Abstract

The arena concert requires a particular type of liveness of performance in order to transcend impersonal mass entertainment. Liveness here looks to authenticity and happenstance, privileges personal communications and seeks to live in the moment, and in this way the live performance then meets and matches or even surpasses the virtual life of the artist or group. The concert must be both mass spectacle and an individual and singular experience for those witnessing and participating in it. Without these latter essential attributes, which can be read as the auratic and authentic replacing the virtual, the arena concert falls short of ontological expectations of live music. In recent years the mise-en-scène of the arena concert has become calibrated to female artists with, seemingly, a concomitant feminisation of the event. In this, the space is often given over to intimacy, empathy, and presented as an insight into the life, and even philosophy, of the performer. This chapter discusses this feminine turn with respect to early intimations of this era (Debbie Gibson and Tiffany) and contemporary manifestations (recent arena tours from Kylie Minogue, Alicia Keys, Katy Perry, Lady Gaga, Peter Gabriel and Girls Aloud), and considers Miley Cyrus’s use of arena technology to ensure that those present for her Bangerz concerts jointly created, and shared in, intimacy. Questions of liveness and intimacy are
considered in respect to sexualised performance, affect, Benjamin’s notion of the auratic, Renaissance images of the infant Christ’s genitals, and in terms of music festivals as germinating alternative lifestyles in the 1970s.

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