

Playing the Reality

Screen Projections during Depeche Mode's Concert

“Touring the Angel: Live in Milan”

A Master's Thesis for the Degree

Master of Art (Two Years) in Visual Culture

Olga Nikolaeva

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Supervisor: Ingrid Stigsdotter

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ABSTRACT

DIVISION OF ART HISTORY AND VISUAL STUDIES/FILM STUDIES

MASTER OF ART IN VISUAL CULTURE

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"Touring the Angel. Live in Milan"

By Olga Nikolaeva

This thesis investigates the video projections that are presented on screens during live music performances through a case study focusing on the Touring the Angel concert by Depeche Mode. The concert took place in Milan and was released on DVD in 2006. Video projections during live concerts combine images that were produced before, such as video clips and still photography, with shots from the stage showing the real time stage performance and the audience.

The study shows how the specific video projections are dependent on the music, text, light, auditory, performer and camera work. It provides an in-depth analysis of the structure and elements of the video projections. Through the author's own experience and phenomenological approach the research discusses the possible influence of video projections on the audience's perception of music and their role as a form of interaction between performer and spectator. Relying on studies in the field of mediatized performance and hypermedia the research also highlights questions about the potential of video projections to enhance or reduce a live music experience.

For the better understanding of the subject the study also brings up the discussion on the television and music video, the role of screen in live performances and the question of live cinema.

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1. Introduction

1.1 *Introductory Outline of the Problem*

In recent years, the impact of media technology on our life has received increased attention by scholars.¹ Thus while studying Visual Culture I began to consider one specific part of media culture that received less attention: the part that is dealing with the question of video projections during live music performance.

In my research I open a discussion on video projections, offering two ways of analysis. The first is how video projections relate to the musical performance itself, their influence on each other or on the audience, and their cooperation with performance, including their combination with music. The second is to analyze these projections as an art project while paying attention to their visual components, effects, and imagery modifications. *Playing the Reality* will open a discussion on the visual manipulation of screen projections during a live music performance by Depeche Mode.

Music concerts have firmly established themselves as one of the most important entertainment events in contemporary culture. They are widely discussed and advertised, compared one to another and they play an important role in the success of the musicians' careers.² Along with media interest, music concerts receive more and more attention from researchers in the art and cultural field. Yet thus far researchers have avoided the actual subject of video projections as an important element of the live performance that can be analyzed alone. Video projections are mentioned in the description of the concerts, their role partly is stressed in the discussion of "liveness", auditory perception or they impact on the performer's success. But video projections deserve more attention because they present the combination of different elements of a live performance and become a highlight of it, bringing together elements of music video, television and live cinema. Video projections combine images that were produced before (video clips, photography, shots from the stage), real time stage

¹ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Routledge, 1999;
Leif Finnäs, "Presenting music live, audio-visually or aurally ± does it affect listeners' experiences differently?", *B.J. Music Ed.* 2001, 18:1;
Kate Mondloch, *Screens : viewing media installation art*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2010;
Jamie Sexton, *Music, Sound and Multimedia: from the live to the virtual*, Edinburgh University Press, 2007

² Auslander, p.57

performance and audience. They can vary from being simply documentary, TV-type documentary or non-documentary.³

My study of video projections highlights the problem of the perception of live performance through a screen and touches upon the questions of “liveness” and the images’ possible impression on the audience.⁴ In the analysis of specific video projections it points out questions about their positive and negative values and ability to enhance or reduce the live music experience.

I analyze elements of video projections that are presented on stage during the concert as I would do with any other examples of video art. I also pay attention to the way they depend on the music, lyric, light, audio, performer and camera work. I also investigate their role in the interaction between a performer and spectator. I apply my own experience and try to understand how the viewer understands the effects and comprehends them from both a psychological or physiological point of view.

1.2 The Case Studies

In January 2006 Depeche Mode started a European tour for their eleventh studio album, *Playing the Angel*, released in October 2005. The first show took place in Dresden, Germany and later on the entire concert was filmed during a two day show at the Fila Forum near Milan, Italy.⁵ While the stage design and film projections were made by Anton Corbijn, the film released on DVD on 25 September 2006 was made by another video director, Blue Leach.⁶

My thesis is based on the analysis of the official concert DVD release for Depeche Mode’s tour, *Touring the Angel: Live in Milan* (2006). My empirical material is images that are projected on screens during the concert, which are analyzed both independently and as a part of the whole music performance. I also pay attention to the stage design, light effects and performer’s presentation.

³ Finnäs, p.56

⁴ Auslander, p.2

⁵ The Depeche Mode home page,

http://www.depechemode.com/discography/home_video/16_tamilan.html [22 Aug 2012]

⁶ The Blue Leach home page, <http://www.blueleach.com/> [22 Aug 2012]

I have chosen to work on that particular concert due to my own experience of this performance as well as previous Depeche Mode performances. While being interested in the band's live performances, their video and documentary works, I have come to the conclusion that they have a strong visual representation that can provide an interesting material for this kind of research. Throughout the band's history their music videos, album art and stage design became closely associated with their music and their personalities. This fact helps to develop a better understanding of how the visual elements of their performance can influence a spectator's perception.

Most of the art-work that relates to the band was created by Dutch photographer, clip-maker and director Anton Corbijn. He started working with Depeche Mode in 1993 on their Devotional tour and filmed the first version of the performance that later, in 2004, was processed and released on DVD. His stage design for the Devotional tour consisted of premade video and photography and was nominated for the Grammy Award for Best Long Form Music Video in 1995.⁷ During that time and up to the present day, Corbijn has worked with Depeche Mode on their tours and music videos.

The stage construction for the concert I am discussing in my research consists of specially build platforms that support the control panels. Backstage consists of the different sized screens that appear from behind the cover while performance is progressing. On the left side of the stage these screens are accompanied by a large ball-shaped aid with an additional screen and a LED display.⁸

1.3 *Research Questions and Objectives*

The questions I will apply to the analysis of the video projections come from different aspects of interests. Theoreticians from different branches of cultural studies, such as Susan Kozel or Kate Mondloch, pay close attention to the role of screen images for video installation.⁹ Yet while video projections do not fully belong

⁷ RockOnTheNet.com, *37th Grammy Awards*, <http://www.rockonthenet.com/archive/1995/grammys.htm> [22 Aug 2012]

⁸ The Anton Corbijn home page, www.corbijn.co.uk **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** [22 Aug 2012]

⁹ Mondloch, 2010;

to the field of video art, they are suspended from the detailed analysis and perceived mostly as a support element of a live performance.

This raises questions concerning video projections in general. What is their role? Are they necessary? How important are they for the contemporary visual culture? Is it possible for the video projections to exist separately from the music performance? These questions address one aspect of the problem. The other side addresses questions dealing with the elements of the video projections. For example - how are the elements of the particular video projections combined with music, live performance or stage design? Those questions are directly connected to the problems of an audience's perception of the entire music performance and its separate elements. For instance how can the video projections, in Leif Finnäs' terms, enhance listeners' cognitive, affective and evaluative experience?¹⁰

The main goal of my research is to investigate manipulation of imagery on the screen during Depeche Mode's live music performances. My research is based on the fact that among studies about live music performances very little attention is paid to such an important element of them as video projections.

The other reason why I want to pay close attention to the origin of video projections and their role in contemporary music performance is the ambivalent treatment of the subject among theoreticians. As mentioned previously, there is a limited amount of material focusing on video projections and some of these tend to be negative on the subject of it. For example, Philip Auslander's work, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, partly takes a negative approach toward video projections in terms of their ability to distract from the live experience.¹¹ He stresses that being dependent on television, live music performances cannot exist without visual support thereby questioning what "liveness" in them is. While arguing about the cost of the video projections or their necessity for a star status of a performer, one can lose the idea of video projections as an artistic creation worthy of a close and detailed analysis.

A further goal of my research is to see if it is possible to answer all questions that were stated earlier using Depeche Mode's concert as an example.

Susan Kozel, *Closer: Performance, technologies, phenomenology*, the MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts/ London, England, 2007

¹⁰ Finnäs, p.55

¹¹ Auslander, p.50

1.4 Theories and Methods

I am using theoretical material, which gives me necessary knowledge about music videos, video art and live installation, live performances and live cinema in general, as well as their elements as a basis for my thesis. For example, the work of Jem Kelly and Nikolas Cook brings up general questions about live performances, their formal elements and possible influence on the audience.¹²

In his work, Kelly describes the close relationship between performance as a live and mediatized presentation. He brings up different examples that, being similar to current empirical material, function as an example of the analyses. During my analysis on the role of the screen during live performances, I also apply the idea of hypermedia, explained by Jay David Bolter.¹³ His approach toward hypermedia as the desire to achieve the reality in mediatized presentation gives my research an ability to look at screen projections from a wider perspective.

Since the topic of my thesis does not have a clear background in any single research area, I am working through material that brings light to the different approaches that can be applied to my research. For example, by working with material that concerns music video, live cinema or film studies, I apply varied analyses of these visual phenomena to my empirical material.

In my research I am also using literature that deals with film studies. Considering the lack of literature on video projections, film studies can be quite useful when they deal with questions of the audience's perception. In my research I use general works on film theory, such as work of Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Hagner and more specific works that deal with the phenomenology and spectatorship such as work by Vivian Sobchack.¹⁴

In addition, I am using literature that examines the role of screen in live performances. For example, Kate Mondloch concentrates on the specific approach of spectatorship theory, which is relevant to my research subject. She argues on the

¹²Jem Kelly, *Pop music, multimedia and live performance* in Sexton, J, *Music, Sound and Multimedia: from the live to the virtual*, Edinburgh University Press, 2007;

Nikolas Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004

¹³ Jay David Bolter, *Remediation: understanding new media*, the MIT Press, 2000

¹⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, Michael Hagner, *Film Theory: an introduction through the senses*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: New Your, London, 2010;

Vivian Sobchack,, *Carnal Thoughts: embodiment and moving image culture*, University of California Press, Ltd. London, England, 2004

subject of the audience's perception of the screen in live installation and video art and discusses different ideas of how the screen influences perception as well as what it means in the contemporary art world and how the spectator becomes primed to experience everything through a screen, coming to depend on mediatized presentation.¹⁵

Some of the material I have been working with, such as work by Philip Auslander, addresses the question of "liveness" that becomes important in discussions of mediatized performance.¹⁶ While Auslander's work provides necessary theoretical background material on the question of mediatized live performances, it also helps to develop a critical approach towards video projections. The phenomenon of live cinema that has been discussed in articles by Michael Lew and Douglas Kahn also helps to analyze the question of "liveness" of music performance.¹⁷

While analyzing video projections I refer to a phenomenological experience. It is necessary for a better understanding of the connection between the spectator and the audio-visual elements of the performance. For this, I rely on the work of Susan Kozel, who works through the phenomenological theory while applying it to live dance performances.¹⁸ However, I did not go deep in to the question of phenomenological experience. While this is an interesting way for the future development of the research on video projections, it can lead current research away from the analysis of the visual elements of the projections themselves toward the pure spectator's personal experience. While analyzing the textual part of video projections I rely on the work of Roland Barthes and his approach toward the connection between text and image.¹⁹

The main goal of my research is to investigate video projections, analyze their elements as well as their role in live music performance and to emphasize their importance as a separate art form that demands closer attention. The main method for the analysis is similar to the film analysis. I watched performances of different songs

¹⁵ Mondloch, p.23

¹⁶ Auslander, 1999

¹⁷ Michael Lew, "Live Cinema: Designing an Instrument for Cinema Editing as a Live Performance", Conference on New Interfaces for Music Expression (NIME04), Hamamatsu, Japan;

Douglas Kahn, "Prelude to Live Cinema", *Journal of Visual Culture*, 10:255, 2011, pp. 255-265

¹⁸ Kozel, 2007

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, London: Fontana Press, 1997

during the concert, paying close attention to the different video elements, analyzing their structure as I would analyze a film or music video. I also pay close attention to how they correlate with music and how they are integrated with light and stage design.

When the final DVD of *Touring the Angel: Live in Milan* was produced, the video made during the concert was partly modified in post-production. Effects of black and white color replacement, illusion of photo shoots and slow motion were used on a previously recorded concert.

Nevertheless, in my research I will base my analysis on the final DVD version and focus on images that were not manipulated on the post-production stage, that is with clear shots of the stage, performers, screens and audience. It is possible to distinguish between the two because the moments that were changed constitute only 20% of recorded performance. Also, to be able to understand video projections as only one medium between performer/music and audience, I place myself within the auditory, which is also relevant to my own experience of the concert from this particular tour.

1.5 Structure

In the following chapter I discuss video projection by examining the origin and concept of mediatized live performance. In the first part, I look at television elements that are presented in live performances. In the second part, I pay more attention to the influence of music video. I end the chapter discussing the “live cinema” performances that combine different aspects of music video, television and live music performances.

The third chapter of my research begins with a detailed analysis of Depeche Mode’s live music performance and with those examples, prompts the discussion on the role of the screen in the concert. I start by placing the screen in the context of the performance’s *mise-en-scène*. Then I develop two ways to perceive the screen: as an object in itself and as a medium of the performance. The explanations make it possible to move to the clear analyses of video projections.

In the fourth and final chapter I analyze specific examples from the concert. I pay attention to the different visual elements of particular songs, discuss the context

in which they were used and analyze their structure. I divide the analyses of projections by the dominant subjects presented on the screen, paying particular attention to the viewers' experience of them and their role in live performance in general.

2. The Origin

Before proceeding to the actual analysis of Depeche Mode's concert it is necessary to address the question of live music performances in general, and with it to take a step back and look at the different types of visual media that influence audio-visual presentation of the concert.

While researching this paper it became obvious that live music performances as one knows them today, including stage design, video projections, advertisement and organization, were formed under the influence of 20th century television and music video. They not only influenced the way contemporary music is presented live but also affected the perception of live music by the audience. The third media type discussed in this chapter stands apart from the first two. Live cinema can be considered as performance developed in parallel that shares the same audio-visual elements with the music concerts and an understanding of it can be beneficial for the research on video projections.

2.1 *Television*

The phenomenon of television lies in what Philip Auslander explains as its (television's) ability to "go live."²⁰ He argues that, "television's essence was seen in its ability to transmit events as they occur, not in filmic capacity."²¹ This dominant idea about television grew strong enough in the spectator's mind so that even though now most television programs are prerecorded, the images remain "a performance in the present."²²

This prevalent idea about television is also supported by the connection between television and theater. Auslander emphasizes that television is capable of remediating theater "at the ontological level through its claim to immediacy" and at the same time he opposed television to film and argues that television is able to "colonize liveness" which film cannot do.²³

²⁰ Auslander, p.13

²¹ Auslander, p.12

²² Auslander, p.15

²³ Auslander, p.13

For anyone present at a live music concert there is no question in the similarity of its effect to the one created by the theatrical performance, which is supported not only through the “liveness” of it but also through the concept of *mise-en-scène*. John Gibbs explains the term *mise-en-scène* as “the contents of the frame and the way that they are organized.”²⁴ By the contents of the frame he means almost everything from lighting, costumes, decorations, to the actors, or in this case the musicians. In the case of live music performance, the screen also becomes the part of the *mise-en-scène*. Illumination, screens, the stage’s construction and the disposition of the band members become a framework for the performance.

However it should not be overlooked that in contrast to theatrical performance as well as film, in most cases live music concerts do not have a strict narrative structure. Kelly explains that the “sense of presence” of the music concert is closer to live art, where it goes “against representation in favor of immediacy, intimacy and self-expression.”²⁵ This expands the term to a different level and creates what may be called atmospheric *mise-en-scène*.

Atmospheric *mise-en-scène* refers to the fact that rehearsed musical performances rely on spontaneous acting. It can appear in the performer’s communication with the spectator on a conversational or a physical level, acting between members of the band. Additionally, atmospheric *mise-en-scène* includes an important moment in live performance where communication is created through music. The spectators partake in performance while singing along or showing their emotions through dancing, jumping or screaming. This is also an important part of the concert experience that actually stresses the effect of “liveness.”²⁶ The lack of narrative structure creates a positive effect and lets the music performance develop on an intuitive level.

Returning to the original purpose of television, one can claim that video projections continue in the same tradition. They translate performance simultaneously with the live action that is happening on the stage. Adding to what connects video projections and television is that televised performance had an ability to replicate the so-called effect of the “wandering eye”.²⁷ Developing this idea, Jody

²⁴ John Gibbs, *Mise-en-Scène: Film Style and Interpretation*, Wallflower: London and New-York, 2002, p.5

²⁵ Kelly, p.106

²⁶ Auslander, p.55

²⁷ Auslander, p.19

Berland argues, “television attempts to surround itself with you, to draw your eyes to a single spot and to fix the rest of you before it”.²⁸ That is to say, video projections also choose the point of view for the spectator. The dependence on “mediatized” performance creates a special niche for video projections in contemporary mass-culture. While the screen attracts the spectators’ eyes, video projections get more attention and thereby can establish their own vision of the performed music.

With the popularity of television, the idea of what is “live” shifted quite dramatically. As different scholars argue, live performances turn more and more toward the importance of mediatized presentation. When television took over one’s visual senses and enhanced one’s experience, music was put in the position that it cannot just be listened to, it has to be seen. Setting the visual association with the particular song reproduced on the television screen gives the audience an opportunity to recognize an image and re-create it in their imagination from far away, even if the whole image is barely visible.²⁹

To underline the extent of television’s influence on live performance Auslander uses the example of Madonna’s staging for one of her concerts. He explains that the idea behind the performance is to reproduce an “artist’s music videos as nearly as possible” because the audience “come[s] to the live show expecting to see what it has already seen on television.”³⁰ Television sets the idea of what is “realistic” for the audience, imprinting images in their memory that were produced with the song.³¹ And with it television gives to the spectator the ability to “read an image.”³² This way television becomes not only a ground and origin for the mediatized live performance, but also creates a set of rules of how the reality has to be presented for the spectator to understand it.

²⁸ Jody Berland, *Sound, Image and Social Space: Music Video and Media Reconstruction* in S. Frith, A. Goodwin, L. Grossberg (ed.), *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader*, Routledge; Second Edition edition, 1993, p.36

²⁹ Auslander, p.89

³⁰ Auslander, p.31

³¹ Auslander, p.31

³² Auslander, p.35

2.2 Music Video

Dean Abt defines music videos and describes them as “three- to four-minute visual statements that are designed to join artistically with a song in order to accomplish several communicative objectives.”³³ With this definition and the previous discussion on television, it becomes even more clear that at some moment music needed to become visual and also expand the borders of its own visuality. This expansion can be traced through the fact that the first music video just followed the idea of live performance and most of the time featured the performer as a main figure. It was used in order to “establish, vitalize, or maintain the artist’s image.”³⁴ That is, from the beginning music video was influenced by live performance and simply copied it. Later, this influence shifted and music video developed toward more artistic and abstract presentation.³⁵ It turned toward the cinematic experience and as Will Straw argues, “music video had made “image” more important than the experience of music itself”.³⁶ That is to say, now music video took a lead and started to influence live performance.

Straw argues that the influence of music video’s secondary aspect, that is an image, would come to dominate “primary elements”, namely music itself.³⁷ To a certain extent, due to television’s influence, there is an obvious truth that without visual presentation, contemporary performance of all sizes, even a performance in a small club, can barely survive the competition and gain success. Images influence the spectator not only as video projections during the performance but also because they are reproduced on merchandise, photographs and band promotion.

On the other hand, Berland claims that images “never challenge or emancipate themselves from their music foundation.”³⁸ Without the support of music those images taken from music video will make little sense. If one speaks of the music videos that are not simply imitations of live performance but have a narrative, film like structure, they cannot be separated from the musical ground, while music is able to stand alone.

³³ Dean Abt, *Music Video: Impact of the Visual Dimensions* in Lull, J, *Popular Music and Communication*. Sage Publication, London, 1987, p.96

³⁴ Abt, p.97

³⁵ Abt, p.98

³⁶ Will Straw, *Popular Music and Postmodernism in the 1980's* in S. Frith, A. Goodwin, L. Grossberg (ed.), *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader*, Routledge; Second Edition edition, 1993, p.3

³⁷ Straw, p.9

³⁸ Berland, p.25

Although television became a base for the representation of video projections, music video can be seen as an element of those projections. While the origin of television lies in the theater, the origin of music video lies in film.

2.3 *Live Cinema*

Theater and television are combined in live musical performances by the logic of their immediacy. But the question arises – what if the immediate translation, that is what one can call television, is manipulated? This takes the attention from the theatrical origin and also cannot be fully applied to television. The image is not prerecorded, as is possible on television, but is manipulated in real time.

Different theoreticians explain the term live cinema as “the live, real-time mixing of images and sound for an audience.”³⁹ Live cinema is a broad subject that includes different kinds of performance and has arisen “from musical/sound performances using digital technologies.”⁴⁰ One cannot precisely say that video elements of live cinema originate from a concert’s video projections. It is likely that both art notions developed simultaneously as technology progressed and were equally influential.

What do live music performances and live cinema have in common? The name is suggestive of something that happens in the real time in front of the audience. Indeed “live” is a key word in this case. It sets the difference between live cinema and film, but creates a connection with video projections. In both cases, images presented on a screen are manipulated in real time. Willis writes that during the creation of live cinema, the images and sounds do not exist in “a fixed and finished form” but are manipulated by the artist.⁴¹ Kahn corroborates this statement and argues that live cinema is a “performance of recording.”⁴² One cannot fully claim that everything that happens during live music performances is spontaneous; the structure of these performances is well hidden. It has to appear as an intuitive

³⁹ Holly Willis, Real time live: Cinema as Performance, *Afterimage*, Jul/Aug 2009, Vol. 37, Issue 1, [n.p] ;

W. Andrew Schloss, Using Contemporary Technology in Live Performance: The Dilemma of the Performer, *Journal of New Music Research*, 32:3, p.240

⁴⁰ Kahn, p.256

⁴¹ Willis, [n.p]

⁴² Kahn, p.258

reaction to the immediate surroundings. It is the audience that claims to set the understanding of how it is supposed to look in reality, still expecting live spontaneous action.

An important connection between a live music performance and live cinema lies in the unique nature of both events. The moment when the audio becomes the part of the video projections is unique in and of itself and difficult to repeat. It also applies to the performer. For example, the track of the movement of the lead singer is usually rehearsed during preparation so the camera will be able to produce the right image at the right time. Yet the movement stays unique, especially in the moments when the performer interacts with the audience, for instance, while the singer reaches to touch someone's hand. Communication of living bodies is one thing that cannot be replaced by mediated performance.

The lack of narration in most live cinema events must be considered. One of live cinema's artists, Mia Makela, who performed under the name Solu, argues that "live cinema is not cinema" at all.⁴³ Her argument lies in the fact that a live cinema montage has a destructive influence on the narration. "[Live cinema] functions best through spatial montage, using the affordances of real-time visual software to show several images simultaneously."⁴⁴ When one considers a certain freedom from the linear structure of cinema, one can see the connection between video projections in live cinema and music concerts in their alienation from the structure of classical narrative cinema. Live cinema and music performance desire to break the frame of premade, prerecorded and pre-rehearsed presentation. It emphasizes the influence of television and music video that those two notions want to overcome. Even as there is an obvious connection between these two art forms, certainly they cannot be simply grouped together. One cannot call the video projections in live music concerts live cinema.

One of the main differences between a live music performance and a live cinema performance lie in physical space. It is the space shared by the audience and the performer in real time. The VJ, the person who manipulates images and sound of projections during a live cinema performance, is indeed the part of the performance but his or her role is not equally important to the role of the singer. She or he may be compared to the camera operator in most cases. Live cinema manipulates images that

⁴³ Mia Makela, The Practice of Live Cinema, *Media Space Journal*, Issue 1 (2008): 1; <http://media-space.org.au/journal/issue1.html> [22 Aug 2012]

⁴⁴ Willis, [n.p]

were made before connecting them with the atmosphere of the audience's space, whereas video projections take the reality of the stage performance, audience, light and music and mix it on screen using different visual effects.

3. The Screen

*Media screen – film screen, video screen, computer screen, and the like – pervade contemporary life, characterizing both work and leisure moments.*⁴⁵

With this statement Kate Mondloch underlines the importance of the screen in contemporary mass-culture. Indeed, from my own experience of live music performances I can conclude that even before the performance starts the screen already commands the viewer's attention. Whether this is conscious or unconscious, most of the time the viewer positions him or herself depending not only on the stage but also according to the location of the screen. Of course these easy manipulations are caused by a wish to have a better view of the performance; yet it also comes from one's habit to watch the screen. As if it is here – it has to be watched. Even before the show begins one will always glance at the black square of the screen and expect something to happen. This is further supported by the fact that many companies knowing this effect does not leave the screen simply black before the concert starts. Rather it is filled with commercials, music videos and sometimes short movies about the band.

3.1 *Made You Look*

In *Screen: Viewing Media Installation Art*, Kate Mondloch describes the screen as something that catches our attention by glowing, usually in darkness. She explains this “glowing” as a type of hypnosis or seduction that “made you look” at the screen.⁴⁶ Building upon this idea Mondloch and Jody Berland open up an interesting discussion in their work on the impact of the physical screen on the contemporary viewer. As discussed in the previous chapter, today the influence of television is strong enough that the TV-screen is able to catch viewers' attention even at the live music events. As if in confirmation of this, Mondloch argues that “the illuminated media screen tends to immediately draw the spectator's attention in any context, if

⁴⁵ Mondloch, p.XI

⁴⁶ Mondloch, p.23

only for an instant.”⁴⁷ In turn Berland supports this phenomenon of the screen, stressing that visual “arresting our eyes by being (on) television.”⁴⁸ It seems possible that even if the content of the video projection is not important, it still will catch one’s attention. For example if there is a viewer who is standing right in front of the stage and has straight access to the performance, she or he will still pay a lot of attention to the screen because, as mentioned previously, it glows, attracts and feels familiar.

In many cases, the audience’s reaction to the screen and how it arrests their attention can be explained from a psychological point of a view. In a certain sense one has come to depend on the look of the screen. To illustrate this Mondloch brings up the work of the scientist, Christof Koch who writes about the viewer’s focus on the screen. He explains that the screen “aggressively and inexorably claim[s] a certain amount of concentration” from the viewer.⁴⁹

According to Monloch, the screen makes you look even closer, because you are the one who is depicted on it.⁵⁰ It is an almost unintentional participation in the process. During the concert, the viewer is located in front of the performance or its video projections, but at certain moment she or he becomes involved in the process. What is the purpose of this during a live music concert? It can hardly enhance the spectator’s perception of music but can definitely influence their perception of the performance on a physiological level.

The screen’s surface becomes the new platform that combines two realities, one of the stage and the other of the crowd. As Mondloch explains, the viewers “are obligated to see themselves in an unfamiliar way or, more precisely, to see themselves from the position from which others might see them.”⁵¹ Now from simply looking at the screen, the spectator is attracted to it from looking at him or herself. This problem will receive a closer review in the following chapter during the discussion of the video projection’s elements.

As stated in the previous chapter, after the invasion of MTV, audience expectations toward music performance became more demanding. From my own experience of live concerts, it is possible to conclude that the screen presented at a

⁴⁷ Mondloch, p. 21

⁴⁸ Berland, p.25

⁴⁹ Mondloch, p.23

⁵⁰ Mondloch, p.24

⁵¹ Mondloch, p. 29

big event may be understood as a tool that makes it possible to bring the performance closer to the audience. In the beginning of the *Touring the Angel* concert, screens are absent throughout the Intro part and first song, only appearing from behind a backdrop when the second song begins. On some level the audience experiences confusion from the lack of a main screen, as if it is a part of a music event's mise-en-scène that always has to be there.

Yet one should not think that without visual elements live music performances will play a less important role in culture or will not attract much attention. For example one can compare two different Depeche Mode concerts and take a look at the numbers. One concert is the main subject of the current research and has a highly visual presentation and will be analyzed in detail in a future chapter. The other concert, *One Night in Paris*, was part of their previous tour in 2001. This concert has a simple visual presentation, which included only light settings and screen projections for a few songs. Directed mostly toward the band's live performance, it still commanded a high level of interest from the audience. In comparison, *Touring the Angel* was performed in 31 countries for 2.8 million spectators and *One Night in Paris* in 24 countries for 1.5 million spectators.⁵² While numbers vary it underlines the interest, which does not depend only on visual presentation but focuses on well-known musicians and their live performance.

3.2 Screen: In a Space

There is always a tension between the screen understood as an object or flat surface that one is used to seeing in everyday life, and the screen as a medium, as a space where the mediated image becomes a reality. After the discussion on the seductive influence of a screen on the spectator and before the discussion of the question of a screen as a medium of an event, it seems appropriate to place the screen in the context of the concert hall, examining stage design and its position concerning the audience.

⁵² The Depeche Mode home page, http://onipdvd.depechemode.com/press_release01.html [22 Aug 2012]; Article Alley, <http://yourticketmarket.articlealley.com/depeche-mode--english-alternative-rock-and-roll-band-depeche-mode-alternative-rock-music-depeche-1157394.html> [22 Aug 2012]

When the screens appear on stage for the first time they are located in the background, behind the actual live performance, not on the side of the stage, and also behind the textual prop. As Gunter Berghaus points out while explaining key characteristics of the video screen, “the monitor image is a picture and light source in one.”⁵³ In this context, the screen becomes a strong source of light that illuminates the stage and members of the band. This ability of the screen to emphasize the performance is explained by Mondloch as its function to include “the space in front of or before the screen,” when the screen being in the background “draws attention to the space between the viewer and the screen.”⁵⁴ In her argument, Mondloch moves the spectator’s experience of live performance from the one of the cinematic. Even as the cinema screen expects the cinema viewer, “to disregard actual space and time for the duration of the film,” while relating closely to media artwork, the concert’s screen on the contrary draws the spectators’ attention this space.⁵⁵

On one hand, because the screen captures the audience’s attention, it will always emphasize the performance. It is as if the viewers’ gaze will always be filtered through the live presence of the performer. On the other, while following the performance itself, the spectator will always have video projections on the side of his or her vision. This creates a visual wholeness of a live music performance for the eyes of audience.

However there are pros and cons in this effect of wholeness. While the spectator has a real stage performance going on in front of his or her eyes, the screen, in this case the background becomes an object in and of itself. By the fact that the image on the screen changes and is manipulated, what is happening on the screen is compared to what is happening on stage. The viewer’s attention is always under the pressure of comparison of the stage reality and the screen reality. While one is present at the cinema and absorbed by media, which in this case underlines the lack of the actual subject which is depicted on the screen, it becomes the only link that connects the viewer and the performer or the plot of performance. While during a live music performance, the screen divides the action in two simultaneously present realities. One relates to “the physical presence on stage,” to which the audience can refer to as

⁵³ Gunter Berghaus, *Avant-garde performance: live events and electronic technologies*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, p.183

⁵⁴ Mondloch, p. 64

⁵⁵ Mondloch, p. 64

live performance.⁵⁶ The other reality presented by a translated, manipulated and changed image of the performance, is the “virtual presence on screen”.⁵⁷

This tension of two realities can either enhance or destroy the perception of the audience. In most cases this is the most personal experience that depends only on one’s preferences, the psychological relationship to performed music and the familiarity with the performance’s concept.

One more interesting element that is connected to the screen during Depeche Mode’s concert is that the number of screens, as well as their shapes and angles changes during the performance. For example, during the performance of the song *Home*, the imagery projection experiences a certain number of changes due to the transformation of the screen. At first the screen presents the solid surface that translates the image of the performer. But in the middle of the song the screen unexpectedly divides into a number of differently shaped screens, thereby breaking the image into pieces. Some screens are used to combine premade shots with live transmission, while some show different angles of the performer or combine images of the different band members.

The screens’ location, their numbers and shapes emphasize the role of the screen during the performance, not simply as a tool of translation and mediation, but as something that can be called a canvas. It becomes a living organism that changes its shapes and angles to the benefit of the performance. The conventional visual narratives of the performance are broken up by the chaotic presentation of images on the screen.⁵⁸

3.3 *Screen: As a Space*

From the moment the spectator recognizes the screen as an object their perception moves to another level, which is the perception of what is on the screen. On this level the physical surfaces disappear from the viewers’ attention.

⁵⁶ Kelly, p.111

⁵⁷ Kelly, p.111

⁵⁸ Berghaus, p.228

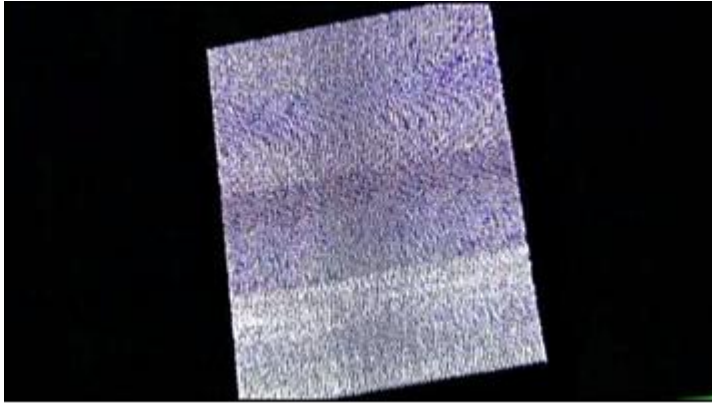


Fig.1
John the Revelator
Touring the Angel, DVD
Mute Records, 2006

Discussing the question of media and hypermedia, Jay David Bolter argues that the main goal of hypermedia or “transparent media” is “to get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real.”⁵⁹ Additionally, Monloch writes on the screen’s object-hood that, “the conventional propensity is to look through media screens not at them.”⁶⁰

Being used to screens in real life, one cannot immediately catch the moment when what one sees on the screen fills one’s attention and melts the borders of the screen. During the performances, the fact that changing image presentation affects the number and form of screens, helps to achieve this effect of disappearance of the surface. The unpredictability of the next move: where the next screen appears, what shape it has, how many screens the audience sees, produces what Berghaus explains as “fragmentary mosaics that defy expectations.”⁶¹ This recalls the idea of hypermedia. While not being able to achieve full transparency of a medium, the audience experiences hypermedia through “directing [their] attention here and there in brief moments.”⁶²

Different effects are used on video projections and all of them create a different conception of the screen. One of these effects is an effect of TV-screen. (Fig.1) During the opening of the song *John the Revelator*, when the screens emerge from the background for the first time, an image emerges, depicting white noise. White noise usually comes from a television that lost its connection to a wire. The sudden interference catches the attention of the concert audience, immediately in contrast with the static image displayed previously. It addresses a natural reflex of television

⁵⁹ Bolter, p. 53

⁶⁰ Mondloch, p.4

⁶¹ Berghaus, p.228

⁶² Bolter, p.54

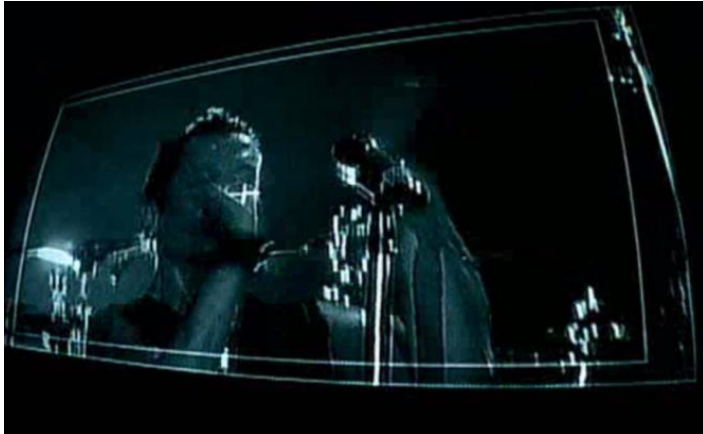


Fig.2
A Question of Time
Touring the Angel, DVD
Mute Records, 2006

viewers who understand that after the interruption by white noise, the signal will become clear and a tangible image will appear. At first the screen projects the translating ability of screen media, does not pretend for it to disappear on the contrary it stresses it. It confirms the concert screen as a familiar screen that the audience is used to in everyday live.

As Nicholas Cook argues, the spectator would expect “the added medium – the picture – to create space for itself by, in effect, mounting the assault on the autonomy of the song.”⁶³ In reality, during Depeche Mode’s performance the screen projection cooperates with the sound. The image of white noise followed by the appearance of a poor quality image in black and white, as if there are some hindrances in translation, is coordinated with the musical rhythm and light manipulation. The seamless combination of music and image helps to blur the boundaries between the performance and the spectator. It becomes one single rhythm, connecting light, music and image, thereby achieving the most desirable effect of hypermedia, not through the realistic representation but through the synchronization with an atmosphere of live music performance.

Later, during the performance of the song, *A Question of Time*, another effect appears on the screen. (Fig.2) The screen is presented as a video camera monitor. A frame, time data and viewfinder are shown on the screen. When the spectator looks at the screen they absorb a completely different point of view. This is no longer what Berghaus called “an active participation of the viewer”, when the camera shows the audience something that cannot be seen by the naked eye, rather it includes the

⁶³ Cook, p.159



Fig.3

I Want It All

Touring the Angel, DVD

Mute Records, 2006

audience in the creative mechanism of the performance.⁶⁴ The viewer's perception of the performance switches from a simple viewing of a final image to the illusion of participation in the creative process, lending support to Andre Bazin's theory of the notion of a screen as a "window" on the world. In this case, the camera screens become an eye through which the audience can see what is going on.⁶⁵

This camera monitor effect grows even more intense during the performance of the song, *Enjoy the Silence*. While the song develops, the screen shows images that are taken of the audience and presented on screens through a black and white viewfinder. It adds to the awareness of the audience being filmed too, as they are depicted as seen by a cameraman. This effect turns the whole idea of the mediated performance inside out as if proclaiming: you are looking through the camera at yourself, taking the reality that surrounds the video projection of the spectator and absorbs him or her into itself, therefore claiming to be a new reality.

It is difficult to argue about the perception of the screen medium by others. With the help of different effects one can say that the screen disappears, as is seen during the performance of *I Want It All*. (Fig.3) The image on the screen shows multiple repetitions of the stage performance, which destroys the image's recognition and at the same time creating some sort of waterfall of colors that depends only on music. At this moment the spectator is no longer aware of the screen surface but filled with the depiction of this effect.

On the contrary, by presenting something unrealistic, the screen will always recall its surface, as evidenced by the use of the black and white effect during the performance of different songs. While one sees reality in color, it is quite hard to

⁶⁴ Berghaus, p.227

⁶⁵ Elsaesser, Hagener, p.57

accept the realism of the mediated image. While still leaving the final answer to the personal perception of the spectator, it is important to emphasize that while present at a live music performance, being absorbed by music, light and video images, a spectator does not analyze the tools of presentation but takes it for granted, making video projections an outlet for creativity.

4. Playing the Reality

Before starting the actual analyses of the visual elements of the screen images it is important to explain the main types of video projections that may be used during a live music performance.

In this case, Leif Finnäs made one of the most exhaustive analyses on the subject. He distinguishes among three main types of audio-visual presentation of music performances. Those three types are – simply documentary, “TV type” documentary and non-documentary.⁶⁶ By relying on his work, the visual accompaniment during the Depeche Mode concert can be considered as TV-type documentation with elements of so-called non-documentary representation.⁶⁷ According to Finnäs, TV-type documentary is a presentation in which a music concert is translated on the screen from different perspectives, including images taken from the audience, including close-ups and long distance shots, or for example, detailed images of the musicians playing fingers or musical instruments.⁶⁸ In its turn, the non-documentary part of the presentation consists of pre-made images that are relevant to the performed song.

Regarding Depeche Mode’s concert, both kinds of live transmitted and pre-made images are present on the screen at the same time. For future analyses, it is important to mention that most of the images captured from the stage performance and translated on the screen undergo some modification. That is they are presented in slow motion, multiplication, changed colors and mirroring. In his work on the Depeche Mode concert, Anton Corbijn has moved from the simple TV-type documentary representation and created a specific complicated piece of video art analyzed in detail in this chapter.

In addition, I distinguished three main elements of video projections that can be considered as a leitmotiv of the whole performance and place them as the backbone of the chapter. Those elements are - the body, the text and the symbol.

⁶⁶ Finnäs, p.56

⁶⁷ Finnäs, p.56

⁶⁸ Finnäs, p.56

4.1 *The Body*

Based on its frequent appearance, one of the main visual elements of the *Playing the Angel* concert's video projections is what I chose to call the body. It is important to emphasize that the use of such non-personal indication of the images including the singer, members of the band and audience or models from pre-made video are necessary to develop the current analysis.

4.1.1 *The Body of the Performer*

Previous analyses of music performances that were made by Ian Inglis or Jem Kelly, are based on the importance of the performer's personality. In a certain sense, to satisfy one's desire to see the performer live, which is considered to be an important part of rock culture, is one of the main reasons to attend a concert.⁶⁹ Moreover, it is visual proof of the performer's ability to actually play music or sing; either it is seen on the stage or on the screen. The "I saw them live" effect usually does not imply the quality of the sound and performance of the songs, nor does it explain what exactly the viewer saw, the performer himself or the translated image.

Contemporary scholars stress the fact that to experience the body within the context of a concert, even if with the help of telematics techniques, enhances "the aura of authenticity."⁷⁰ Some researches go even further and argue on the phenomenon when even physical closeness to the performer brings less intimacy into the audience's perception of reality than the reality created on the screen.⁷¹ This is true to a certain extent.

Most images used in video projections during a performance present the body because this is sometimes the only way for the viewer to reach the performer. Through mediatized performance that brings the performer closer to the audience, he or she is able to feel it and in some ways participate in performance itself. In her work, Susan Kozel describes the body as "a pattern of information."⁷² That is to say, the performer's body presented on screen gives the audience the ability to

⁶⁹ Auslander, p.55

⁷⁰ Kelly, p.110

⁷¹ Auslander, p.32

⁷² Kozel, p.33

experience everything through their own bodies.⁷³ The performer's body gives the viewer information by lips synchronized with the sound or moves with the rhythm of music. With the beat of the sound created by the amplifiers and reflected in spectators' bodies, the performer moves to the same sound, adding an audio-visual effect of the concert. Taken together it enhances the spectators' perception of the live performance

This is quite significant in the analysis of Depeche Mode's performance, since their lead singer, Dave Gahan usually pays particular attention to the bodily presentation of the song. While he is barely talking to the public, the way singers usually make a contact with the audience, his performance is focused on the cooperation of his moves and gestures with the songs. His body language becomes an element of the performance that is able to enhance the spectator's perception.

Due to the fact that there is more than one screen present during Depeche Mode's performance, a viewer's attention is more expanded. During the performance of *Personal Jesus*, different images are present on the screens simultaneously. (Fig.4) Different musicians are combined in one screen space, taken them from their live presence on the stage and placing them in one intermediated reality. Screen projections take over a person's natural ability to see in a limited frame of his or her vision and extend this vision. As Jody Berland explains, the image almost has a physical ability to transport the spectators, via their eyes, "out of the space [they] are actually in."⁷⁴

This extension develops further when the audience and the performer appear in the same video projection. They are combined, not only in the physical space of the arena, but in the intermediated space of the screen. (Fig.5) This projected image not only shows the depiction of spectators by the camera, a panoramic view of the audience that is frequently used at music concerts, but also gives the point of view on the stage and the arena as if from a distance that include within one space both sides of the performance which is audience and performer.

While presented on the screen, the audience becomes part of the performance, combined into an intermediate space with the performer. Even if a viewer is not present at the moment, they are aware that people in the same audience are physically present and can virtually conceive of the same experience. In other words,

⁷³ Kozel, p.49

⁷⁴ Berland, p.36

as a body of the performer can increase the sense of authenticity, the body of the spectator, depicted on the screen, can have the same influence.

4.1.2 *The Body Modified*

Yet while speaking of the effect of authenticity, it is important to stress that this can only clearly be applied to a TV-type documentary translation of the image. But what kinds of perception can one talk of if the image is modified? For example, during the performance of the song, *John the Revelator*, the images are not only translated in black and white, but also the quality of the images changes to a disturbing level, as if these projections are becoming white noise again.

In contrast with the television presentation of the body presented on screen, the projections exist in real time, in the same space as the viewer. Earlier it was understood as a positive moment, able to expand the viewer's perception. Now, when one considers the projected modified image, it becomes a complicated issue. While watching the music video, the spectator accepts a bodily modification because they only exist on the screen and all manipulations belong to the screen's reality. The television screen develops protection from whatever is happening with the presented body, while the concert's screen, on the contrary, creates a gap between the live performance and what is translated on the screen. What is important here is to understand that the spectator is ill prepared for the transformation of a living body that is in front of him or her. When one can see the performer on the stage the same way as people around, it becomes impossible to fully let the projected image get hold of one's perception.

Vivian Sobchack argues in her work through phenomenological perception that the spectator has an ability to feel "the flesh" presented on the screen.⁷⁵ In this case, the spectator feels separated from the perceived image that no longer resembles his or her own body. This happens because "the flesh" under manipulation does not resemble one's own. It becomes estranged and distant.

⁷⁵ Sobchack, p.61

The demolition of the perception and authenticity develops further when premade video elements are combined with images from the actual performance. The visual presentation of the song *I Feel You* is an excellent example of this. (Fig.6) During the song, the screens in the background create two levels. On the upper level there is an image of a woman's face that is presented in a good quality, the one that actually can make the spectator feel "the flesh" of it and compare it to reality.⁷⁶ At the same time, the lower level of screens presents images taken from the stage in a chaotic, flickering montage. With the montage, what is "here" and "now" becomes more distant from the spectator. With its modification, images of the real performance reject the possible haptic experience that the screen creates. While the absent body that is not present in the spectator's reality, the woman from the premade images, through the quality of the image becomes accepted as something that exists in the "here" and "now."

4.1.3 Close-up

The use of the close-up during Depeche Mode's concert is one more element of screen-based presentation of the body that requires a separate examination. While a face is understood as a "multifunctional medium," there are still two conflicting points of view on the use of close-up.⁷⁷ On one hand, simply *due to* its photographic and cinematic technique, a close-up provides a sense of access to the performer that cannot be achieved any other way but through the screen. On the other, *because of* its photographic and cinematic techniques, it creates a bigger distance between them. Let us consider both points using the examples from the concert.

During the performance of the song, *A Question of Time*, the screen repeatedly shows the close-up of the lead singer's face. (Fig.7) This kind of close-up that only concentrates on the face follows the cinema's idea of its necessity for narrative motivation.⁷⁸ Of course, considered together a live music performance does not have a narrative structure like film does; yet every song, in particular, requires presentation of emotions that come from its mood and lyrics. Sometimes this is necessary for the presentation quality of the live performance.

⁷⁶ Sobchack, p.61

⁷⁷ Elsaesser, Hagner, p.61

⁷⁸ Elsaesser, Hagner, p.72

The audience expects not only to hear songs they already know, as they can do at home, but to see them. Seeing them not in a sense of music video where the emotional basis of the song's meaning is usually presented through the imagery storytelling. With the close-up, the song becomes a story that is presented by the members of the band. It should affect the spectators on a personal level and make him or her to feel and empathize with it. In the same way, the close-up on the guitarist's playing fingers enhances the aura of authenticity of the musical part of the performance. Through making the image of guitar strings strummed by fingers accessible, the close-up visualizes the sound of the guitar, making it tangible. The question of mediation of the screen no longer matters as long as the image and the sound work together for the better perception of the spectator.

While a close-up is capable of enhancing the viewer's perception at the emotional level, it reduces perception on a physical level. In contrast with the full-scale presentation of the performer's body that was analyzed earlier, close-ups have an ability to create the effect of "frightening impossibility."⁷⁹ It can be argued that this actually creates a bigger distance between the audience and the performer. The spectator is aware that it is impossible to see the performer that close in reality. While reading the emotional component of the music performance from the singer's face or receiving visualization of sound, the spectator still keeps his distance from accepting the close-up image as reality. That is to say that to receive visual access to the performer it is not the same as to make him more real.

From my own experience it is possible to conclude that these types of image projections do not aim to convince the spectator to accept them as reality, rather they try to overwhelm the spectator's sensory perception. This can be compared with the sound getting louder and louder, until it becomes almost frightening. The goal of the live music performance is to involve all possible senses of the spectator with the cinematic technique and sound, to make the viewer feel the performance fully even if it is through an exaggerated presentation.

The video projection that accompanies the song *Macro*, illustrates this idea. The projections on the screen show an extreme close-up of the performer's face, that at some point become so close that it overcomes the audience and dominates the real-time performance itself. The screen behind the real performance presents the singer as a set of cells that make the face unrecognizable, and instead of making it more

⁷⁹ Elsaesser, Hagener, p.72

accessible, it pushes the spectator away. It is possible to conclude that the effect of such desirable “liveness” is created not through the most accurate and clear presentation, but through the application and irritation of the spectator’s senses.

4.2 *The Symbol*

The symbol is the second significant element that prevails in the concert’s video projections. Applying such polysemantic terms as a symbol I am addressing C.S. Peirce’s definition of symbol as a “representamen which fulfills its function regardless of any similarity or analogy with its object and equally regardless of any factual connection therewith, but solely and simply because it will be interpreted to be a representamen.”⁸⁰

There are two types of images that can be identified as such. The first type are images that function as “*memoria technica*,” meaning images that present old material taken from a music video or album artwork, “allowing the spectator to reflect on the start status of the performer, by depicting a body on international hit songs.”⁸¹ The second types are images that present the general knowledge of the audience which, in Dean Abt’s term can be considered as an image taken from the “cultural dreampool.”⁸² This image selects associations from the spectator’s memory and cultural imprinting.

Symbolic images carry a strong visual message that addresses the audience’s memories and associations with the song. Most of the time, the symbolic image bears a close association with the meaning of the song’s lyrics. On one side they can be seen as something that is only possible to analyze through one’s own experience and knowledge. On the other, as Kozel argues, “one person phenomenological account can be received by other within circles of shared truth.”⁸³ “Shared truth” in this case, is understood as a previously seen image and its connection to the performance in general, or to one song in particular.

⁸⁰ Charles Sanders Peirce, *Logical Tracts*, No. 2, CP 4.447, c. 1903; <http://www.helsinki.fi/science/commens/terms/symbol.html>. [22 Aug 2012]

⁸¹ Kelly, p.111

⁸² Abt, p. 99

⁸³ Kozel, p. 24

During the performance of the song, *Walking In My Shoes*, the screen projection presents a red silhouette of a grotesque creature with a woman's body and a bird's head that emerges from the corner of a screen. (Fig.8) This figure will not have any meaning for the unprepared spectator on its own. It does not reflect the song's lyrics as dreamlike images usually do in a music video. Yet it will be closely associated with the performed song, provided the fact that the spectator has certain knowledge about the music video and use of the same symbol in Depeche Mode's career. For the first time this figure appeared in the music video for the same song made by Anton Corbijn and on the cover to the single released under the same name.⁸⁴

The same happens with the other iconic image that is strongly related to Depeche Mode and cherished by all their fans. It makes sense to mention that Depeche Mode, as well as other highly successful bands, have strong background imagery. These images have become closely associated with the band throughout their career. In general, images are important for the band's fans as a symbol of shared knowledge and the connection it creates between different people. For example, during the performance of the song *Home*, the screen projection shows an image of the rose. (Fig.9) As the performance continues, the image takes over all screens behind the singer becomes a highlight of the whole performance.

The image of a red rose is always popular among Depeche Mode fans. It became a symbol of the band right after it appeared on the cover of the album *Violator* in 1989 for the first time.⁸⁵ Furthermore, it is significant that the image was presented during the performance of the song whose lyrics describe the joy of being brought hope and comfort of familiar things. It is as if the symbol sends the message for the part of the audience that is familiar with the symbol and relate to it on the emotional level.

Along with the appeal toward the spectators associations, symbolic images also have a more prosaic mission. They are responsible for an international recognition of the performing band. As Auslander argues, while music performances establish themselves as "an alternative to television" they still rely on associations of "highly cinematic images with particular song."⁸⁶ The problem turns into what Will Straw explains through "music video would result in a diminishing of the interpretive

⁸⁴ The Anton Corbijn home page www.corbijn.co.uk [22 Aug 2012]

⁸⁵ The Anton Corbijn home page www.corbijn.co.uk [22 Aug 2012]

⁸⁶ Auslander, p.89

liberty of the individual music listener, who would have visual or narrative interpretation of song lyrics imposed on him or her (...)"⁸⁷

Right before the concert starts the only prompt of what is about to happen on the stage is a background drapery with the depiction of a feather made humanlike figure. This symbol addresses itself for the audience that has particular knowledge about Depeche Mode and the last album, and sets up a chain reaction of associations. For the first time, the image appears on the album's cover and become a symbol of the "Playing the Angel" record. It was used on one of the singles that follows the album and now becomes the image that precedes the actual performance.

Even though this is an apt example of how "memoria technica" works, such a strong symbolic image, that demands certain knowledge from the audience, has one weak side. What if one is not familiar with the image? If presented during a live performance it will never create a complete impression as it is supposed to do. It is not a universal symbol that can be understood equally by everyone and that means that the message of it will not be read. In that case those images will only stay as some sort of colorful decoration. It is unlikely that they will be printed in someone's memory and associated with the live performance because the intensity of the visual row during the performance is too high for the image to get a hold on someone's memory.

But there is another type of image that is also present during the concert. According to Kozel, this is a type of symbol that gives the spectator the ability to "construct meaning empathically, perhaps through imagination or previous experience."⁸⁸ During the performance of the song, *Sinner in Me*, an image of the cross appears behind the performing band. (Fig.10) This time the symbol relies on the universal comprehension of the image reflecting the meaning of the song. It is striking and takes over the visual sense of the spectator. It sets an immediate association therefore creating the fertile ground for the song's representation, as is also seen during the performance of the song, *World in My Eyes*, when an image of human eyes appears on the screen of the additional prop. (Fig.11)

One more example from the concert shows how an image cooperates with the sound and reflects on the memory, resulting in an even better perception of the performance. In the opening of *A Question of Time*, a sound that is supposed to

⁸⁷ Straw, p.3

⁸⁸ Kozel, p.25

remind one about a countdown is represented by the actual image of the countdown on the screen. This is what Cook describes as the phenomena when “both music and picture can be understood in terms of distributional analysis,” by which he means that image, “can be analyzed musically.”⁸⁹ In this way, the impression on the spectator comes full circle in both the audio and video senses. That is what one sees and hears cooperate together relying on the images from the spectator’s memory and his or her strong associative array.

In case of the reflective associative reaction not only visual symbols take a part in *memoria technica*. Different colors of light used throughout the entire performance can also be considered as a symbolic element by the way it applies to the associations of the spectators. The use of light helps to create the wholeness of an atmospheric experience. In the beginning of the first song, *Pain That I’m Used To*, with the first notes the deep blue light that drowns the stage disappears and is replaced by flickering red light. It rushes with a sound, flashing, reflecting a screechy noise. Sound and light take over the audience and set the associative reaction with the main motive of a song – pain, suffering and blood. One can also take this knowledge from his or her previous experience, something that comes from memory and unconscious reactions, especially since red is easily associated with something tense and frightening.

The same can be said about the darkness on stage after some of the songs. These moments of almost full blackouts separate the mood of one song from the other, underlining mutual independence. It removes the spectator from all emotions he or she experienced during the song’s performance into the darkness, which also intensifies one’s senses. While the viewer cannot see anything, he is able to hear and feel better. That is why songs usually start to play before any images or even light is turned on, to draw the attention first to music then to its visual elements.

4.3 *The Text*

The third element of video projections that interests me is the text. While presented on the additional prop during the most of the concert, this element juxtaposes the high level of dominant imagery. Nevertheless, textual messages always are presented

⁸⁹ Cook, p.159

on stage during Depeche Mode's performances. It is present in two forms: one is static and one is changing, running on the additional screen in the manner of the text from the street advertising board. The second form of representation makes the text alive just to catch attention. It either moves, flashes or changes colors. It shows clearly that text presented in this way can fight against visual dominance of the image to win viewers' attention.

With the fact of imagery dominance the question arises - what is the meaning of the use of the text during the musical performance? The question stands from the fact that the linguistic message is not subservient to the effect of immediacy. It is not an image that can catch one's attention for a moment, print the message in one's mind and move further. To be understood, the textual message has to be read. That is to say, that the concept of the articulated language is opposed to the whole idea of live performance that is based on its continuous change.⁹⁰

A positive or, it can be argued, a negative side of the image is that it leaves space for interpretation or imagination while the text directs the viewer toward "a meaning chosen in advance."⁹¹ There is no symbolical message in the text that can be interpreted in different ways. Through the text, spectators that are present at the concert are not only connected to the performer but with each other with the common understanding of the textual message.⁹² In that case the common understanding of text can create a stronger bond between individual spectators than the understanding of image.

As noted previously, the depiction of the body is directed toward the personal experience of closeness or alienation, a feeling of authenticity and comprehension of a bodily message. In its turn the symbol connects with the associations, memory and previous experience of the same image. Yet the text's meaning lies in the sense of its words. It starts right from the beginning of the performance while the word "hello" appears as a running line right before the band comes up on the stage. What is significant about it is that the text replaces verbal communication. By scrolling across the screen, it connects the audience and performer through the electronic medium. In some ways it pierces one's attention to the screen right from the beginning, underlining its importance. As seen immediately after the message appears, it allows the performance to start right away, without any additional

⁹⁰ Barthes, p. 34

⁹¹ Barthes, p. 40

⁹² Auslander, p.55

greetings or presentations, pouncing on the audience with all its visual and audio force. It sets the mood for the whole performance that will follow the line of spontaneity and immediacy.

The text makes one think of the meaning of the song as much as the visual interpretation does. With the first song, *Pain That I'm Used To*, the text that repulses the song's meaning and mood is shown on a large grey ball-shaped prop with a LED display. While the main screen is still absent in the background, the text becomes a textual message that "no longer guides identification but interpretation" of the song's performance.⁹³ During that song, all words present synonyms to the word "pain" which is a leitmotiv of the song's lyric. It is a textual visualization of the meaning of the song, not an exact copy of its lyric.

The same happens during the performance of the song, *Precious*, when words "love", "regret", "lament" appears on the LED display. (Fig.12). They are not copying the lyric in phrases but in synonyms and mood. The words are designed to set a personal connection between the song and audience. They apply to more personal layers of the audience's consciousness than the symbolic image does. They concur with the message that can only be misunderstood in rare moments when the spectator is not familiar with the language.

The text also creates the connection directly with an image, as it is seen during the performance of the song *I Feel You*. During the performance the word "sex" appears alongside the image of a naked woman on the LED display. (Fig.13). It comes up right in the end of the song, underlining the general meaning of it. Even if the spectator is not familiar with the lyrics or the story behind the song he or she can always relate to the emotional reaction that the word brings. That is to say that the text, as nothing else, can make one listen to the song. With the help of the words the audience goes from being a viewer to an active listener. The text not only supports the song's representation as shown in previous examples during an absence of the imagery projection, but also makes the audience consider a new approach. It is capable of creating not visual but textual intimacy with the performer.

Yet while all previous examples present the text as something that one should read, towards the end of the concert, the text becomes a part of the visual mosaic that is presented on the screen (Fig.14) Lines that fully repeat the lyric of the song shown on the screen are mixed with images taken from the audience. In this case, the text

⁹³ Barthes, p.39

loses its function as a bearer of the message and becomes a part of the visual manipulation. It is just a visual collage that plays with the spectator's attention. One can catch a glimpse of one word or phrase but will not be able to construct the whole meaning of the text.

It is important to mention that one cannot deny the fact that perception of the live concert, even the analysis of its visual elements, cannot be separated from one's own experience. My own perception that the images construct a personal comprehension of the video projections during Depeche Mode's concert is on par with contemporary scholars. The striking thing about video projections that is important to understand is their immediacy. They will not be repeated; there is no time for analysis. Images "hit" the viewer if it gets in field of his or her vision and moves further without a pause. In the case of video art installations, there is always a possibility to see everything again, to absorb and comprehend. When video projections follow the flow of music and depend only on live performance in all its meanings, this is where the uniqueness of the analysis and also the originality of video projections lies.

A live music performance is distinct from other ways of experiencing music in its ability to create an all-consuming atmosphere. The person present at the show becomes the viewer, the listener and the performer simultaneously. Even at an open-air concert, the physical presence of other people creates a closed space, influencing the use of different audio-visual technologies. Amplified, almost to the physically tangible level, sound synchronized with light enhances the spectator's perception of the music; while being a simultaneous source of light and image, video projections influence a spectator's ability to see.

5. Conclusion

The above discussion was directed towards the possibility of a diversified analysis of video projections during a Depeche Mode live music performance. To be able to understand how one should accept video projections, I looked closely at the question of their origin, tried to describe the role of screen as a medium and take a closer look at their visual elements.

What I understood first while constructing my analysis is that it should not be forgotten that the perception of video projections depends on many different aspects. For example, where the spectator was standing, how familiar he or she is with the music and possible video images for the song or with the history of Depeche Mode's live performance. One of the main questions that I raised in the beginning is how video projections can influence one's perception of a live music performance. While analyzing different elements of video projections such as the body, the text or exploitation of the close-up, I tried to give a perspective opinion on how video projections can be understood. With this analysis it is possible to conclude that none of the video projections were made to distract from the beginning. Of course, they could reduce a viewer's perception through one's individual comprehension of their elements. Yet from the beginning, the main role of the video projections is to complete the live music performance by targeting the spectator's every sense.

Apart from theoretical approaches that I used in my work, this research is based primarily on my own experience and comprehension of the subject. Many times I found it difficult to distance myself from the fact that I know exactly what one or another image means, relating to Depeche Mode's music but a certain part of the audience may not be familiar with it and therefore would understand it in its own way or even leave it unnoticed. In addition, relying on my own memory of the performance, I understood how much my perception and my understanding have changed, simply because I am no longer surrounded by other people, no longer get lost in the darkness after the song or find myself being distracted by different audio-visual effects. That is why there is always a danger for bias in research of this nature because it is easy to become lost in the symbolic and phenomenological analyses, while the main point is to stay on the surface and analyze the visual elements of the projections and possibly to find a structure in them.

From my own experience I can argue on the subject as a spectator. Because I was present at the concert and was a member of the audience, I can see how my own attention shifted from the stage to the screen, unconsciously mixing two realities until they became a whole, while consciously I understood the manipulations that affected a real image when it was projected on the screen.

In my analysis I did not extensively investigate the question of the visual enhancement of the music. This comes from one's own experience, and in many cases can only be understood through it. Those examples can be analyzed when the sound is synchronized with the light and images, for example in their rhythm. One way or another, a discussion on mediatized live performance raises the question of its "liveness." According to Auslander, a general definition of mediatized performance is the one that is "circulated on television, as audio or video recording."⁹⁴ As stated earlier, his point shows that through the power of television everything that is mediatized sets the criteria for what is real.⁹⁵ In that case, what Auslander presents as a dependency of live performance on media technologies turns in to an instrument that helps to create the fullness of the live performance. Video projections use the attraction or even inevitability of the spectator's reaction to avoid the screen and with that play a game with the audience.

Limitation of the analysis may arise because I use the examples that, one way or the other can rely on my own experience of the concert. Yet this subject will always show new sides and aspects if one will pay attention to a completely different type of performance. That is to answer the question of the general role of video projections and their importance for live performance one should pay expanded attention to the other examples and compare different styles and musicians.

On one hand researchers tend toward the studies of people's perception of music and apply the screen only to check the destructive or amplifying abilities of visual elements. On the other hand, studies directed toward video projections apply the filmic perception of it by the viewer, setting aside an audio part of the performance. There are certain aspects that should not be overlooked in this kind of study. One should always keep in mind that although we apply a spectatorship approach that is taken from film studies, video projections cannot be considered as simply as that.

⁹⁴ Auslander, p.4

⁹⁵ Auslander, p.39

The impact made by music and the lack of narration should not be overlooked. Yet at the same time cinematic elements of video projections make the same strong impact on the viewer. This is why studies of video projections should be considered important. Moving from the example that was discussed in my work, it is possible to analyze other concerts and works of other artists to see how the subject can vary and develop, what is different from one to another and which roles video projections hold.

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Imagery Appendix:



Fig. 4 *Personal Jesus*, Image Source: *Touring the angel: Live in Milan*, DVD, Mute Records, 2006



Fig.5 *Personal Jesus*, Image Source: *Touring the angel: Live in Milan*, DVD, Mute Records, 2006

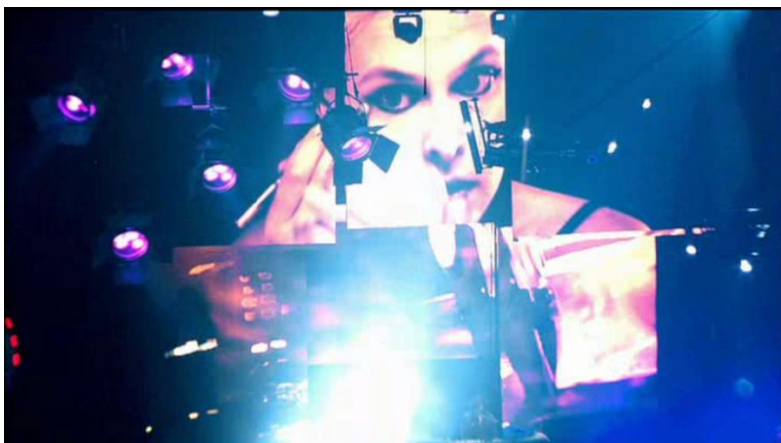


Fig.6 *I Feel You*, Image Source: *Touring the angel: Live in Milan*, DVD, Mute Records, 2006

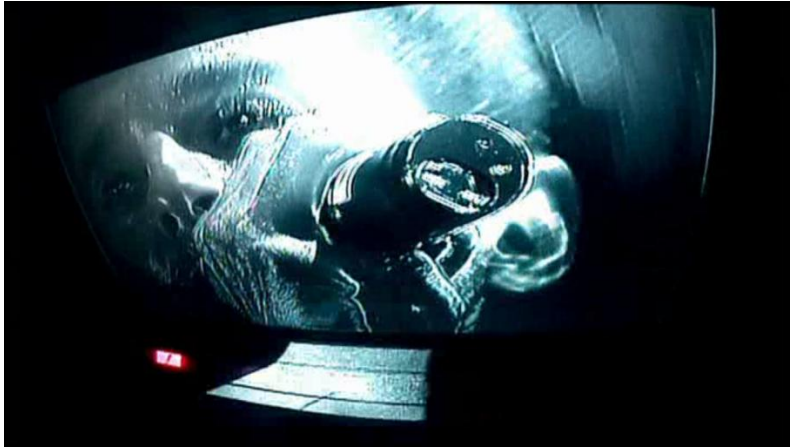


Fig.7 *A Question of Time*, Image Source: *Touring the angel: Live in Milan*, DVD, Mute Records, 2006

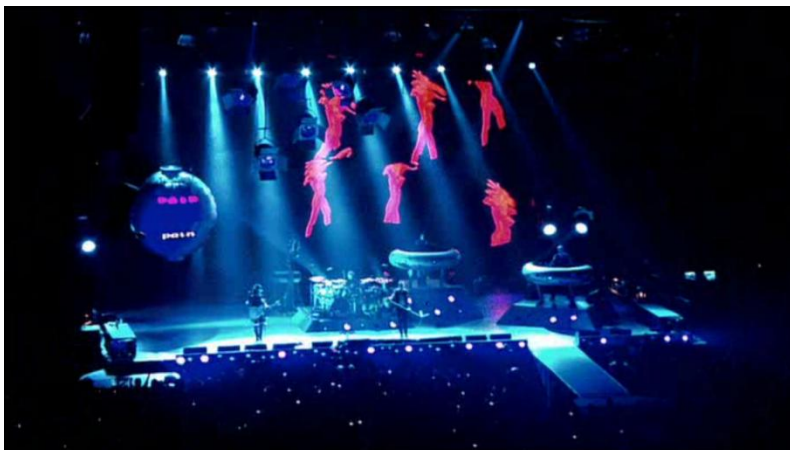


Fig.8 *Walking in My Shoes*, Image Source: *Touring the angel: Live in Milan*, DVD, Mute Records, 2006



Fig.9 *Home*, Image Source: *Touring the angel: Live in Milan*, DVD, Mute Records, 2006



Fig. 10 *Sinner in Me*, Image Source: Touring the angel: Live in Milan, DVD, Mute Records, 2006

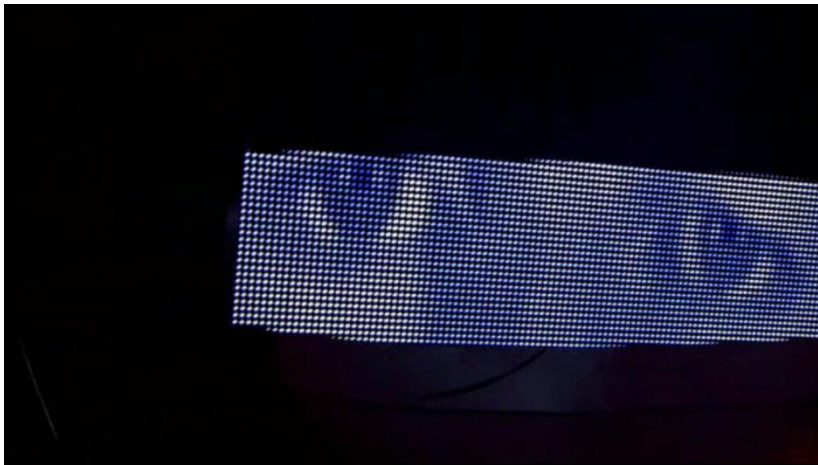


Fig.11 *World in My Eyes*, Image Source: Touring the angel: Live in Milan, DVD, Mute Records, 2006



Fig.12 *Precious*, Image Source: Touring the angel: Live in Milan, DVD, Mute Records, 2006



Fig.13 *I Fell You*, Image Source: Touring the angel: Live in Milan, DVD, Mute Records, 2006



Fig.14 *Everything Counts*, Image Source: Touring the angel: Live in Milan, DVD, Mute Records, 2006