CHAPTER TWENTY

Intimate Live Girls

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Intimate with Miley

That essential experience, or even just ambience, of intimacy, is endangered in the transition to arena concerts. 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 personalizing, 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. On the other hand, Katy Perry's inter-song comments about 'going through crap' ('feeling 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 photocopies of 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 promised by startled audience recognition that marked the start of the evening - in order to apologically 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 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 signalled her party life (selecting a male from the audience who was then tied to a car on stage, whereupon he pole danced for him in sparkly hot-pants), for the Femme Fatale tour.

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 as 'the quest for authenticity in popular music' 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 [ . . . ] people want to see artists in "real" conditions' (Barker and Taylor 2007, 5). Kylie Minogue's entire 2012 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. 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 letter spells the band's name, moving through the air above the arena 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 date 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 public 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 rehearse and prepare, as narratives which then contextualize 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 then to appear from nowhere, and retain their mysterious and impenetrable persona, even to the point of collaborating in outright falsification. This early 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 promised 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, tantalizingly, just beyond the reach of the camera crew, and脉脉包, 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 Ride 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.

In contrast, 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. 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 Pennnhacker 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?'), this carries a payload of subversion, Hendricks seems to simply recreate or restage such a moment. And whereas Bowie seems 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 actuality 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 of 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 presenting a direct correlation 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 redefined. 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 be taken as a parallel and mostly marginalized 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. These are their places, not public spaces: the viewer is invited into the 16- or 17-year-old's bedroom, listens to their 'telling secrets' and enters the revery with them: 'Only in my dreams / as real as it may seem / it was only in my dreams'. 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, Morrissy 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 Raphael (1996), Whiteley (2000) and O'Brien (2012), through female-fronted punk and post-punk groups, and their belated refrains in gobbler 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 meanings' (Anon, 1991). Joni Mitchell is a 'significant force' for Whiteley (2000, 92) through her articulation of a female subjectivity as formed, and coloured and nuanced, by the at times successful and at times disastrous chasing after desires. Mitchell's narrative is confessational and disarming, and locked into wider societal questions and struggles (especially during the 1970s) of wants understood and freedoms gained, self-determination and self-realization and the related 'modernization' of woman. This subjectivity is certainly a much more satisfactory terrain for exploration than that of the bluntly exuberant and slogan-garbed performance of desire, of 'what I really, really want' (for Whiteley's later discussion of the imperatives of commercial success of The Spice Girls).

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 eugenics model of effective incubation and promotion of their own.

The music texts themselves evidence their own strategies of intimacy, which are often manifest in the ways in which they retain and even showcase
vocal tics or unusual annunciations, as understood to be particular to the
singer. Gibson’s feisty and even at times strained vibrato on ‘Only In My
Dreams’ works in such a way: it seems almost too showy, pushes too hard
on a voice not fully formed and so is very much indicative of the ‘real’
presence of the singer. Vocal character is often imparted in the way in which
the singing clearly sounds as if it emanates from the singer as she smiles. For
a singer as distinguished as Amerie, a similar effect of presence is achieved
through a seemingly anarchic disregard for the structure of the song; during
‘Gotta Work’ (in the album version, from Because I Love It, 2007) the lyrics
of the verse crash into and then across (to the point of almost three bars) the
chorus, as if too much needs to be said, and too urgently, to cut the discourse
in deference to the chorus. The inclusion of extraneous, personal material
(such as Taylor Swift’s giggle, after the lyric ‘I go on too many dates’), for
the 2014 single ‘Shake It Off’, but there is a laugh on ‘Gotta Work’ as well,
can be read in just such a way too. In these instances, the intimation is often
towards vulnerability or exposure (too much emotion, or simply sharing a
joke with the listener) on the part of the singer.6

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 bigness’s very obverse – the fruition of a mise-en-scène of
intimacy, of smallness and of confidences, allowing for a feminization of
space, even the vast space of the arena. And this mise-en-scène, now, speaks
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 grassroots 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 familiar, 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 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.7 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 paedo-philia;
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 sexualized 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, individualized come-on or invitation.8 For much of Terryworld,
the use of underage-looking models seems in dialogue with an underage-
looking sexualization of the popular culture – the ground on which most of
Miley’s critics assemble. Is popular culture, and girl pop culture, then, just the
deusen-up version of this? Or is this the degeneration inevitable in the direction
(or just the imagined upside) 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 lolitas, and so on, are actually now all about? Or
are these images merely outsiders to an emergent genre: the social media selfie
is 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
prove 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,
Richardson's photographs actually are the 'going bad'. The strained aesthetic, often flatly (or even flash) lit and so lacking in depth, simply underlines the straightforward portrayal 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, erasing 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 strained 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 chime to the plughole of the post-ejaculatory moment - the face wet with liquids, as with Miley's tears and mucus and spit.

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 filtered 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 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 customization, 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, included simulated masturbation (including with oversized 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 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. 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' '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 the

was for outside broadcast) and Dolly Parton's 'Jolene' (which was so inepically played that at one point the song seemed in danger of grinding to a halt before its conclusion). 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 auraic 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-split her previous personal best - works in a similar fashion: to cut through the hype of the event, the starliness 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 line about this was to ban, and have that ban swingeingly 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). 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 which 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 theorizations of striptease and burlesque. (Or, diagnostically, psychoanalysis: public masturbation held as a very typical sign of mental disorder.) But the materialization 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 we 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 materialization of sexuality in the arena may be said to work in just such a manner as the materialization 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. 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 Dobbins and Thomases (‘can she actually sing?, ‘is she just hype?’) and the Pharisees of the commentariat (‘this isn’t good music!, ‘this isn’t a good role model!’) alike.

Richardson’s ‘tongue’ is more than a muscle movement; unlike a facial expression, illustrates desire and intent, and a sensuality 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.

**Snogging with tongues**

After a tribute to her newly deceased dog, Floyd, of ‘Can’t Be Tamed’ (a towering inflatable 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 dancing 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 which is typically read as bi- or homosexual, but more just a youthful affectionation, and often adopting ‘selfie’-like poses. 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. 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 discreetly left the stage as the music played on. This twisting and exit perfectly dramatizes 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, seem 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. 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 marginalization 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-sexualization, 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 Is 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 personas, 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. 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) is 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 unship 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.

Being more closely linked

Such great claims were also once made for the open-air music festival, 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 fictitiously 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 multidimensional 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. Sandford 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 atomized 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 Bangor tour the sharing, and tribal togetherness, seems 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 and 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 an aural 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 feminization 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.

**Notes**

1. This chapter was first given as the conference paper ‘Skanky Shamanism’ at the AHRC-funded symposium Carnivalising Pop: Music Festival Cultures (13 June 2014, University of Salford); my grateful acknowledgement for the feedback from colleagues at that event, particularly Gina Arnold, and to the symposium’s convenor, George McKay. Unless otherwise noted, the following tours are referred to in the text, in relation to concerts given in the Manchester Arena: Alicia Keys, As I Am tour (9 July 2008); Kylie Minogue, KylieX2008, aka X tour (18 July 2008); Aphrodite, Les Folies tour (1 April 2011); Kiss Me Once tour (26 September 2014); Lady Gaga, the Monster Ball tour (3 June 2010); Britney Spears, Femme Fatale tour (7 November 2011); Keane, Under the Iron Sea tour (2 March 2007), Strangeland tour (29 November 2012); Guns ‘n Roses, Up Close and Personal tour (25 May 2012); Morrissey (28 July 2012); Girls Aloud, Ten: The Hits tour (5 March 2013); Peter Gabriel, Back To Front tour (25 October 2013); Miley Cyrus, Bangerz tour (14 May 2014); Prince, Hit and Run tour (17 May 2014); Katy Perry, The Prismatic World Tour (20 May 2014).

2. Thus the author’s vintage pink roses Hartford shirt (visible from his position on front row) briefly preoccupied Kylie during the 2008 concert, resulting in an outstretched arm, a pointed finger and the individual instruction to ‘make some noise!’

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

4. These strains, as apparent in the public persona of Farrah Abraham (from reality show star, to her 2012 album My Teenage Dream Ended, to leaked sex tapes) illustrate the endurance and expansiveness of the model of girl pop culture. For further information, see my discussions of the confessional mode of female performance and activism, in the context of Third Wave feminism (Halligan 2013a; Halligan forthcoming).

5. 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

6 A fuller analysis of sonic strategies of intimacy, which are entirely commonplace in pop music, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

7 The 'Hannah Montana' television series ran from 2006 to 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-sexualized 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 comically bored.

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

9 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 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 communicable singularity' (2012, 51).

10 Diane Martel was the Creative Director of the Bangaz tour.

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

12 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 indistinguishable from Keys at a distance, in an arena, some four years earlier.

13 This argument draws 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, 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. Steinberg is reluctant to assemble an incarnational theological reading derived from the displays of Christ's genitalia (see Steinberg 1996, 238–239) but allows John W. O'Malley, S. J., to do so in relation to Steinberg's original, 1983 text: 'This God [ . . . ] is unveiled, revealed, in these scenes as truly and fully man' (O'Malley, quoted in Steinberg 1996, 215).

14 In this respect, achieving a close encounter with the pop star in the enormous space of the arena, becomes all-important to the audience, and a major concern of those working on arena tours. Most artists will use a walkway or walkways for this reason, in respect of ground and lower-level audiences. Miley, Kylie, Katy and, as noted, Girls Aloud, take to the air to cater for the rest of the audience: flying over the stadium audience or, in Kylie’s case, riding on the back of a flying dragon dressed as an angel while singing a cover of The Eurythmics’ 'There Must Be an Angel (Playing with My Heart)' (1985) for the Aphrodite tour.


16 On the problematic political radicalism of Gabriel's song, which Elias 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), and elsewhere in this current volume. A performance of this song, for this tour, is included in the film/DVD *Back to Front: Peter Gabriel Live in London* (Hamish Hamilton, 2014). The design of this tour is discussed elsewhere in the current volume.

17 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).

18 For Cyrus's own reflection on the event, see Cyrus and Lefin (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 Mtonia is retired, which she then has legally adopted, describing her birth certificate as 'defunct' (Cyrus and Lefin 2010, 64). There are plenty of indications that the quality of identity is not a psychologically settled state of affairs; during the live concert, Cyrus talked on air, and in a self-obsessed way, about her public personas, often inanely and with only the repeated mantra of her own stage name, said in full each time, as discernible. And, reflective on her use of the kiss cam during an interview on the Bangaz tour DVD (Diane Martel and Russell Thomas, 2015), and the way in which the kiss cam reveals the problems for her audience members suffering from being 'a normal person' when in fact they are 'different', Cyrus claims, messianically, 'I think the universe puts this kind of responsibility to certain people that they know can handle it, and I think I'm strong enough to handle it, and some of those people maybe aren't, and that's why I'm kind of a leader in giving them that little push.' Despite the distance between such sentiments and the above-noted tendency towards the trivial and banal concerns of young girl pop, many of the interviews, including one which involves the recitation of the beginnings of a feminist pop manifesto, are conducted in a hotel bedroom and bed, with Miley in her underwear.