proxies.

The recognition in the audience would have seemed to have been that the kissing couples were both living in the moment, on Miley's guidance, and heightening and amplifying that moment for themselves and all others, and laughing in the face of sexual mores, discretions, taboos and prohibitions. Such a dynamic is familiar to activists: the affective example set by Occupy events, the freedoms of what Bey (2003) identifies as the "Temporary Autonomous Zone", which are often also sensual too and position pleasure as a weapon of political opposition. Miley's own hyper-

sexualisation, in and through the show, figures as a centrifugal force in these matters – shamanically spurring on this skanky, sensual solidarity. And “Adore You”, in its stately pace (especially in terms of its opening position on the *Bangerz* album) use of strings, and seeming narrative of increasing desperation on the part of the singer/character as her stalker-ish adoration (and fantasies of marriage, and divine guidance) are not fully returned by the object of her affection, obliterates the ADD-like power pop of the Hannah Montana persona. Miley’s voice is siren-like, in the sense of singing up and above and echoing across the music – perhaps inviting the entranced into this “danger zone” of confession, and acting unconditionally on impulse. This is the mood in which Miley’s then covering of “There’s a Light That Never Goes Out” seems entirely appropriate: that other great anthem of unrequited longing.

If the stepping up to such an alternative to that embodied by the Disney pop princess of Hannah Montana had been achieved via an immersion in Richardson’s aesthetic, then the implementation – via an engulfing of the arena event with a sense of shared intimacy and actual intimacy – was Miley’s, and Hannah’s, own. The television series and Hannah Montana film, and *Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds*, illustrate that the protagonist, across her different personae, is an arena figure from the outset: the first arena star at the point of her origin, and whose musical beginnings began by her performing live as the fictional Montana, before the “Hannah Montana” series had first aired.<sup>17</sup> But the negotiation of such a star status remains on the grounds of intimacy: the dialectic of the lyrics of “Best of Both Worlds” (also the theme song for the series) are entirely correct. The schizophrenic balance of the thesis of Tennessee “small town girl” versus the antithesis of international pop star (“in some ways you’re just like all your friends / but on stage

you're a star"; "chill it out, take it slow / then you rock out the show", "living two lives is a little weird / but school's cool 'cos nobody knows", and so on) results in synthesis in Miley Cyrus. And the synthesis is one in which small town intimacy is retained even in the persona of superstardom (and, for the television series, the intimate and everyday of the settings were juxtaposed with the Montana persona as a superstar, for comedic effect – now at home, arguing with her brother, being ignored by boys, the indignities of her father's unhip behaviour, etc). In this way, and on these grounds of small town girl and international superstar, Cyrus reinvents the culture of the arena show, propelling it into an as-yet unknown future.

#### [B] Being More Closely Linked

Such great claims were also once made for the open-air music festival too, as gatherings which seemed to be "... a rehearsal for the time when basic amenities as we know them have broken down, perhaps through the running out of natural resources, perhaps through revolution and social eruption, perhaps through nuclear war..."

(quoted in Sandford and Reid 1974, 5). In this way

There are many among those who use festivals who believe ... that this is the way that much of Britain may one day be; that the life style provided and lived at pop festivals may be an indication of the way that society itself may be moving. Future social structures are seen as being more closely linked to the soil, to be more concerned with sharing ... to contain more tribal togetherness than now. (Sandford and Reid 1974, 119)

Such idealism is difficult to take at face value, or only wishfully and fitfully translated into squatting and Green movements and activism, and the history of music festivals itself and, later, raves. But, pace Hardt and Negri (2005), the multitudinal coming together of singularities, and new forms of immaterial labour that arise within that shift, partially confirm the contention of the “many among those who use festivals” that the lineaments of new forms of living and togetherness, and communication, can be detected.<sup>18</sup> Sanford and Reid’s “tomorrow’s people” still seem to emerge from such cultural spheres.

So how does the arena concert, in general, compute in relation to updating this 1970s imaginary, with the iPhone entry to the live social media hinterland of the arena event as replacing LSD or MDMA as the essential gateway to fully embracing the experience? Arguments could be made from a number of positions (and are made in the current volume): the arena concert as the model of interactive yet atomised communication; intimacy as mediated exclusively through social media, and so achieved in bad faith; a virtual “being there” (at the behest of generating photos for Facebook and Instagram) as holding more ontological weight than an actual proximity. In the context of the Bangerz tour, it seemed to me, the sharing and tribal togetherness seem to have been edged towards, affectively. So what, then, is the equivalent to the soil, and the mud, to which we are now “being more closely linked” through this? Seemingly, to return to the technological achievements of the arena concert and Hardt and Negri’s terminology, vibrations in the digital “communicative ether” (Hardt, Negri 2000, 360; see also 346-347): the sharing occurs not just with those in the festival field or the music hall or arena itself, but with those, and maybe those who know those, as all connected via social media.

The worth of what is communicated, whether it is then considered as viral advertising and / or, for the fan, self-validation through evidencing that auratic moment (when the fan shared the space and moment with the star: the being there), is a matter of debate. (And where one aspect of that debate is that relaying live images of Beyoncé to friends via social media is no kind of communication at all, but the sorry condition of excommunication; see Galloway, Thacker and Wark, 2014). But it is in this context that the ideas of intimacy, and the feminisation of the space, where the spectacle around the central female performer is expanded beyond the confines of the arena, and out into the ether, is truly played out. In this, irrespective of, say, the actual saliva of Miley mingling with the bottled water and then spat out onto fans, comes the virtual construction and dissemination of Miley, and with performance and intimacy as facets of this construction, and this construction as founded on the event of the arena concert, and its myriad images simultaneously and permanently showcased and archived on social media. The arena concert is the central transmitter for, and optic of, this transformation: the spectacle of the intimate, and the intimate as spectacular.

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<sup>2</sup> Thus the author's shirt (visible from his position on front row) briefly preoccupied Kylie during the 2008 concert, resulting in an outstretched arm, pointed figure and the individual instruction to "make some noise!"

<sup>3</sup> Minogue, Anti Tour (2 April 2012, Manchester Academy). My thanks to Sunil Manghani for his observations during and after the show.

<sup>4</sup> For further, see my discussions of the confessional mode of female performance and activism, in the context of Third Wave feminism; (Halligan 2013), (Halligan 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Footage of the former is incorporated into the music video for Tiffany's "I Think We're Alone Now" (1987); the latter refers to the promo music videos for Gibson's "Only In My Dreams" (1987) and "Out of the Blue" (1988), from the album *Out of the Blue* of 1987.

<sup>6</sup> If Gibson is used as emblematic here, to the exclusion of previous and entirely comparable girl pop stars, it is in part because her brief moment in the spotlight coincided with a general transition in MTV towards the predictable, bland and safe. MTV seemed to shift from a parasitical model of absorption of extant popular musics to a eugenic model of effective incubation and promotion of their own.

<sup>7</sup> The "Hannah Montana" television series ran from 2006-2011. The public transition to "adult" star occurred across 2010/2011. Some missteps along the way are apparent, where Miley seems to have been granted an insufficient modicum of non-sexualised maturity, as with the films *Hannah Montana: The Movie* (Peter Chelsom, 2009), *LOL* (Lisa Azuelos, 2010, released 2012) and *So Undercover* (Tom Vaughan, 2011), in which she seems cosmically bored.

<sup>8</sup> The anticipation seems to be a matter of a slight projection into the future, into the then-coming rise of social media; "Everyone has taken these pictures of themselves

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and posted them on the internet,' Mr Richardson said. 'I'm just putting them out there on a gallery wall.'" (Trebay 2004).

<sup>9</sup> At this point, "twerking" (formerly known as grinding) was seen as the nadir of "raunch culture": a shameless and public display of "girls gone wild". Writing in 1999, Tiqqun anticipated twerking in respect to their developing of a post-feminist theory akin to Deleuze and Guattari's "body without organs": "The young girl considers her ass a sufficient foundation for her sentiment of incommunicable singularity." (2012, 51)

<sup>10</sup> Diane Martel was the Creative Director of the Bangerz tour.

<sup>11</sup> The former for several gigs during the Bangerz tour, the latter two in Manchester. The broadcast was for the 2014 Billboard Music Awards, held at the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the matter of such intimate concerts is surely undermined by their being recorded for broadcast and commercial release: this intimacy is a matter of style or even affectation rather than exclusively experiential. Alicia Key's Manchester Cathedral concert of 24 September 2014, for "MTV Crashes Manchester", required a relatively small (and screened) crowd, effectively as part of the set design, while the performance itself remained "big" and rehearsed, even in this context (including down to the matching outfits of the band members). The effect of being at the front for this concert was little different from Keys at a distance, in an arena, some four years earlier.

<sup>13</sup> This argument is predicated on Steinberg's (1996) reading of the figure of Christ in Renaissance art, but in popular music history terms there is a substantial body of work that posits the singer as Christ- or guru-like, the concert as religious ritual, and so forth. In addition, actual young pop star displays of vaginas, accidental or otherwise,

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was seemingly de rigueur at one point, as Schwartz notes (2011), and thereafter was seemingly the subject of hacking for the so-called “Fappening” of 2013.

<sup>14</sup> For girl-on-girl snogging as a rite of passage rather than matter of sexual identity, see (Sanghani 2014). The subject itself was celebrated in Perry’s best selling single, “I Kissed a Girl”, in 2008.

<sup>15</sup> On the problematic political radicalism of Gabriel’s song, which Easlea claims as “instrumental in challenging apartheid” as well as the sine qua non of Gabriel’s recording career, (2013, 10), see (Drewett 2012, 99-112) and (Byerly 2012, 113-130). A performance of this song, for this tour, is included the film/DVD *Back to Front: Peter Gabriel Live in London* (Hamish Hamilton, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Assuming that the local council would have ultimately licensed the venue on the condition of avoiding illegal activities, which would have then included a prohibition against anything understood to “intentionally promote homosexuality”, as per the Section 28 amendment of the Local Government Act 1986, with the inclusion of section 2a. Text available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/10/section/2A> (accessed December 2014).

<sup>17</sup> For Cyrus’s own reflection on the event, see (Cyrus and Liftin 2010, 65-67). The fictional Miley Stewart plays the fictional Hannah Montana, both actually played by Miley Cyrus, who then reverts to this variant of her birth name (which was Destiny Hope, rather than “Miley”, Cyrus) once Montana is retired, which she then has legally adopted, describing her birth certificate as “defunct” (Cyrus and Liftin 2010, 64). There are plenty of indications that the question of identify is not a psychologically settled state of affairs; during the live concert, Cyrus talked on at length, and in a self-obsessed way, about her public persona, often inaudibly and with only the repeated mantra of her own stage name, said in full each time, as discernible.

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<sup>18</sup> On questions of the imagining of immaterial labour in popular culture, see (Goddard, Halligan 2012). For a multitude-inflected reading of post-1968 music subcultures, see (Mueller 2014).