This Must Be the Stage: Staging Popular Music Performance in Italian Media Practices around '68

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Abstract

Popular music gained increasing cultural relevance in Italy during the *Sessantotto* ('68) — a tumultuous period essentially extending over a decade, until about 1977. Because of the ideological baggage that performance acquired in those turbulent times, representing performing musicians and the social bodies interacting with them in live contexts became a key challenge for audio/visual media such as cinema, television, radio, and the recording industry. This article attempts an intermedia approach to liveness in mediatized popular music performance by cross-examining the concurrent ways in which two of the above-mentioned media practices — namely film and record production — dealt with the increasing significance and presence of popular music performance in Italian culture at that time. The agency of media as relational frames between performers and the public was strategic in determining the affordance of new popular music genres among young Italian audiences in the 1960s and 1970s. We wish to suggest that the impact of these genres on Italian young audiences reverberated across different media, generating a set of recognizable patterns.

Introduction

Popular music gained increasing cultural relevance in Italy during the *Sessantotto* ('68) — a tumultuous period essentially extending over a decade, until about 1977.[1] Similarly to what happened in other countries, new trends in popular music genres and performance practices went hand in hand with political and generational protest movements, especially — but not uniquely — the reception of rock-related styles 'as a sort of *lingua franca* of opposition

[1] On this historical periodization, see Antonella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 31–3.

culture the world over'.[2] Because of the ideological baggage that performance acquired in those turbulent times, representing performing musicians and the social bodies interacting with them in live contexts became a key challenge for audio/visual media such as cinema, television, radio, and the recording industry. Umberto Fiori has commented extensively on the cultural "shock" that the importation and revisiting of popular music from abroad provoked in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s, especially concerning the sharp contrast between the exuberant style of rock'n'roll and beat performers, and the local tradition of Italian popular song:

> The music's success, then, was on the level of a very intense and very individual aesthetic experience, one to be contrasted with that offered by the Italian songs of the time. Above all else, what created interest and made the greatest impression was the self-confidence and exuberance of the performers, together with their modern and distant world.[3]

Implied in this assessment is that the impact of performance was to a great extent prepared and shaped by the media:

> Clothing and fashion associated with rock were more widespread than the music itself, mainly because they were spread by the press and above all the cinema, which had a far more effective distribution network for transatlantic products.[4]

This article attempts an intermedia approach to liveness in mediatized popular music performance by cross-examining the concurrent ways in which two of the above-mentioned media practices — namely film and record production — dealt with the increasing significance and presence of popular music performance in Italian culture at that time. We shall expand on how these two media promoted divergent and fragmented, yet deeply intertwined ideas of liveness.

In addressing such a culturally and geo-historically shifting category as liveness, we propose to tackle the notion of 'staging', theorized by Simon Zagorski-Thomas in relation to music recording. For Zagorski-Thomas, 'staging' refers to 'aspects of the "event" that are external to the performances and yet contribute to the meaning we perceive'.[5] It thus includes all of those 'para-performative' elements that surround a music act and 'allow the listener a sense of participating in a specific performance and a vicarious relationship to

[2] Gianmario Borio, 'Music as a Plea for Political Action: The Presence of Musicians in Italian Protest Movements Around 1968', in *Music and Protest in 1968*, ed. by Beate Kutsche and Barley Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 29–45 (p. 41).
[3] Umberto Fiori, 'Rock Music and Politics in Italy', *Popular Music*, 4 (1984), 261–77 (p. 263).
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Simon Zagorski-Thomas, *The Musicology of Record Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 73.

the audience for that performance not accessible through studio productions'.[6] Analysing how "media stagings" evoke a live performative space — that is, the site of co-presence where 'the aesthetic and the political coincide'[7] — can be a valuable testbed for examining the respective attitudes of records and films. By understanding the two as representational practices infused with different values and ideas of fidelity to a posited originating event,[8] we aim to assess not so much the extent to which a performative space is "faithfully" recovered by its mediatization, but rather how the intermedia 'debt',[9] which any "staged" recorded sound or image owes to reality, becomes a trigger for cultural engagement. Following Steve Wurtzler, 'any representation can be thought to consist of the moment of representing, the absent event posited by the representation, and a consumer's encounter with both'.[10]

The element of space is central to us in a twofold way. On the one hand, the spatial dimension acts as a catalyst for discursive configurations of narrative, formal, and symbolic elements of performance within both cinema and record production, where the reciprocal roles of performers and audiences are linked to their positioning within the aurally or visually represented venues. On the other hand, a spatial relationship between media and their interpellated audiences can also be highlighted.[11] The agency of media as relational frames between performers and the public was strategic in determining the affordance of new popular music genres among young Italian audiences in the 1960s and 1970s. We want to suggest that the impact of these genres on young Italian audiences reverberated across different media, generating a set of recognizable patterns. In our brief, introductory survey, we shall however limit ourselves to sketch a preliminary framework that will serve as a starting ground for further investigations. We aim to account for the variety of the modes of performance representation, intending them as hints at broader cultural trends in Italian popular culture of 1968 and its aftermath. For this reason, our article privileges the close reading of a set of case studies and resists the temptation to produce a coherent, if premature generalization.

[6] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 60.

[7] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetic* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 51.

[8] For a thorough discussion of these issues, and their consequences in terms of the creation of different types of subjectivities in mediatized performance, see Steve Wurtzler, '"She Sang Live, But the Microphone Was Turned Off:" The Live, the Recorded and the Subject of Representation', in *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, ed. by Rick Altman (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 87–103.

[9] Pietro Montani, *L'immaginazione intermediale. Perlustrare, testimoniare, rifigurare il mondo visibile* (Bari: Laterza, 2014), p. xii.

[10] Wurtzler, 'The Microphone Was Turned Off', p. 88.

[11] For a discussion of Jean Comolli's notion of 'interpellation', see Wurtzler, 'The Microphone Was Turned Off', pp. 98–9.

Live(less)ness in Filmed Popular Music Performance before '68

Two classic musical sequences featured, respectively, in Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960) and Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966) exemplify one significant aspect of the phenomenology of popular music performance in 1960s Italian cinema. Both involve real performers — namely Adriano Celentano and The Yardbirds — and both seem to exploit pop music performance to activate cinematic dimensions that deliberately move away from realism. Furthermore, both feature a temporary interruption of the performance's flow to mark what Amy Herzog would term as moments of 'excess, rupture, fluidity, and the dissolution of the space-time continuum that orders the reality of everyday experience'.[12]

Celentano's performance of Little Richard's hit 'Ready Teddy' at the Baths of Caracalla in *La dolce vita* (00:37:25–00:39:56)[13] starts in a relatively realistic fashion — if one excludes the evidently imperfect lip-syncing resulting from the post-synchronization of the audio-track (Fig. 1a). However, as soon as the performer falls off the stage as a result of his exaggeratedly "springy" rock 'n' roll moves, the performance takes an odd turn: at first, the flow of the music breaks down, as though the off-frame musicians had (realistically) stopped playing, owing to the incident that had occurred to their frontman; yet, when the music starts up again, neither Celentano nor his band perform it on stage: instead, they begin to dance in a circle with their audience, in time with the rhythm of the music, so that the gig ends in an oneiric, typically Fellinesque procession-dance (Fig. 1b).

[12] Amy Herzog, *Dreams of Difference, Songs of the Same: The Musical Moment in Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 7.
[13] Timecodes refer to the DVD release issued by Medusa (Cinema Forever – The Mediaset Collection, 2003).

Figure 1a-b: Film stills of Adriano Celentano performing 'Ready Teddy' in *La dolce vita* (Fellini, 1960)

Antonioni's treatment of The Yardbirds' hit 'Stroll On' is even more daring (1:29:50–1:33:08).[14] On the one hand he places the British wonder band in a studio mockup of the Ricky Tick — a famous club in Windsor, Berkshire, which featured a wealth of pop acts at the time (Fig. 2a); on the other, he has the extras playing the audience stand still throughout most of the performance, looking almost unaffected by the engaging groove of the song (Fig. 2b). The uncanniness of the situation is further emphasized when the crowd suddenly gets animated as Jeff Beck throws the neck of his smashed guitar at them.

[14] Timecodes refer to the DVD release issued by Warner Home Video (2004).

Figure 2a–b: Film stills of The Yardbirds performing 'Stroll On' in *Blow-Up* (Antonioni, 1966)

Both sequences problematize liveness for different expressive purposes; most significantly for our argument, they do so not so much by directly intervening in the musical content of the performance, but rather through sabotaging its "natural" staging. It is the relational bond between the performers and their audience that is put into crisis. In both examples, eschewing conventional representations of performance may be understood as a sign of the underlaying scepticism the two directors exhibited toward the music rituals of a younger generation they struggled to comprehend. Both Fellini and Antonioni seem to exhort the viewers to not believe the supposed cathartic effects these performative styles were expected to produce. More overt in Antonioni is the denial of the supposedly disruptive political significance of the performance act: deprived of its spontaneity, the act unwinds as alienated nonsense, whose effects are limited in their extent and scope by the physical disconnection of the performance space from the outside world.[15]

Rather than standing out — because of their supposed authorial legitimacy — as exceptional cases, the two examples just mentioned may be seen as signalling a broader attitude toward music performance similar to that found in more popular strands of Italian cinema in the 1960s, typically represented by the successful genre of the *musicarello* — roughly comparable to an Italian version of the American juke-box film musical. All in all, performance in *musicarelli* functions rather like a "performance of the record", in the sense that the singer's presence, lip-syncing to his or her own hit, more often than not serves as a mere

[15] In passing, it is worth noting how Antonioni's attitude toward the younger generation and its musical values evolved from *Blow-Up* to his next film, *Zabriskie Point* (1970).

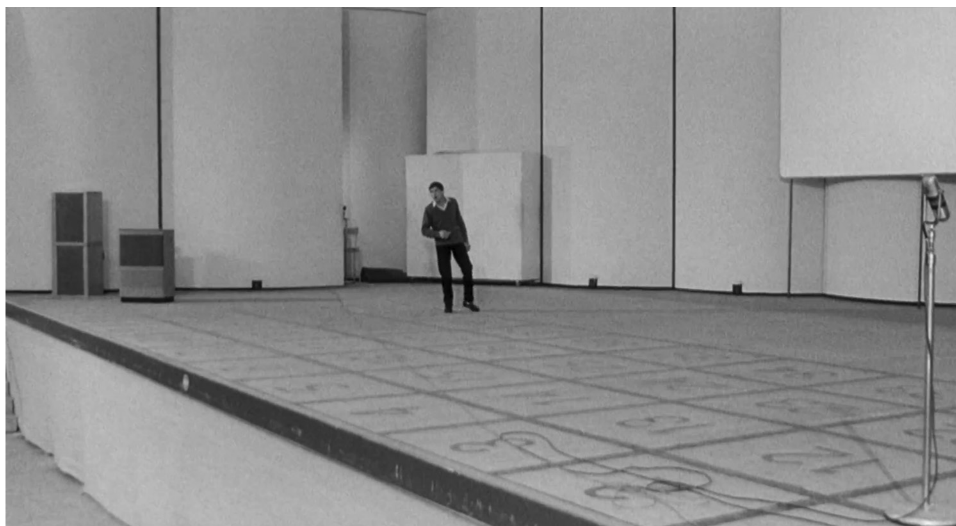

Figure 3: Film still of Gianni Morandi performing 'I ragazzi dello shake' in *Highest Pressure* (Trapani, 1965)

doubling of the audio track, if not as a cumbersome redundancy; this is especially the case when — as frequently happens — the lip-syncing is poorly realized. In general, *musicarelli* show little or no concern about evoking a performative "here and now", preferring instead to conjure up idealized performative spaces, 'pseudo-events'[16] which exhibit a very tenuous connection, if any at all, with live performing experiences.

In *Highest Pressure* (*Altissima pressione*, Enzo Trapani, 1965), Gianni Morandi's performance of 'I ragazzi dello shake' (00:25:58–00:28:03)[17] is inserted into a neutral, almost sanitized space, something in between a TV studio and a provincial movie theatre (Fig. 3). While the presence of loudspeakers and a microphone on stage may at first glance evoke a live setting, the microphone is actually never used by the singer, but only by the announcer to introduce the musical guest. Remarkably, the interaction between the performer and the audience appears highly unnatural and artificially "staged". The fans resemble a television audience that is instructed to cheer at given times, regardless of the actual performance. There seems to be no effort to disguise the fact that Morandi is actually lip-synching to the song in playback (the track even ends with a fade out, as several other song acts do in this film).

The identification of the performance act with the record functions in such a way that the record stands out as the "original" and performance its "copy".

[16] Wurtzler, 'The Microphone Was Turned Off', p. 96.
[17] Timecodes refer to the authorized online streaming release of the film, licensed by Under The Milky Way on YouTube <https://youtu.be/Zy8wXOEJQdY>.

Consequently, the spatial core of music-making representation in *musicarelli* becomes the studio, rather than the live venue. This is confirmed by the comparably higher care with which *musicarelli* tend to portray the recording studio with its wealth of technological equipment. Settings such as the singer recording his or her vocals — this time, in front of a microphone — and facing the sound personnel in their white gowns separated by a glass in the mixing room, are anything but rare in films such as the Italian release of *Go, Johnny, Go!* (Paul Landres, 1959),[18] *Highest Pressure*, *I ragazzi di Bandiera Gialla* (The Kids of Bandiera Gialla, Mariano Laurenti, 1967), and several others. Even in these cases, however, we should not confuse these films' care for visual details with their substantial disregard of the sonic aspects of the recording experience: like the "live" acts described above, the studio performances as well are sonically, for the most part, nothing more than playback versions of the published record.

The centrality of the record as an idealized performative experience, detached from a clear correspondence with reality, resonates with Fiori's description of 'a peculiar distancing effect' that characterized the reception of rock-related styles in Italy and was charged 'with [a] potential for both criticism and action, which was probably unknown to the English or American public'. 'The only way of participating actively in this music', Fiori continued, 'was through possession of records, without even the illusion of a more dynamic relationship with the source of music'.[19]

The Live Album as Intermedium: The Club and the Televisual Mode of Reception

As an object aimed at reproducing a past musical event, the live album frames the live experience within discursive boundaries that are both genre- and event-specific. It relies in the first place on linking the concert experience to other types of mediatized experiences of performance in order to maximize the affective stance at the core of the liveness effect.[20] While cinematic representations of the time problematized liveness by staging performance in unbelievable or unlikely guises, as we have seen, live albums from the same period seem rather to be concerned with referencing recognizable typologies of performing venue and suggesting prominent links with other media, such as for instance television in the case we are about to consider.

Mina alla Bussola dal vivo (Mina Live at La Bussola, PDU, 1968 — recorded during the show on 14 April in the same year) was the first live album to be released by a highly popular Italian performer and media personality during the decade. Here, the performance is presented as an exclusive event in an indoor

[18] The Italian release of the film (*Dai! Johnny, dai!*, 1960) was screened with an added prologue in which Celentano performs 'Impazzivo per te'.
[19] Fiori, 'Rock Music and Politics in Italy', p. 267.
[20] Auslander, *Liveness*, p. 60.

space. Despite her ubiquitous presence on television, as well as in *musicarelli*, in commercials and elsewhere,[21] Mina's media presence was always characterized by an emphasis on her exceptional qualities: as a virtuoso performer and outstanding vocalist, as an emancipated woman, as an "independent" singer who produced her own records. In the same vein, her live show is here also framed as an event whose access is restricted to a limited group of people. In an attempt to emphasize the uniqueness of the live album experience, only half the songs featured in this record were subsequently released as studio versions, thus displaying a specific taste catering to a group of *connoisseurs* assumed to be the target listeners of this record and — at the same time — distinct from her mainstream audience. Finally, the environment of the club creates an aural space where the listening experience is staged as a private — almost intimate — experience; the songs are arranged with marked dynamic contrasts between *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*, and the use of vocal techniques such as crooning and whispering is frequent.[22]

Other mainstream performers who saw their live gigs in clubs and similar venues released on record in the following decade — *e.g.* Franco Califano (*Recital*, 1977), Domenico Modugno (*Dal vivo alla Bussoladomani*, 1977) and Luciano Tajoli (*Bussoladomani. Dal vivo*, 1978) — occupy a similar position to Mina's: all of them exploited the recorded live show to present a rearranged and refined version of their songs in terms of instrumentation (though not in terms of the formal structure), while in none of their albums does the live performance seek to be a faithful rendition of the studio recording. What is also noticeable in all of these is the limited emphasis they place on depicting the relationship between the performer and the audience: despite the small venues in which the live show is taking place, the performers are rarely heard addressing the audience, even to introduce the musicians or the songs. The space reserved for the aural perception of the performers/audience interaction is limited to the clapping and cheering, in what may be described a hierarchical relative positioning of the audience as subjugated to the performers. When some occasional dialogue is audible, it involves the singer and the musicians on stage, and thus stresses the performers' separation from the public, rather than the inclusion of the latter as a real co-protagonist of the show. Such a presentation of the relative roles of performers and audiences highlights a symbolic distance between the realms of artistic production and the everyday listener's experience, thus strengthening existing social structures and boundaries.

[21] For a summary account of Mina's career, see Paolo Prato, 'Virtuosity and Populism. The Everlasting Appeal of Mina and Celentano', in *Made in Italy. Studies in Popular Music*, ed. by Franco Fabbri and Goffredo Plastino (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 162-71.

[22] Such a performative style is also consistent with other examples of Mina's presence on contemporary television, where she presented her own songs and lots of covers in orchestral arrangements, most of which were not subsequently recorded in the studio and released on record. See Rachel Haworth, 'Making a Star on the Small Screen: The Case of Mina and RAI', *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies*, 3.1 (2015), pp. 27–41.

The mediatization of the live show, then, builds its own system of meanings 'as a multi-layered communication medium *dispositif* that connects the stage event of a theatrical production with a wider range of processes and procedures, and which also incorporates media for technical reproduction like sheet music or commercial records'.[23] A crucial element in the staging of this first type of recorded live show is thus the "vertical" — meaning non-reciprocal and non-inclusive — relationship between the performer and the audience, which stresses the exceptional nature of the former and rewards each individual listener with a self-appointed sense of his/her good taste.

On the whole, what Mina's live album suggests through its "aural staging" is that the listener is allowed to take part in a restricted community, a community that allows each individual an opportunity to distinguish him/herself from the undifferentiated mass of the "mainstream" audience. Such an attempt to offer a sort of "elevated" entertainment can be seen as cohering with the modes of consumption afforded by a certain idea of televisual edutainment, which was widespread in the policies of Italian national broadcasting at the time. Public television in the post-war era was characterized by what media historians have labelled as a project of "pedagogic enlightenment" aimed at the creation of a modern, post-fascist, cohesive image of the national popular culture.[24] This conception was based on the notion that television was solipsistic yet democratic at one and the same time, capable of guaranteeing access to everyone but also of satisfying the needs of those who were cultivated enough to appreciate certain subtleties. On the one hand, in positioning herself at the "high-brow of the low-brow", in this album Mina provides a connection with her audience which is strengthened by the sense of distinction that the very appreciation of her own music affords. Moreover, the reaction of the live audience itself follows a predictable "script"; her fans can be heard not only in between the songs, but also at the climactic moments of the arrangements (the first occurrence of the hook and its repetition, the reprise of the chorus, particularly danceable instrumental or virtuoso passages). The overall impression is that the audience responds to the act while being disciplined by the structure of the songs itself, as in a carefully scripted situation-comedy.

In its connection with the televisual mode of reception, the live show as presented on record can be considered a specific sort of phonographic artefact in which the staging has the effect of realizing an 'intermedium',[25] connecting different forms

[23] Nils Grosch – Carolin Stahrenberg, 'The Transculturality of Stage, Song and Other Media: Intermediality in Popular Musical Theatre', in *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin: 1890–1939*, ed. by Len Platt, Tobias Becker and David Linton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 187–200.
[24] See, for example, Gianfranco Bettetini, 'L'Italia televisiva chiama davvero l'Europa?', in *Le televisioni in Europa Vol. 1. Storia e prospettive della televisione nella Repubblica Federale Tedesca, in Gran Bretagna, Francia e Italia*, ed. by Claus-Dieter Rath *et al.* (Torino: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1990), pp. 247–82.
[25] Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction. A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999).

of artistic expression through a series of widespread cultural conventions related to a particular performative experience. The reference established by this group of records with specific performative circumstances also confirms the mentioned link with television: all the live concerts quoted above took place in a famous club, La Bussola, located in a renowned vacation site in the northern coast of Tuscany, a music venue that acquired national relevance for its being frequently elected as a broadcasting location for TV programmes by the RAI.

Staging Large Venues: The Public Pop Concert and Its Media Paradigms

Large-sized concerts and festivals went through a tormented history in Italy in the aftermath of 1968. After the infamous attempt to import the psychedelic vibe of the Monterey Pop Festival to a free event of the Rome Pop Festival in May 1968 at the PalaEUR, with an international cast of soon-to-be superstars,[26] the number of public pop concerts increased gradually until the early 1970s. This included events such as Palermo Pop (which took place three times between 1970 and 1972), the free pop festival at the Caracalla Baths in Rome (October 1970), and the Festival della Musica d'Avanguardia e Nuove Tendenze (Festival of Avant-garde Music and New Trends), first held in Viareggio (May–June 1971), before being moved to Rome and Naples in the following years. After these experiments with big crowds, the Italian underground scene took on a series of lower profile, highly politicized and self-financed rallies, such as the series of public concerts promoted by the underground magazine *Re Nudo* that culminated in the large public concert at Parco Lambro in Milan on 26 June 1976.

By the mid-1970s, the tense socio-political context surrounding pop and rock music in Italy had made it extremely difficult to find safe concert venues where the security of performers and audiences could be guaranteed. On the one hand, the left-wing radical "free music" movement proclaimed the so-called *auto-riduzione* (self-reduction) of ticket prices,[27] while on the other, some popular music performers — especially singer-songwriters — were publicly "prosecuted" on stage by audience members and accused of being "not political enough" in their songs and performances.[28] All these circumstances led to the widespread assumption that Italy was an unsafe place for live music in those

[26] Among others, Julie Driscoll & The Brian Auger Trinity, Donovan, Captain Beefheart, Ten Years After, Soft Machine and Pink Floyd, and the Italians I Giganti and Camaleonti were involved. The festival, poorly received by a sparse yet rowdy audience was interrupted on its fourth day (of seven) due to public disorder. See Matteo Guarnaccia, *Re Nudo Pop & altri festival. Il sogno di Woodstock in Italia 1968–1976* (Milano: Vololibero, 2011), pp. 23–7. Claudio Pescetelli, *Roma beat. I duemila giorni che cambiarono la città eterna* (Genova: Editrice Zona, 2015), pp. 156–69.

[27] See Fiori, 'Rock Music and Politics', p. 266.

[28] One of the most infamous "public trials" happened at the Palalido in Milan, at the end of the show held on 2 April 1967 by Francesco De Gregori. For an account, see Enrico De Regibus, *Quello che non so, lo so cantare: storia di Francesco De Gregori* (Firenze: Giunti, 2003), pp. 90–2.

years. Fiori pointed out how much the link between music and politics in Italy laid its foundations on a fundamental ambivalence:

> The taste for a kind of music was seen as a collective political choice and indeed this latter was often seen as more important than the music itself. This is to say that the choice was made less on the basis of the immediacy of personal taste and more according to the continually debated criteria of an affinity between a common political and social ideal and a particular artist or record.[29]

What was the role of film and records in this context? In general, all of the above-mentioned events were poorly documented, with the exception of the Caracalla Pop festival, which was broadcast on radio and became the site of a curious filmic remediation we will return to shortly, and the second edition of the Festival della Musica d'Avanguardia e Nuove Tendenze (1972), which was telecast by the RAI. The inaugural edition of this festival also led to a compilation album called *Al Festival Pop Viareggio 1971* (At Viareggio Pop Festival, Ariston Records, 1971); this, however, featured only studio tracks by Nuova Idea, Stormy Six and Top 4. The first properly cinematic attempt to document a massive countercultural event was Alberto Grifi's unreleased footage of the 1976 Parco Lambro festival. Because of the *cinéma-vérité* style of Grifi's operation, which deliberately refused to take on the shape of a finished film, this work may be seen as the closest attempt in Italy to react expressively and politically to the concert movie aesthetics that had by that time crystallized in Anglo-American documentary production.[30]

Apart from this example, Italy struggled to develop a self-standing concert-movie genre. The releases of *Banana Republic* (Ottavio Fabbri, 1979), documenting Lucio Dalla and Francesco De Gregori's 1979 tour, and *Concerto* (Luisa Zappa Branduardi, 1980), documenting Angelo Branduardi's European tour *La Carovana del Mediterraneo* (The Mediterranean Caravan, 1978–1979), arguably count among the first proper concert movies in Italian film production. Notably in both cases, the contemporary release of the homonymous live albums (*Banana Republic*, RCA, 1979; *Concerto*, Polydor, 1980), which became all-time best-sellers, largely overshadowed the films' fame. Reasons for this Italian peculiarity may well have been technological: for one thing, Italy had for many years been devoid of the technical basis for direct cinema, that is, direct live sound itself. Not only did dubbing imbue every facet of film production practice, it had also developed into an artistic resource in auteur cinema. It is plausible that the late and generally weak emergence of the music documentary genre in the 1980s was a belated side-consequence of the diffusion of the large-sized concert practice in the country. In other words, it was only after the live performance started being perceived as a participative, transformational collective experience and the record industry had

[29] Fiori, 'Rock Music and Politics', p. 269.

[30] For direct cinema's aesthetic linkage to rock music, see Dave Saunders, *Direct Cinema: Observational Documentary and the Politics of the Sixties* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007).

Figure 4: Film still of Freedom performing 'The Game Is Over' in *Attraction* (Brass, 1969)

Figure 5: Film still of the New Trolls performing 'Il nulla e la luce' in *Terzo Canale – Avventura a Montecarlo* (Paradisi, 1970)

established the live album as a successful marketable format (see the next section) that the necessity for suitable audiovisual means started to be manifest.

One would assume that the arrival of progressive rock on to the Italian music scene from the late 1960s might have affected the modes of live staging in film. This is true only in part. The inclusion of progressive rock bands in musical films certainly brought a new kind of psychedelic imagery to performance stagings and a mutation of the *musicarello* framework, but this rarely translated into an emphasis on liveness — quite the contrary, in fact. The increasing importance of the LP album format favoured ingenious visual depictions of performance that ventured into psychedelic "places of the mind", as evinced by the visionary settings of Freedom's diegetically performed soundtrack in *Attraction* (*Nerosubianco*, Tinto Brass, 1979) (Fig. 4). Likewise, the performative space of the New Trolls' soundtrack in the film *Terzo canale. Avventura a Montecarlo* (Third Channel: Adventure in Montecarlo, Giulio Paradisi, 1970), is highly conceptual: the band performs the original soundtrack of the film from a visualized "somewhere-else",

Figure 6: Film stills of Freedom performing 'The Better Side' in *Attraction* (Brass, 1969)

Figure 7: Film stills of The Trip performing 'Travellin' Soul' in *Terzo Canale – Avventura a Montecarlo* (Paradisi, 1970)

separate from the film's diegesis, halfway in-between an Andy Warhol-influenced, live multimedia setting and the Cinebox aesthetics (Fig. 5).[31]

Still, in contrast with what had happened before 1968, performance is no longer treated as an autonomous entity detached from the films' story-world but is rather intertwined with it. Often set in public, open spaces, performance takes on a symbolic force in which a community recognizes itself desiring for new kinds of existential experiences. This is all the more apparent when the open-air staging is imaginative, evidently aimed at upending the usual order of everyday life.[32] In *Attraction*, Freedom play in the bucolic setting of Hyde Park while the main female character pursues her free-love fantasies (Fig. 6), while in *Terzo Canale* The Trip play in their uncovered van while driving around the streets of Rome (Fig. 7).

Terzo canale deserves further attention for its deep connection to a historical concert like the Caracalla Pop festival. Eddie Ponti's recollection provides a precious testimony of the *literally* cross-media origins of the Caracalla Pop

[31] The Cinebox was the Italian video-jukebox concurrent of the Scopitone.
[32] The influence of psychedelic films such as *The Magical Mystery Tour* (Bernard Knowles and The Beatles, 1967) is self-evident in both these examples.

festival, in which the film is not (just) a document of the live event but constitutes the actual pretext around which the event itself was set up:

> Meanwhile we had made a deal with Radio Montecarlo, with a very famous record company and an equally famous film company to produce a film which would include all of us: Trip (the main characters), Four Kents, Jody Clark, New Trolls, Primitives, Mal, Sheyla, Ricchi e Poveri and your humble servant. In order to set up the exterior shooting with an oceanic crowd we endorsed the idea of a guy who at the time looked rather crazy to us but who would later reveal to be the cleverest: Giovanni Cipriani. This way the first open-air Italian festival was born: a massive gathering of people at the Caracalla Baths, and us performing on a trailer truck (we could not even imagine those pharaonic stages that would later become the norm).[33]

Terzo canale consists of a sort of pastiche of a *musicarello*, a psychedelic promotional movie and a concert movie – all combined with references to the Italian *poliziottesco* genre, road movies, underground culture, and (perhaps too much) more. The film's odd storyline revolves around an adventurous and unlikely road trip to Montecarlo, where The Trip are expected to perform. Incidentally, the location where the band ends up is none other than the Caracalla Pop Festival (while Montecarlo is, of course, the name of the radio station that originally broadcast the event). In this chaotic mishmash there is room for both a parody of and a sincere homage to the concert movie genre. When the band arrives at the concert venue for the sound-check, the off-frame sound of the microphone-tester's voice — a direct quotation of the sound-check scene from the *Woodstock* film (Michael Wadleigh, 1970) — can be heard as a caricature of a psychedelic experiment with tape delay. On the other hand, the post-synchronization between the visual footage of the Caracalla concert and The Trip's album track 'Fantasia' stands out as a genuine attempt to conjure up an effect of liveness that was indebted to the contemporary explosion of the concert film genre abroad. The (post-synchronized) Caracalla live set dominates the final part of the film (Fig. 8); the carefree irony that pervaded the whole first part of the movie is no longer allowed: the prog-rock live experience has become the performative core of the cinematic experience. This film aptly testifies how the cultural imagery of the rock event — having reached Italy cinematically, via the contemporary Anglo-American concert movie genre — was inextricably blended with the rise of a live concert culture in the country.

[33] Eddie Ponti, from *Nuovo Sound* 11 (March 1975), as quoted in Pescetelli, *Roma beat*, p. 236. For more on the Caracalla Pop Festival, see ivi, pp. 236–49. English translation by the authors.

Figure 8: Film stills of The Trip performing 'Fantasia' at the Caracalla Pop Festival in *Terzo Canale – Avventura a Montecarlo* (Paradisi, 1970)

Hearing the Crowds: The Audience as Co-protagonist in the Live Outdoor Concert Album

One of the first examples of a live album set in an outdoor space ever released in Italy is *Dal vivo. Bologna 2 settembre 1974* (RCA International, 1975), documenting the performances of singer-songwriters Lucio Dalla, Francesco De Gregori, Maria Monti and Antonello Venditti at the national annual meeting of the Italian Communist Party (Festival Nazionale dell'Unità). The cover of the album, showing a filtered picture of the crowd attending the event, already calls our attention to the concert as an opportunity for collective empowerment, a moment in which popular music stars are 'elevated to the position of avatars and spokesmen of the counterculture'.[34] As already noted at the end of the previous section with reference to the close of *Terzo Canale*, in this album too the imagery of the live event is mediated first of all by a string of concert films that were produced in the Anglo-American market in the second half of the 1960s, and which provided a model for the social and cultural reception of the rock concert.

By evoking a wide-open space, *Dal vivo. Bologna 2 settembre 1974* testifies to the sheer physicality of the performers facing thousands of people, transforming the concert into an act of symbolic engagement in socio-political causes. Large spaces and crowds do not easily allow for rarefaction and subtleties in the strictly musical delivery of the performance; instead they call for violent contrasts and unexpected turns in the action, even at the risk of seeming raw and unrefined. Improvisation, also in its symbolic valence of extemporaneous collaboration between a performer and the audience, is another key component in such kinds of aural representation of the live show. In the first track of *Dal vivo. Bologna 2 settembre 1974*, Lucio Dalla's 'Abcdefg', the sparse scatting of the

[34] Norma Coates, 'If Anything, Blame Woodstock. The Rolling Stones: Altamont, December 1969', in *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time*, ed. by Ian Inglis (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 59.

singer in the song's central part literally emerges from the crowd's buzz; thus begins the process that transforms a track lasting less than three minutes in its studio recording into an exercise of virtuosity and collective improvisation of more than eight minutes. The feel of participation in the act of music-making is aurally and symbolically acknowledged in a rendition of the live performance in which the hierarchical distinction between the performer and the audience is programmatically disrupted.

A second example is 'Caos (II parte)', from Area's *Event '76*, released by Cramps in 1979, but recorded during a concert at the University of Milan on 27 October 1976. The same track was released on the LP *Maledetti* [Damned] (Cramps, 1976) in a much shorter studio performance: the live version was actually split between the two sides of the LP and has a total duration of more than thirty minutes. As the liner notes written by the band's vocalist Demetrio Stratos clarify, 'Caos (II parte)' is a highly structured form of chance process in which 'every 90" the improvisation is forcefully varied following the change in the emotional state that each musician has chosen and is trying to interpret. [...] the basic function is therefore totally liberating, it does not aim to teach or demonstrate anything, but tries to overcome the differences between music and life'.[35] In the live version of the same track the same structure takes on a process of expansion: as heard on the first side of *Event '76* the track flows through a very similar sequence of improvisational situations with respect to the record, but their individual duration is nearly doubled, with the result that the first part of the track lasts about 20 minutes. At the end of this sequence, the audience claps as if the performance of the "song" has reached its end, but the track continues on the second side of the record for another 9 minutes; this second part of the piece consists of three different improvisational situations based on elements not previously heard on the studio recording. Improvisation in public performative situations requires more time to be developed and to grow from the shared "vibes" of the musicians and the audience. The growing duration of the songs in the live show also works as a critique of mass culture embedded in the record as a product of the recording studio: 'The "live" album frequently is judged positively if the increased "presence" signified by it is perceived as invigorating the studio-produced original or approximating the "aura" of non-mediated performance'.[36] The more the live performance departs from the studio track, the more the experience of the live show is valued for its uniqueness and acknowledges the contribution of the audience in the act of music-making.

The interaction between performers and audiences became a key feature in live albums documenting concerts in non-mainstream genres such as progressive rock, singer-songwriters and avant-garde, improvised music. Even though they do not always present live shows in outdoor spaces, they nevertheless evoke the

[35] English translation by the authors.
[36] Wurtzler, 'The Microphone Was Turned Off', p. 94.

same atmosphere and the sense of collective engagement highlighted above. This is especially evident when the recordings include a spoken introduction to the songs by the main singer (or his/her thanking the audience at the end of each song), a detail that, as we noted above, was lacking in records set in indoor spaces, such as clubs. These introductory fragments of conversation often expand on the background or the context of the songs, or just include some small talk between the performers onstage and the (collective) entity of the audience, creating a sense of intimacy and inclusion that would be unthinkable when listening to the albums analysed in the second section of this article. By recovering another "para-performative" aspect of the live show, such details also convey the impression of listening "on location".

Some other examples of this kind can be heard in the above-mentioned *Dal vivo. Bologna 2 settembre 1974*, as well as in Premiata Forneria Marconi's *Live in U.S.A.* (Numero Uno, 1974), New Trolls' *Live* (Magma, 1976), Francesco Guccini and Nomadi's *Album Concerto* (EMI, 1979). In the latter example, each song is preceded by a short presentation by the lead singers, interspersing the show with short stories about their life on tour, their choices regarding the set list, and occasional puns and jokes. The fact that the album documents two shows in venues that are very close to the home towns of Francesco Guccini and most of the Nomadi (respectively the Club 77 in Pavana and the Kiwi Club in Modena, Emilia Romagna) favoured their framing as particularly "authentic" examples of live shows in which the audience's participation and real-time feedback acquire a special flavour. The connection between the band on stage and the crowd in the pit acquires a political valence, first of all, where this relationship was instead programmatically downplayed, favouring a participative approach to a collective effort towards the reconfiguration of established social roles. At the same time, the collaboration with the crowd in the moment of music-making, and its inclusion within the performative space aurally represented in the record, emphasize the potential for the performance to be a transformative experience for those who attend the live show. Since such transformation takes place in a public space, it opens up symbolic spaces for the catharsis of society as a whole.

Conclusion

Our focus on staging has stressed the relevance of spatial and relational configurations of performance as symbolic nodes for social and ideological debate. The critique of mass culture or the celebration of the status quo, the detachment or absorption of everyday life within art, the private or public nature of the performative venue, the hierarchical or collaborative attitude in the relationship between the performers and the audience are the main axes along which the representation of live performance developed in Italy in the scrutinized period. A crucial role in the "staging" of the para-performative elements of the live events portrayed in cinema and on record is played by

the 'performance registers'[37] involving the performer, the audience and the technology at the moment of the performance; in this respect, sets of conventions related to the divide between mainstream and non-mainstream acts, their associated performative venues and spaces, and the specific kinds of intermedia experience they afford, can be fleshed out.

The examples we covered highlight how a "liveless media culture" and a "culture of mediatized liveness" — though subjected to different agendas according to the specific audiences targeted and individual authorial attitudes — were highly intertwined in Italy in the 1960s and the 1970s, with a prevalence of the former in the pre-1968 period and a strengthening of the latter in the post-1968 period. Over this watershed, the pop recording industry started to explore the market of live albums with increasing attention: the number of live albums grew considerably between 1968 and 1979, according to a trend that did not seem to privilege specific music genre patterns over others.[38] As for television — though the majority of music programmes continued to be based on playback (with the famous exception of the Festival di Sanremo) — a cautious inclusion of live music acts can be detected in those years, especially in such programmes as the pioneering *Senza rete*,[39] in the growing broadcast of summer music contexts such as *Cantagiro* and in the above-mentioned rare broadcasts of independent free festivals. At the other end of the liveness spectrum, cinema seems to have allowed for a timid transformation of the status of live performance at the turn of 1968. In staying anchored to post-synchronization techniques (for obvious technological reasons), it still transitioned from a clear neutralization of musical performance to a more ideologically loaded treatment of rock music acts.

Emerging from this initial survey is the status of youth culture in Italy at that time as a contested field of cultural production where antagonistic images of the political, the social, the present and future state of the nation were proposed,

[37] Jem Kelly, 'Pop Music, Multimedia, and Live Performance'. In *Music, Sound and Multimedia. From the Live to the Virtual*, ed. by Jamie Sexton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 105–20 (p. 112).

[38] According to the statistics extracted from the Discogs database for this research, during the 1960s and the 1970s the number of live recording releases on the Italian market proportionally far outnumbered even that of US/UK record production. While in the latter national contexts, the presence of live records peaked in the 1960s and remained steady during the 1970s, in Mediterranean Europe (France, Spain and Italy) the trend continued to grow at a remarkable rate also in later decades.

[39] The audience was encouraged to understand the title of the show, literally meaning "without net", as "without the safety-net of playback". The programming of the show followed a monographic criterium: each episode featured one or in some cases two pop artists or bands accompanied by the resident TV-studio orchestra. Curiously, the first director of *Senza Rete* was the same Enzo Trapani who had directed the film *Highest Pressure* just a few years before; the film itself was a spin-off of the TV programme *Alta pressione* (High Pressure), directed by Trapani in 1962. The transformation of this influential TV director's attitude toward liveness over the space of only a few years, as reflected in these three different audiovisual artefacts, is a subject that would be worth considering in greater depth in its own right.

negotiated and exploited for public consumption.[40] It is our hope that pinpointing popular music performance as a cultural node in a specific socio-political context may constitute a way to interrelate separate investigations into different media and reciprocally illuminate their respective agencies.

Endnote

This article brings together two independent papers presented by the authors at the one-day symposium 'To Each Their Own Pop' (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan) on 23 October 2017. The two papers respectively dealt with popular music performance in Italian record production (Bratus) and film (Corbella). The authors are equally responsible for the overall conception and outcome of this article and co-wrote each part of it. For the purposes of research evaluation, the credit for each section may be ascribed as follows: *Introduction* (Corbella – Bratus); *Live(less)ness in Filmed Popular Music Performance before '68* (Corbella); *The Live Album as Intermedium* (Bratus); *Staging Large Venues* (Corbella); *Hearing the Crowds* (Bratus); *Conclusion* (Bratus – Corbella).

[40] Concerning this topic, a thorough account of the relationship between mass culture and the Communist Party in the Italian cinema industry can be found in Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture*, *1943-91* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).