This is the Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in Robert Adlington and Esteban Buch (eds), ***Finding Democracy in Music*** **(2020), available online:**
https://www.routledge.com/Finding-Democracy-in-Music/Adlington-Buch/p/book/9780367486921

CHAPTER 8

AS THE BAND HIT FULL THROTTLE: LIVE EVENT, MEDIATISATION AND COLLECTIVE IDENTIFICATION IN POPULAR MUSIC CONCERT FILMS

Alessandro Bratus

Since the end of the 1960s, the experience of the live concert has in many respects been at the core of the construction of value judgements in the public discourse about popular music. During this period, which saw the birth of what might be termed 'rock culture' from sources including the underground and mainstream press, record label marketing executives, institutions, film and television, the cultural trope of the rock performance as a moment of collective self-recognition was created.[1] This happened initially in the wake of the festivals of the late 1960s – first and foremost, Woodstock – and their immediate mediatisation into successful films which spread the spirit of that moment around the globe (Plasketes 1989; Lobalzo Wright 2013; Arnold 2014), to be further promulgated by critics writing in the music press. They framed the understanding of this culture around a set of dichotomies including – among others – rock versus pop, leisure versus engagement, art versus commerce, and live versus recorded.[2] The celebration of the live show as a moment of collective identity construction is based on the premise that this moment is universally accessible, involves a community of peers that interacts peacefully despite their differences, and follows a set of common – often unspoken – rules.

In this article, I seek to demonstrate that the audiovisual representation of the popular music concert retains such values at its very core, presenting the live show as a moment of democratic self-recognition for the community of its participants. I will suggest that this is the result of a set of technical and narrative devices, illustrated by examples drawn from a variety of genres and historical periods. I read these recurring tropes through the perspective of 'performative democracy', highlighting how the first step in building a community such as the one envisioned by the film concert is the shared participation in a specific idea of belonging embedded in the media representation. In this respect, the role reserved for the audience of the film emphasizes the difference between their mediated experience and that of those who attended the event.

---

1 For examples of the centrality of the category of 'the live' in popular music historiography, see Inglis 2006 and McKay (ed.), 2015. On the role of the press see Jones 2002 and Bratus 2008.

2 In this context we might also include the never-ending tension between live and recorded music in popular discourses about popular music, and its subsequent incorporation into the theoretical concept of 'liveness' (Auslander 2008).

Such a difference opens the possibility for the viewers of the media artefact to distance themselves from the representation, either by reclaiming a sceptical position towards the narrative of the live show as a moment of utopian, egalitarian community, or, more frequently – as these are products designed for the fans – by contemplating from an external point of view these exceptional moments of collective recognition, fostered by their favourite performers. These considerations bring to the fore the relationships of power, control and dominance implied by the processes of mediation at work in the representation of popular music performance.

I have selected my examples by focusing on concert films that render either a specific performance or a restricted set of performances that took place in the same venue and within a short time span. In this way, it is easier to establish the link between the event and the performative claim of collective belonging, as well as to identify the technical procedures that disrupt the illusion of a faithful representation of the event. In such disruption, I argue, lies the core of the identification processes afforded by the concert film's narrative. The elements which the case studies have in common would seem to suggest the presence of some shared tropes characteristic of the distinct 'genre' of the concert film, and which participate in the construction of the ephemeral, imagined – or better, as we will see – 'believable' community it offers to its viewers.

Concert films in the light of political theory: *The Representative Claim*

In his book *The Representative Claim*, political theorist Michael Saward elaborates a performative framework of political representation that involves five main actors: a maker, a subject, an object, a referent and an audience. Summarising his model, Saward writes:

> It begins with the familiar idea that in representation an individual or a collective stands for, speaks for, or acts for, another. In other words, a subject stands for an object – an elected MP for a constituency, for example. But we need to look more widely than this. Some individual or collective agent constructs or *makes* the claim – a "maker". And the thing represented is an idea of it, not the thing itself, which is better called a "referent" (if the politician makes himself the "subject" who stands for an "object," the object is his idea of his constituency – "good, hard-working folk" for example – rather than the referent, which is all the other things the constituency is, or might be). All of this needs, and has, an "audience," which receives the claims and accepts, rejects, or ignores them. (Saward 2010: 36)

Crucial for the present discussion is Saward's proposal to switch attention from the actual meaning of the representation – such as the claim that electing a particular MP guarantees that he will take care of the interests of its voters, that the Liberal Party defends a specific idea of 'family', that the working class is the

symbol of revolutionary hope, or that antiglobalization demonstrators speak for the oppressed and marginalized to Western governments (p. 37) – to the modes by which 'meanings are generated and contested; or, […] how something absent is rendered as present.' (p. 39). The term "presence", in his theoretical framework, characterizes an analytical approach to political discourse centred on what shared concepts, ideals, and beliefs lies behind the words, images, and sounds that are actually pronounced and used. When we close-read political statements, Saward continues, what is at stake is 'How is the *impression* of presence constructed, defended, and contested?' (ibid.). I find this approach useful because it offers an analytical frame for unpacking the modes by which the event that is represented (the live show) is proposed as a moment for collective self-recognition for the absent audience (the viewers of the concert film). Viewed in this way, the musical performance has potential to be the catalyst for the realization of a democratic community (the one embodied by the musicians and the audience who participate in the event).

Two further pivotal elements can be drawn from *The Representative Claim*. The first is the very idea that democracy is based on claims, usually made by someone on behalf of the many. The second is the distinction between the constituency and the audience, the former being the group or individual the maker is supposedly speaking for, and the latter being the people that are actually reached by it. Saward points out that both audience and constituency can be either 'intended' or 'actual', depending on whether the perspective is maker- or recipient-driven. Such a distinction highlights the space of negotiation generated by the performative view of representation, and the active role the public has in responding to the representational claim of the agent who is speaking for them. Since constituency and audience only rarely fully coincide – even though they do so in the 'performative concept' at the heart of much artistic performance[3] –, the aim of the claim is to turn part of the audience into a constituency "through the dynamics of claim-making and claim-reception. A claim for and about an intended constituency and to an intended audience may play a key role in shaping a conscious sense of being part of that constituency or audience in its targeted members" (ibid.: 51).

In the live event, the makers of the claim are the musicians themselves, who offer themselves as a subject (the band) standing for an object, which takes the form of the sense of shared identity produced by their performance. The intended constituency and audience of such a claim are the fans of the band, who are most likely to pay money to be present at their gigs. In the case of the mediatised live event, things change considerably. The maker is now the person who is in control of the representation (the director of the film), and who in that position makes the claim about a collective identity, by using as its object the event itself (and its main characters, namely the performers and the band). The intended audience and constituency are again very similar; the difference between the two lies in the act of individual acceptance required of the viewer of the media product, to share the sense of collective belonging established during the event and represented by the film. In this respect, it can be said that the constituency is tentatively 'authored' by the maker. (S)he succeeds if (s)he builds a representation of a collective identity that can be widely shared by

[3] For the term 'performative concept' as used here, see Bratus 2017.

fans of the band (the constituency) and the general public (the audience), with the result that part of the latter is turned into the former.

Moreover, the experience of the concert mobilises a sense of identification whose social meaning includes an emotional dimension. This resonates with the discussion of contemporary democratic discourses in recent political studies. Emotions represent a 'third way' for the political debate, beyond the end-oriented 'means-ends rationality' of representational politics, and the deliberative model based on the search for the 'best' solution:

> By putting the accent either on the rational calculation of interests (aggregative model), or on moral deliberation (deliberative model), current democratic political theory is unable to acknowledge the role of 'passions' as one of the main moving forces in the field of politics and finds itself disarmed when faced with diverse manifestations. Now, this chimes with the refusal to accept the ever-present possibility of antagonism and the belief that, as far as it is rational, democratic politics can always be interpreted in terms of individual actions. (Mouffe 2005: 24)

Moving away from rationality – or better, trying to connect the rational understanding and the affective dimension of the artwork – can be relevant for discussing the experience of the mediatised live event, as this process of identity construction is triggered by perceptual stimuli and then rationalized in a way that affords some social meaning.

But at what point might all this connect to the concept of democracy as embedded in a media artefact? I believe that the answer to such a question is threefold, and correspondingly entails three kinds of tensions. First, the mediated live concert exerts its influence in a 'public sphere' which constitutes the environment in which democracy as a participatory, performative practice comes into existence,[4] even though the consumption of such a cultural artefact is predominantly private and personal. Second, the access to such a representation of collective self-recognition is in principle open to all members of society, without specific restrictions based on class, gender, age, or any other personal characteristics. The only condition for participating is acquiring the means to experience the media artefact itself – including in ways that do not imply any form of monetary exchange. At the same time, access to these artefacts is restricted to people that choose to belong to an exclusive community defined by a shared taste. Finally, the community portrayed through the media is not directly controlled by its members; instead, its existence is claimed by someone (the group in the case of the live show, the director in the case of the concert film) on behalf of a collective body. In this sense, the act of claiming the representation does not depend so much on the effects of the claim (i.e. whether the maker is entitled to speak because (s)he is elected or supported by a community); rather, it is a top-down attempt at a discursive positioning that aims at constructing an imagined community. The modes and the strategies required to construct such a discourse (and to play out these tensions) are at the core of the

4 For the concept of 'public sphere', see Habermas 1991.

following analysis of concert films, in which I discuss how they pretend to represent a democratic community through processes of discursive construction that are, however, far from democratic.

Experiencing Live from a Different Time and Place

I have reflected elsewhere about the mediatisation of popular music performance as a process of manipulation of raw audiovisual materials captured on location, then elaborated in order to provide the cinematic viewer with a specific experience of the event (Bratus 2016: 50-56). I have highlighted how, in the case of live shows with no audience, such a manipulation aims first and foremost to provide an exclusive perspective on the performance to the viewers of the media artefact. In the unusual venues in which Pink Floyd's *Live at Pompeii* (1972) and Korn's *The Encounter* (2010) are staged – an empty Roman amphitheatre and a cornfield near Bakersfield (California) – the bands can be heard performing 'just for themselves' and for the cinematic spectators. However, in both cases the film builds its own internal narrative drive, to some extent unrelated to the unfolding of the real event and subordinated to the conventions of audiovisual mediation. For example, it is well known that, as a consequence of some technical setbacks during the shooting in Italy, the Pink Floyd performance was shot in two different locations (Pompei and Paris) in order to have enough material to put together a feature-length film (Mason 2004: 173-177; Blake 2013, ch. 4). The macroformal structure of the film itself, with the song *Echoes* split between the first and the last sequence, is another clear indication of its cinematic construction. The manipulation of time ensures narrative continuity by highlighting how distant the viewers' experience is from what they would have seen if present on location.

A second example, drawn from Talking Heads' seminal *Stop Making Sense*,[5] introduces another kind of distance from the bare capturing of an event and its ensuing presentation: the de-synchronisation between the audio and the video tracks counteracts the realistic perception of the moment portrayed on video. After the opening credits, which roll on screen with no sound against a bright background that is slowly revealed by a backward camera movement as a spotlight on the stage floor, we are initially introduced to the performative situation by the buzzing crowd heard on the soundtrack (fading in from 00:00:54 onwards). Then the shadow of David Byrne's guitar head and his feet appear, and, with a backward crane movement, we follow his walking towards the front of the , until he says into the microphone: 'I've got a tape I want to play'. As he begins strumming the chord to *Psychokiller*'s introduction, we are made aware of the basic situation for the rest of the concert film: the performance is shot either from the point of view of the audience or from that of the stage, but the audience on location is nothing more than a background for the performer, or an acousmatic presence in the soundtrack, as if it were just another stage prop.

Despite the simplicity of the situation – further underlined by the bare stage, which will be prepared and equipped as the show progresses – what we experience through the concert film is anything but a

5 Jonathan Demme, *Stop Making Sense*, USA, Cinecom Pictures, 88', 1984.

'natural' situation. Rather, it is a sort of 'staged playback' in which the audiovisual spectator of the film cannot precisely know to what degree the situation (s)he is seeing is similar to the one experienced by the audience on location. Is Byrne really playing? Is his guitar even plugged in? Is the drum machine track heard through the cassette player (is it appears) or the PA (as seems more likely and logical given the situation)? Answering these questions is less relevant *per se* than the mere fact that they emerge while we experience the concert film, thus questioning the authenticity of the mediatised performance. A major disruption in this respect occurs at 00:05:08 (and then again at 00:05:21, 00:05:32, 00:05:43, though in these last instances without disruptions in the flow of images). Over a dense percussive fill, Byrne acts as if he had lost his balance owing to the effect of the irregular beat, and a rapid sequence of images shot from different angles highlights his momentary lapse in equilibrium, introducing a discontinuity in the audiovisual flow.

More attention is given to the people that prepare and equip the bare stage as the show progresses; sometimes Byrne says 'thanks' to the invisible audience, but there are no signs of contact or interaction between the musicians and the crowd during the entire first part of the concert film. The situation is eventually reversed as the film heads towards its conclusion: during the last songs of the set, the audience is shown dancing to the music, going wild in reaction to the climactic final part of songs such as *Take Me to the River* and *Crosseyed and Painless*. In some 'revealing' shots at 01:16:34 and from 01:23:56 to the end of the last song, we are finally allowed glimpses of the dancing audience, gathered at the Pantages Theater in Los Angeles. Whereas for most of the film the gaze of the cinematic viewers afforded a special position and closeness to the performer, offering them a sort of 'enhanced experience' in comparison to that of the audience on location, in these final shots the camera discloses the point of view of the performers.

In the examples just considered, we can see how the representation of the live performance depends on the creative manipulation for communicative purposes of the space and time of the original event. Images and sounds captured on location have to be curated and carefully chosen to create a specific understanding of the event, triggering in the viewer an involvement and reaction that are different from those of the audience present at the live event.

Performance: Or, Anyone Watching Can Climb on Stage

> If you've not seen The Chemical Brothers in concert, *Don't Think* is about as close as you'll get to that inimitable rush of intense euphoria without handing over a ticket at a venue's front door. […] And, in breaking through the fourth wall of the traditional concert set up by heading out through the crowd and beyond, it's the first time anyone has managed to capture what it's like to be in the audience as the band hit full throttle. (Chemical Brothers 2012)

> Unlike many concerts, watching Sigur Rós is seldom a communal experience; it is instead intensely personal. By almost entirely removing awareness of the crowd and any sense of place, Morisset brings

> you closer than ever to the players, using multiple camera angles to reveal in sometimes minute close up the concentration and effort involved in delivering such a powerful rock show. (Sigur Rós 2011a)

> *Inni* is spare and near-monochromatic in its tunnel vision. Filmed in a manner that invites both intimacy and claustrophobia, *Inni* cocoons the viewer in a one-on-one relationship with the band, eschewing the audience for closeness, depicting how it feels for both band and fans to experience Sigur Rós live. (Sigur Rós 2011b)

Beyond their bold, celebratory tone, these quotations from the paratexts of The Chemical Brothers' *Don't Think* and Sigur Rós' *Inni* exemplify the many promises that this kind of product, and many others of the same type, make to their viewers and buyers. They allude to the reproduction of an ecstatic state of intense involvement, the same as has allegedly been experienced by the people physically present at the event, and understood as an opportunity to experience a close connection between performers and audience.

The live concert film thus guarantees its viewers an exceptional way to experience an event already framed as extraordinary in its own terms. In the case of The Chemical Brothers' *Don't Think* DVD, the audiovisual artefact gives access to the final concert of a successful world tour, in the context of a huge music festival held in a very special location. On 31 July 2011, the group was the headliner of the Fuji Rock Festival final day, probably the biggest annual outdoor live event in Japan, along with other big acts such as Coldplay, The Faces, Big Audio Dynamite, Incubus and Wilco.

Relevant for the present discussion is how this performance is portrayed in the concert film so as to be experienced in a way that is in every respect severed from that of those present on location. Such a separation can be best exemplified by observing how a specific signature track of the band, *Hey Boy Hey Girl*, is staged in the mediatised rendition of the show. At the beginning of the DVD track, we see a frontal view of the stage while the 4/4 beat of the previous song is still playing. The next cut (00:31:19) brings us on stage, with a lateral view of the performers, who are waiting for the right moment to press a particular trigger on their gear ; then, a cut that immediately precedes the beginning of the new sound shows a close-up of a keyboard (most likely a MIDI controller) with keys labelled with yellow tags (00:31:20). The one that is about to be pressed is 'HBHG'. While the sound is heard, the camera lingers on how the finger of the performer is trembling in parallel with the *tremolo* effect of the synth, a detail that no one in the crowd at the festival was allowed to see.

Another detail that emphasises the fictional dimension of the mediatised performance is the alternation of images captured on location (witnessing the event) with the digital animation projected on the big screen behind the performers. These images maintain for the entire duration of the track a hybrid, ambivalent status in between the diegetic and the non-diegetic, with the consequence of establishing an unstable relationship of immersion and distance between the spectator and the event. Sometimes they are clearly shot on location; sometimes they are merely interspersed with images captured on site; sometimes it

is the movement of the camera (as in the rapid 'swirls' at 00:32:44, 00:33:14, 00:34:36 and 00:34:51, or in the rapid rotation accompanying the same sound from 00:33:20 onward) that creates an 'impossible' vantage point for the absent spectators of the concert film. During the 'drop' section of the song (00:33:42), the images on the screen are superimposed over images of the crowd, creating the impression of a holographic 3D projection that could either be part of the live show or a post-production effect. Finally, in correspondence with the final repetition of the vocal sample 'here we go!' (00:34:21), a crane shot over the vast jumping crowd of the festival presents a perspective of the event that was partially inaccessible even to the performers themselves. In the same section, other shots bring the song to its close by visually establishing for the benefit of the DVD viewer the collective (dancing) body as a character of the live performance.

Another fascinating case in point is Sigur Rós' *Inni*,[6] where the relationship between the actual event and the result of the audiovisual mediation is brought to an even higher degree of separation. Shot during their gig at the Alexandra Palace in London over two nights in November 2008, this black and white concert film uses the performance as a starting point for an abstract visual representation of the event.[7] The shooting of the performance often focuses on minute details whose immediate connection with the production of the sound is not entirely straightforward. At the beginning of the song 'E-bow' (00:44:36), the image shows what appears to be a layer of soft dirt spread over a pulsating surface, synchronised with the sound of the tom-toms; then the first cut on the drummer is shot from the back of the stage and above his head (00:45:02). The visualised rhythm of the drum kit is immediately contrasted with the soundtrack in the next shot (00:45:13), a still image of a microphone and a stage light without any visible performer, introducing the first sight of the entire band from a side view shot from the backstage (00:45:20). Next comes a detail of the hand of the keyboard player that occupies only half of the screen, while the other half is blackened (00:45:25), and another detail of the undulating fringe jacket of the guitarist and lead singer while playing his electric guitar with a violin bow (00:45:30). Then we see a close-up of his microphone with a partial perspective on the head of the same performer in the background (00:45:40), his movements not directly linked with any recognisable sound event. Bringing to an extreme the detachment of the DVD viewers from the audience on location, the first minutes of the mediatised performance of this song exemplify how the sense of connection with the event is made apparent by emphasising the divide with the real experience of the live show.

In the second section of 'E-Bow', the spectators of the live show are at the centre of an audiovisual play that scrambles different temporal layers using a visual motif drawn from the stage design. The spherical lights on stage provide the performers with a minimalist scenario which is first shown at 00:45:51, reiterated in the following cut, and then re-evoked at 00:46:11 in a sequence of images drawn from the very end of the

---

6 Sigur Rós, *Inni*, XL Recordigs/Krunk, XL CD 538, 2011.

7 As detailed in the presentation of the DVD: 'Originally filmed on hd digital, *Inni* was first transferred to 16mm film and then projected and re-filmed once, sometimes through glass and other objects to give a strong impressionistic look, a feat accomplished with the help of Godspeed You! Black Emperor visual collaborator Karl Lemieux. The film was then meticulously pieced together by *Heima* editor Nick Fenton, who chose to break up the flow with unexplained archive footage, including interview and concert material from before the band's exposure to the wider world at the tail end of the last century' (Sigur Rós' 2011a).

concert. They show single individuals framed in circular 'bubbles' on a dark background while heading out of the venue, addressing the band wrapping up their gear, dancing as if intoxicated with alcohol, chatting, etc (for example, at 00:50:26). This audiovisual sequence establishes a special relationship with the structure of the song, starting at the very beginning of the 'lyrics' – sung in the nonsense language invented by the band, Hopelandic – and lasting for about a minute, after which the image returns to the lateral perspective of the stage (00:47:12). In the next cuts, after a frontal shot of the singer with the lighting bulbs over his head (00:47:15), another audiovisual effect jeopardises the authenticity of the mediatised performance by rapidly juxtaposing different frontal shots of the stage taken from different performances (from 00:47:27),[8] until the diegetic performance is restored, first – briefly – at 00:47:41, and then at 00:47:54. The following part of the song alternates again between the performance on stage and details of an almost abstract nature, until a new sequence of the audience within the circular 'bubbles' begins, this time multiplied and scattered across the screen (00:49:05-00:50:34). The full image of the audience is finally 'revealed' at the beginning of the final section of the song (00:53:12), highlighting a blatant separation between the audio and the video tracks, and once again in correspondence with a section of the song in which the nonsense lyrics are brought to the fore. At this point, the images shot on location are entirely removed, giving way to an earlier backstage sequence of the band (00:54:33). In such a continuous back and forth between the real performance and the visual material that stands independent from the music, it is worth stressing the role reserved for the audience on location, the image of which becomes part and parcel of the representation of the event that the DVD viewers experience from a privileged viewpoint.

It is the performative event itself that connects the participants to the live show and the DVD viewers, thanks to a shared musical experience. First, for both the audience and the concert film viewers, the visual dimension adds to the perception of the sounds the gestural and the physical features needed to bring the music into existence. Second, both are equally exposed to the difference between the songs as heard on the record and as performed during the concert, an element that signals the unrepeatability and the value of the live performance. In the example of Sigur Rós' 'E-Bow', the crucial moment of the 'revelation' of the source of the 'bubbles' sequences at the end of the song comes against the background of a vocal section that is not present in the original track, released in 2002.[9] It is the uniqueness of the performance that makes the event worthy of being experienced, fostering a sense of witnessing an exceptional event and a desire to engage with the band and their fellow fans, to establish a feeling of belonging to a community of peers – an ephemeral and perhaps illusory feeling, yet still profoundly effective.

Genre and Cultural Positioning in Scripting the Mediatised Event

8 In these cuts the detachment between the video and the sound track is made clear through the asynchrony between the light show and the music, which are clearly not consistent.

9 Sigur Rós, *()*, FatCat, fatcd22, 2002, track 3 (untitled).

In the mediatisation process, the performance is staged to convey a specific meaning with regard to the performers, framing their position within particular genres and cultural categories. Leaving aside the performance *per se*, it is precisely what happens offstage that is particularly relevant in this respect, because it provides context for the live show for the benefit of the film viewers alone. In other words, it affects how the representation of the performer performs the performer.

This point can be illustrated by the concert film of Frank Zappa's 1977 Halloween concert at the Palladium Theater in New York, the unfortunate and monumental *Baby Snakes* – monumental at least in its temporal magnitude, namely a running time of almost 3 hours.[10] Although the core of the film is supposed to be the live show, the band on stage is not shown until 00:16:26, when they play *The Poodle Lecture*. Right from the start the film presents the character of Frank Zappa and his eclectic artistic persona, in a series of visual sequences that bring to the fore his musicianship, technical mastery, seriousness of purpose, and iconoclastic attitude. At 00:00:21, a fade-in reveals Zappa smoking a cigarette while discussing with the band the minute musical details of the refrain of the song *Baby Snakes* during the rehearsals for the show. The atmosphere on the stage is relaxed and playful; these are not only competent musicians, they are also so talented that they can use their talent to have fun with the music they play, having a great time in the process. From 00:02:12, the viewer is brought backstage, immediately before a long sequence of Zappa working with the clay animator Bruce Bickford in his studio to realize the stop-motion clay animation that will become part of the film. This establishes him as a multimedia artist, working with different techniques and co-workers to pursue his forward-looking creative drive.

The context in which he purposefully positions himself is the realm of the avant-garde, and this is done by taking to an extreme the dissociation between sounds and images, so as to compromise any form of representation straightforwardly linked to the moment of the performance, at least in the first part of the film. A number of images shot in the recording studio, where Zappa is directing his musicians with movements closely recalling the techniques of conducting improvised music, also contributes to this end (for example those at 00:04:55 and 00:05:37, and then from 00:06:48 to 00:07:17). An abrupt cut leads to a sequence where two fans are interviewed backstage, witnessing their passion and involvement with Zappa's multimedia *oeuvre*. As soon as Zappa asks the guy to sing the refrain of *Baby Snakes*, the melody triggers an aural cue to what is effectively a sort of opening sequence of the film (though 'real' credits have already been presented in the very first minutes). The title song is heard over a montage of animation and high-speed images of the film's preparation, including some that represent the guitarist sitting at the editing table, patiently cutting and glueing pieces of celluloid, as a kind of metatextual representation of the very creative process of the film we are seeing on the screen. From 00:10:11, the film returns to the clay animator Bruce Bickford, who gives a long and apparently erratic explanation about his work and sources of inspiration, again in dialogue with Zappa.

---

10 Frank Zappa, *Baby Snakes*, self-produced, 1979.

Something similar happens in *Shine a Light*, the recent Rolling Stones' concert film directed by Martin Scorsese.[11] In its first minutes, black and white sequences show the preparation of the show, as well as the negotiation between the director and the band regarding the ways in which to capture their performance. This defines a space for the cinematic rendition that is at once separated from, and yet profoundly linked with, the way in which the events are depicted. The careful, almost maniacal preparation of the camera movement on the basis of the show setlist, as well as the anxious attitude Scorsese discloses to the film's viewers, highlight the unpredictability of what can happen, and the possible failure of the entire project due to unforeseen circumstances. At the core of this first sequence, therefore, is the authorial figure of Scorsese, with his background as an acclaimed director, caught out of his comfort zone by the fact that he must deal with the unrepeatability of a live event. These sequences act as a reminder of the exceptionality of that particular live show – a charity event organised to support the Clinton Foundation –, while emphasising the exceptional experience of making such a film. In presenting such tensions for the cinematic viewers,

> this opening sequence indulges in disclosing what the whole poetics of direct cinema had historically disguised: the fact that every filmed music performance demands careful and exhaustive preparation and negotiation between filmmakers and performers. At the same time Scorsese plays once more with the mythology of rock by fabricating an (apparent) friction between the frivolous and moody nature of the rock-star and the methodical rehearsal of the film director. (Corbella 2015: 54)

Seeing is Believing in the Maker: Or, Concert Films Shaping Their Audience

The Scorsese example discussed in the previous paragraph, serves as reminder of the central position the director has in scripting the event portrayed in the concert film. When considered within the general framework of the performative concept of democracy proposed by Michael Saward, the director can be identified with the role of the 'maker' of the claim for the existence of a collective body. (S)he designs the media object as something the audience can relate to and identify with; (s)he also defines the space in which such identification might take place, and constitutes the common ground in which a sense of collective belonging to a community of equals might be rooted. In this respect, the choices made in organising the whole audiovisual product as something one can believe in relies on a collection of individual features that constitute a 'Thing', as in the case of the sense of national belonging discussed by Žižek:

> The Thing is not directly a collection of these features; there is 'something more' in it, that *is present* in these features, that *appears* through them. Members of a community who partake in a given 'way of life' *believe in their Thing*, where this belief has a reflexive structure proper to the intersubjective space: 'I believe in the (national) Thing' equals to 'I believe that others (members of my community)

[11] Martin Scorsese, *Shine a Light*, Shangri-La Entertainment, USA, 117', 2007.

> believe in the Thing'. […] The national Thing exists as long as members of the community believe in it; it is literally an effect of this belief in itself. (Žižek 1990: 53)

The quote underlines how collective self-recognition can rest on the shared belief that the same set of discursive features might trigger similar processes of collective self-recognition, and that the effectiveness of such features depends on the modes in which different elements are discursively composed into a media object that may be trusted and believed in.

The hypothesis at the core of this article is that the underlying mechanism which provides the possibility for collective identification in the concert film is the highlighting of the divide between two collective bodies: the spectators of the event, and the viewers of the mediatised performance. Such a result is first and foremost obtained through the crucial process of audiovisual montage – understood in the broad sense of the manipulation of the images and sounds captured on location – following a general logic not so distant from the one put in place by Bertolt Brecht in his 'epic' theatre, working on disruptions and discontinuities rather than on consistency and unity. As Walter Benjamin points out, in the realm of montage 'the superimposed element disrupts the context in which it is inserted. But here the procedure has a special right, even a perfect right […] The interruption of action, on account of which Brecht described his theatre as "epic", constantly counteracts illusion on the part of the audience' (Benjamin 1999: 778). Inasmuch as the director prevents the concert film viewers' identification with the audience present on location, the mediatised performance sets the conditions for a special kind of authentication, specifically related to the act of media consumption.

We can then apply to these media objects an interpretative perspective drawn from the theory of cultural repertoires, for which it is crucial not only how people use cultural artefacts, but also

> how culture (music) may configure its own user/consumer. This issue gains *critical* saliency when music's users enter into musically mediated settings that have been framed by a subset of participants who may aim overtly to mediate conduct in particular (e.g., organisationally, institutionally, or politically congruent) ways. (DeNora 2003, 126)

This conceptual re-thinking of the relationship between an artefact and its users can be easily aligned with the approach I have adopted. The concert film creates for its viewers a space where they are able to recognise themselves as part of a collective body, precisely thanks to the awareness of their detachment from the collective body represented within the media object.

Mediatisation and the Performance of Democracy

I have sought to demonstrate the critical potential of an analytical approach focused on the audiovisual strategies through which the concert film, while posing as a reliable witness of the facts, emphasises the distance between the spectators of the audiovisual artefact and the audience present on location. I have also sought to focus attention on the role of the figure who controls the technology in his/her capacity as an authorial figure operating within the chain of performance re-mediation. In objectifying and commodifying a live event in a pre-packaged form, the concert film transforms the participatory stance at the core of the live concert into an opportunity for the audience to accept (or reject) the representational forms proposed by the maker of the media artefact, and opens the possibility that the audience is transformed into in what Saward calls a 'constituency'. As Barthes wrote when explaining the radical opposition between photography and cinema, in the latter 'the *having-been-there* gives way before a *being-there* of the thing' (1977: 44). The audiovisual narration creates a witnessing of a reality for the spectator, whereas in a photographic image the relationship between the observer and the thing reproduced by the photograph rests only on the subjective reading of the picture, which Barthes calls a 'message without a code' (*ibid.*).

The notion that viewers' connection with a past musical event experienced through the media rests on the separation from it rather than on the transparent rendition of it might at first sight appear paradoxical and counter-intuitive. However, it can be viewed as extending the insights offered in the recent 'performative turn' of musicology (see Born 2010; Cook and Pettengill 2013; Jost 2013; Cook 2013 and 2015; Orning 2017). This has stressed the role of a variety of mediating forces in constructing musical works in performance. The danger here, perhaps, is that this performative turn risks substituting one concept of the work of art for another, by equating the raw material of the media representation (the images and sound captured on location, which select specific perspectives and moments of the event) with access to the performance itself. I hope to have demonstrated that the differences between the two are considerable and relevant in giving form to our understanding of what we are seeing and hearing – which is to say, in creating the sense of 'presence' Michael Saward suggests as crucial in the construction of any representative claim. Even though the substitution of 'performance' for 'work' appears more open and inclusive, accounting as it does for the shared processes of meaning construction between performers and listeners, in the case of recorded artefacts it risks overlooking the extent to which technical choices 'author' the media object itself, and consequently its content. Furthermore, Saward's distinction between 'audience' and 'constituency' reminds us that any representation aims at the transformation of the first in the latter, and that such a transformation is the result of a conscious acceptance on the part of the viewers of what is proposed to them, in the case of concert films namely the sense of being involved in a community represented on screen. Born's view of a recorded artefact as 'made of bits and pieces of players and performances, rendered as the idealized image of "community" and technical perfection in music' (Born 2010: 26), should, in these examples at least, be extended to include the crucial role of the director (the authorial figure summing up the contributions of all the professionals involved in the realization of the media object, from the cameramen to the editors) as the main figure calling such a community into existence.

While the ‘performative turn’ in musicology has acted as a healthy reminder of the artificial and ideological reality of a concept such as ‘the work of art’ and of the need to put performance in a more central position within the discipline, the next step is to acknowledge how media texts are also sites for expressing other forms of authorship, power and control. Stressing such a second-order form of authoriality calls attention to the crucial role played by the performativity of the media itself, its power to speak on behalf of ourselves, to shape our experience of events, to build our sense of being involved in a community of peers. For this reason, the awareness of such processes invites us to exercise a constant critical attention to the forms of representation made on behalf of such collective bodies. Such an emphasis forces us to ask how much we, as viewers and consumers of media artefacts, voluntarily (though often unwittingly) participate in an idea of democratic space that is already shaped and disciplined by them.

References

Arnold, Gina (2014), ‘Nobody's Army: Contradictory Cultural Rhetoric’, in Sheila Whitely and Jedediah Slower (eds), *Woodstock* and *Gimme Shelter*’, *in Countercultures and Popular Music*, London: Routledge.

Auslander, Philip (2008), *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, London: Routledge.

Barthes, Roland (1977), ‘Rhetoric of the Image’, in *Image-Music-Text*, London: Fontana, pp. 32-51.

Beniamin, Walter (1999), ‘The Author as Producer’, in *Selected Writings. Volume 2, Part 2. 1931-1934*, Cambridge: Belknap Press, pp. 768-82.

Blake, Mark (2013), *Pigs Might Fly. The Inside History of Pink Floyd*, London: Aurum.

Born Georgina (2010), ‘Listening, Mediation, Event: Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 135/supplement 1, pp. 79-89.

Bratus, Alessandro (2011), ‘Scene through the Press: Rock Music and Underground Papers in London, 1966–73’, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 8/2, pp. 227-52.

Bratus, Alessandro (2016), ‘In-between Performance and Mediatization: Authentication and (Re)-Live(d) Concert Experience’, *Rock Music Studies*, 3/1, pp. 41-61.

Bratus, Alessandro (2017), ‘Performance del/nel testo: per un approccio analitico alla mediazione tecnologica dell’evento performativo nella popular music registrata’, in Michela Garda and Eleonora Rocconi (eds0, *Registrare la performance. Testi, modelli, simulacri tra memoria e immaginazione*, Pavia: Pavia University Press, pp. 109-30.

Chemical Brothers, The (2012), *Don’t Think*, DVD, Parlophone, P3043889/5099930438897.

Cook, Nicholas (2013), *Beyond the Score: Music As Performance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cook, Nicholas (2015), ‘Practising Research, Playing with Knowledge’, in Mine Dogantan-Dack (ed.), *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 11-32.

Cook, Nicholas and Richard Pettengill (2013) (eds), *Taking It to the Bridge: Music As Performance*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Corbella, Maurizio (2015), 'Performativity Through(out) Media: Analyzing Popular Music Performance in the Age of Intermediality', in Costantino Maeder and Mark Reybrouck (eds), *Music, Analysis, Experience: New Perspectives in Musical Semiotics*, Leuven: Leuven University Press.

DeNora, Tia (2003), *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Habermas, Jürgen (1991), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Inglis, Ian (2006), 'Introduction: History, Place and Time: The Possibility of the Unexpected', in Ian Inglis (ed.), *Performance and Popular Music. History, Place and Time*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. xiii-xvi.

Jones, Steve (2002) (ed.), *Pop Music and the Press*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Jost, Christoph (2013), 'The performative turn in music research: between desideratum and paradigm of (sub)discipline', *Musik Theorie*, 28/4, pp. 291-309.

Lobalzo Wright, Julie (2013), 'The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly '60s: The Opposing Gazes of *Woodstock* and *Gimme Shelter*', in Robert Edgar et al (eds), *The Music Documentary: Acid Rock to Electropop*, New York: Routledge, pp. 89-104.

Mason, Nick (2004), *Inside Out: A Personal History of Pink Floyd*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

McKay, George (2015) (ed.), *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media Culture*, London: Bloomsbury.

Mouffe, Chantal (2005), *On the Political*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Orning, Tanja (2017), 'Music As Performance – Gestures, Sound and Energy: A Discussion of the Pluralism of Research Methods in Performance Studies', *Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education*, 1/5, pp. 79-94.

Plasketes, George M. (1989), 'Rock on reel: the rise and fall of the rock culture in America reflected in a decade of "rockumentaries"', *Qualitative Sociology*, 12/1, pp. 55-71.

Saward, Michael (2010), *The Representative Claim*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sigur Rós (2011a), *Inni: A Double Live Album and Film*, Sigurros.com, <https://sigurros.com/band/disco/inni/> (accessed on 30/08/2018).

Sigur Rós (2011b), *The Film*, Sigurros.com, <https://sigurros.com/band/disco/inni/inni-film.php> (accessed on 30/08/2018).

Žižek, Slavoj (1990), 'Eastern Europe's Republics of Gilead', *New Left Review*, 183, pp. 50-62.