Pop stars and idolatry: an investigation of the worship of popular music icons, and the music and cult of Prince

R. Till

Department of Music and Drama, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, England

Email: R.Till@hud.ac.uk

Abstract:
Prince is an artist who integrates elements from the sacred into his work. He uses popular iconography to present himself as an icon of consumer culture, as a deified 'rock god' worshipped by his fans, and as a preacher leading his audience like a congregation. His personality cult mixes spirituality and sexuality, and deals with issues of ecstasy and liberation, a transgressional approach that draws both controversy and public interest. This paper investigates Prince's work and the role of the pop star as an icon within contemporary culture, an icon that contains a physicality and sexuality not present in contemporary western religious traditions. It discusses to what extent popular musical culture operates as a form of religious practice within contemporary western culture, and the implications that this has. The paper investigates the construction of Prince's public character, his manipulation of the star system, and how he uses popular iconography to blur the distinctions between spirituality and sexuality, the idealised performer and the real world, the sacred and the profane, and the human and the divine. It explores how he possesses and is possessed by the audience, who enter into the hollow vessel he offers up to his fans.

Keywords: Prince; popular; iconography; icon; star

Introduction

This paper investigates the construction of the cult[1] of popular musician Prince, investigating what it means to describe him as a popular icon, differentiating this terminology from 'star' or 'celebrity', which are largely synonymous. The term 'popular icons' is used to recognise the differing earlier traditions of iconography. A discussion of popular iconography, and the nature of popular icons, is followed by discussion of the star system and the relationships between stars and icons, using the song 'Let's Go Crazy' from the film and soundtrack album *Purple Rain* to illustrate how these issues can be seen in the work of Prince. This includes looking at performance traditions, the use of overt, ambiguous and transgressional sexuality as part of marketing, and references and attitudes to religion within African American culture. It investigates other musical and performative techniques and influences, as well as the use of the colour purple by Prince. His use of a graphical symbol to replace his name is also discussed. Finally the paper draws conclusions about the role of, and worship of, the popular icon within postmodernity.

---

[1] The term cult is used in order to recognise the oppositional presentation of popular music cults, rather than the more contemporary term 'new religious movement'. For further reading on cults see Cowan and Bromley (2008).

The Star System

Within popular culture, stars are those who are recognised for their 'well-knownness' (Boorstin 1987), and have high visibility, suggesting people 'whose name has attention-getting, interest riveting and profit generating value' (Rein et al. 1997, 15). They have various ways of becoming famous. In the past this was usually through their actions, whereas within contemporary society stars are icons of consumption, not necessarily having achieved anything in order to be famous (Lowenthal 1944). Dyer describes in some detail the star system and its workings amongst actors (1979). Although film stars dominated the star system in the first half of the 20th Century, and despite film stars still being both popular and famous, popular music stars have perhaps become the dominant form of European star in more recent years.

For stars to progress to a point where they are described as 'an icon' requires their achievement of a level of fame at which they are treated with the sort of respect traditionally reserved for religious figures. They are then usually known by only one name, as are religious figures such as Jesus, Moses, Mary, Judas, Buddha and the Pope. The combination of an image and single name description characterises icons and differentiates them from stars. The development of icons for branding is used by the entertainment industry for marketing purposes, just as it is in the manufacturing industry. As Longhurst puts it, 'Stars function as trademarks which generate sales for the music business and the culture industries more widely' (1995, 185). The importance of image in this process has meant that artists' images have become as important to success within popular music as the quality of their music, indeed it has meant that for some artists the careful handling of branding, marketing and image has been the dominant factor in, and feature of, their success.

Popular Icons

Iconographic techniques either taken from, rooted in or similar to those in religious traditions are used by the music industry in order to enhance the success of a popular musician. These icons use every aspect of 21st century multimedia techniques in their design. Videos, websites, photographs, ringtones, clothing, fanclubs, films, concerts and a huge range of merchandise, allow the icon to be a three dimensional, moving multimedia creation, based on the character of the performer, but weaving myth and fantasy into a hyperreal legend using

public relations companies, press releases and media manipulation. Compared with that of a painting or sculpture, popular icons have an entire fantasy world that surrounds them, in which the pop star lives. The performing arts tradition, in which the body is the main instrument, has made the creation of semi-fictional pop star characters a key part of the art-form of the pop musician.[2]

Consumer culture uses popular icons as examples of idealised consumers, the music industry in particular presenting them as perfect models of consumption. Their images are used to sell products with little functional value, to add enhanced value, encouraging the purchase of the products associated with these icons. Consumer culture requires consumption to exceed need, in order to consume as much as is produced and sustain never-ending growth (Dyer 1979, 38-43). Icons have apparently infinite needs; they project an imaginary (or semi-fictional) extravagant life style featuring elements such as limousines, designer clothes, huge houses and large entourages. They sell objects with little inherent value outside association with their cult, including t-shirts, badges, recordings, dvds, posters, magazines and perfumes, providing products that the consumer can buy in order to be more like, or feel closer to, their favourite icon, to allow consumption of that icon.

Traditionally icons were hollow vessels inhabited by God. The popular icon is to be filled or inhabited by the viewer, by the consumer or fan. This means that the fans take the place of God, deifying themselves. As Bing Crosby put it 'Every man who likes me sees in me the image of himself' (Buxton 1985, 187-9). In a similar vein George Michael has stated 'It's not the something extra that makes the star – it's the something that's missing' (Goodwin 1993, 117). The representation can never equal the represented as the signifier is never equal to the signified, and thus it can appear that the more hollow, vacuous and lacking in content stars are, the more successful they can become. Holding back information about stars leaves space for observers to

---

[2] 'Pop' is used here to indicate mainstream chart music traditions, pop music being traditionally associated with a younger audience and commercially driven successful current music, whereas 'popular' music includes folk music, underground music subcultures, historical traditions, and a broader range of less commercial forms.

fill in the gaps with themselves. Identification with or rejection of these signifiers is used to tell the observers' own stories.

For the performer the process is a mystical one. The emptying out of self is a mystical tradition, addressing the void, stillness and space, allowing exploration of the self, or for the divine to indwell the empty vessel. In this case the performer is filled, inspired and sustained by the projected adulation of the fans, the worshipper creating the popular icon, as without an audience a star is merely another person. The members of the audience are embodied as larger than life deific beings, possessing the star whom they consume, as they become possessed themselves by the character of the star. As Longhurst describes it, 'Stars appeal because the audience wants to understand or fill in the knowledge that is missing' (1995, 186). When fans listen to the singing of the star in the privacy of their bedroom, or within the exclusivity of the earphones of their mp3 player, this can seem a very intimate relationship. The inserting of themselves inside the star by the fan (or vice-versa) can be a very personal process, with obvious sexual analogies, which many icons exploit with a sexualised style of performance. 'It may be that the fan of a star feels that only he or she can possess such knowledge'(Longhurst 1995, 186-7), that the relationship is monogamous. Thus the personality cult of the star also becomes a contemporary form of possession cult.

Fans imagine they are like the star, and that the star is like them, projecting into the hollowed out icon. Richard Dyer, drawing from Andrew Tudor's work (1975), defines four different ways that audiences relate to film stars; emotional affinity, self-identification, imitation, and finally projection. Projection happens when imitation goes beyond image and affects the person's life in a more substantial fashion (Dyer 1979, 18). Film stars promote their films only periodically, and they play different characters in different situations. Popular music stars usually play only one part.[3] Their appearances onstage add credence and authenticity to their realism, as they are perceived through songs, interviews and other media outputs. This material is not always factual, but it is not clearly fictional. Fans assume that popular singers are singing about their real experiences

---

[3] Some popular music stars have renewed and reinvigorated their work by creating new versions of their onstage character, notable examples including David Bowie, Madonna, and Adam Ant.

and feelings, although this is often not the case. Pop stars carefully mix fact and fiction to create a hyper-real personality that is more interesting, and extravagant, than any real person. They draw upon cultural myths and archetypes, upon histories of other icons, and on numerous other media sources.

In comparison to film culture, where the audience usually leaves the star behind in the cinema, the artifacts of popular music are designed to routinely penetrate deeply into the life of a fan. Pop fans will routinely imitate a pop singer by singing along, memorising their words. It is quite normal for popular music fans to have a deep level of involvement with a star, imitating their dress, hair or image, and imitation and projection are both common. Karaoke allows fans to further imitate their heroes, as do computer games that allow fans to play the part of a popular guitar hero or singer.[4] Fan clubs, often run by the management of the musician, allow the audience to feel more intimately involved with the star, allowing the musician to market directly to the most interested and obsessive members of the audience, building a personality cult. Pop stars have the advantage of validating the authenticity of their public persona by performing live in concert. Their lives are generally perceived as real, although they are usually a complex mixture of reality, construction, marketing, exaggeration, and untruth. This ambiguity offers flexibility in the perception by the audience of the nature of the star.

Prince

Prince is one such star who has managed to progress to the status of popular icon, using an overt strategy which has proven very successful. Born Prince Rogers Nelson, he launched himself as a solo artist, shortening his name to Prince, creating a public persona or mediapheme[5] drawn from his various influences, and using a number of themes and traditions. He was born in Minneapolis, a United States city that has no large black community or separate black music tradition to inspire him (as in for example New York, Chicago, New

---

[4] *Guitar Hero* computer game software for various games consoles, allows the player to seem to play guitar in a band.. *Singstar* software allows the player to sing, and *Rock Band* includes drumming, as well as bass guitar and keyboard playing. The player does not need to actually be able to play the instrument concerned.

[5] Mediaphemes are quick encapulations; once a story, person or event is translated into mediapheme form, which can ricochet through the channels of mass mediation with ease. There are many similarities between an icon and a mediapheme, a mediapheme is perhaps a postmodern form of or term for an icon. (Baty and Paige 1995); Johnson 2004, 79-99).

Orleans, Memphis or Detroit). Prince has therefore drawn from both black and white American musical cultures. He integrated funk and blues guitar music from black musical culture, along with their modern, white derivatives, new romantic and rock guitar music. He plays with and uses the black and white traditions of the guitar hero, and presents himself as an authentic virtuoso performer (Marshall 1997, 158) and auteur producer. He draws themes of overt sexuality (Hill 1989, 31-2) from the homoerotic yet heterosexual preening of heavy metal, the raw eroticism of early blues (Till 2007) and funk and the transgressional gender ambiguity (Baitz 2007) of the 1980s pop music new romantic genre. Singing in a high falsetto voice and presenting a feminised image, he deals lyrically with issues such as incest, masturbation, oral sex and threesomes, adopting a complex approach to sexuality that has guaranteed a huge level of media coverage. He plays the part of a pop god, performing authenticity much like David Bowie,[6] enhanced by an exploration of spirituality and divinity. Neither black nor white, he presents himself as purple. He eventually reduced himself to a symbol, both contesting and enhancing his treatment as a product within the music industry. He did this by changing his name temporarily to a simple graphical symbol, and insisting that the media use only this symbol as his name.

An excellent illustration of these points is the performance of the song 'Let's Go Crazy' from the film *Purple Rain*, released in 1984. A vehicle written to feature Prince as its star, the film is styled as an extended rock video, with a loose plot gathered around musical set pieces both live and recorded. 'Let's Go Crazy' begins the film. The film blurs reality and fiction, using a mixture of autobiographical and fictional elements, creating a mythical Prince. Some of the music featured (not including 'Let's Go Crazy'), was recorded live in concert, and this adds to the confusion of how much within the film is real and how much is fictional. This film helped to create the perception of a legendary Prince that no longer had to be bound by reality and could rise to iconic status. It was a critical and commercial success and along with the soundtrack album it established Prince as an international musical superstar. It allowed Prince to create and present his iconic construction in detail. Prince also understood the power of mixing sexuality and religious references, and that this would help to guarantee controversy and even greater media coverage.

---

[6] Bowie has stated 'I have never been convinced by the importance of authenticity… I have always engaged in the idea of an entertainer who performs authenticity. Yes I think one cannot be authentic.' (Von Appen and Doehring 2006, p. 38).

The Sacred and the Profane

Prince adopted many ideas from James Brown's onstage persona, which itself was based on African American gospel preachers. Prince went to a live concert by 'James Brown when he was 10 and he went straight home to practice the moves' (Sutcliffe 1992). Prince uses numerous religious or pseudo-religious references to conjure up an atmosphere charged with a feeling of powerful emotions and transcendence. 'Let's Go Crazy' uses many of these techniques. The film begins in darkness with a simple church-like organ chord the only sound. From the darkness comes Prince's voice. He speaks as if he is officiating at a church service. His first phrase is 'Dearly beloved we are gathered here today', a reference to the first lines of the Christian marriage service, which begins 'Dear beloved we are gathered here'. The marriage service goes on to describe marriage as 'signifying the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church' (Church of England 1978). In this case Prince is presiding over a joining of himself with his church, his congregation, his audience of fans. This places him in the position of Christ or deity, marrying, possessing and becoming one flesh with his worshippers, carrying obvious sexual overtones. The rest of Prince's opening address is an odd mix of references, but what is notable is the organ accompaniment and spoken style that sets up a religious context for the concert, and for both the relationship of the audience with Prince, and the film. It makes the audience aware that they are here to worship their idol, not just watch a concert, preparing the way for a film which features numerous opportunities for Prince to be presented as a popular icon. It also places the film viewer as an audience member, voyeuristically observing what one might assume to be the early life of Prince.

Prince is often filmed backlit during 'Let's Go Crazy', the stage lighting from the front replaced by powerful rear white lights that leave the band silhouetted. Backlighting is used much in the way that a halo, a circle of light also known as a nimbus, is placed behind the head of a divine being in religious artwork in Christian, Hindu, Roman and Greek contexts. Within Christianity this is used to indicate the logos or divinity of Christ, Mary or other holy figures. Here it is Prince who is presented as divine. Beams of light come down from

above, surrounded by clouds of smoke from a smoke machine, as if the band, raised up on the stage, were in heaven, set above and beyond the audience.[7] The crowd is encouraged to project their appreciation towards the stage by clapping, holding their hands in the air, singing along, screaming or imitating the group. At one point the audience mimics Prince's hand movements, joining in with their hero and feeling for a moment connected to him. The audience scream, shout and applaud the musicians onstage, faces looking up in adulation, reaching out towards Prince to touch him. The song finishes with Prince ascending into the light. He climbs up onto the piano, and, with a nimbus-like light carefully placed behind his head, plays a solo guitar cadenza, spotlighting his guitar virtuosity, his extraordinary musical ability. At this moment he is alone. He is physically alone on top of the piano, above the rest of the band as well as the audience, and musically he is alone, not accompanied by anyone else. He is alone in the light, the one and only Prince, above everybody else and presented for the worship of those below him.

The mixing of the sacred and secular within music has a long tradition within African American music. Blues, rhythm and blues, soul, funk and disco all included elements that came from gospel music. Prince's work explores and transgresses the boundaries between the sacred and profane, much as he adopts a transgressional approach to traditional sexual boundaries. Prince is similar in many ways to rock'n'roll singer Little Richard, who also was effeminate, looked androgenous, was of mixed race (Hamilton 1998, 161-76), wore make up, used a falsetto voice, was a dramatic and extravagant performer, and alternated between religious fundamentalism and homosexuality and promiscuity (White 2003). Like Little Richard, Prince moved beyond a racially segmented audience in order to sell to a larger, mainstream, white audience. Prince has said 'I don't necessarily think of myself as a member of the black race - more a member of the human race' (Salewicz 1981). At a time when MTV showed little or no music by black artists, Prince presented an image that mixed and combined elements of black and white culture.

---

[7] The structure of music concerts enhances the perception of musicians on stage as being above and superior to the audience. They are brightly lit, raised on a platform and separated by security guards and fences from the audience.

To further avoid being pigeonholed as either primarily black or white, Prince presents himself as purple. He uses the colour purple as a theme in his work, in lyrics, clothing and videos. Within traditional religious icon design, red represents divine life, while blue represents human life. Purple is a mixture of the two. Purple dye in ancient Rome was worn by senators and emperors in their togas (Vout 1996, 204-20) and went on to become associated more broadly with aristocracy. It is also associated with psychedelia and 1960s culture, referencing for example the ultra-violet or black light used in hippie lighting effects, and a Jimi Hendrix song 'Purple Haze' (1967).[8] *Purple Rain* features purple clothing and lighting, a purple motorbike and a purple guitar. Prince has become intimately associated with Purple.

The symbol

Prince has tried to control every aspect of his work. One aspect of his career he could not control was the way he was presented and represented by his record company, Warner Brothers. Despite having carefully packaged himself as part of his artform, Prince changed his name to a symbol as a complaint against being treated as a commodity. In a press release that was widely published, Prince stated,

> The first step I have taken towards the ultimate goal of emancipation from the chains that bind me to Warner Bros. was to change my name from Prince to (symbol). Prince is the name that my Mother gave me at birth. Warner Bros. took the name, trademarked it, and used it as the main marketing tool to promote all of the music that I wrote. The company owns the name Prince and all related music marketed under Prince. I became merely a pawn used to produce more money for Warner Bros.… I was born Prince and did not want to adopt another conventional name. The only acceptable replacement for my name, and my identity, was a symbol with no pronunciation, that is a representation of me and what my music is about. This symbol is present in my work over the years; it is a concept that has evolved from my frustration; it is who I am. It is my name.

The symbol simplifies his mediapheme to one visual object, an act of overt iconography, or icon drawing. It is based on the alchemical symbol for soapstone (Figure 1). This is turned 120 degrees clockwise so that the arrow is pointing downwards. A circle is then added to the top. The result is similar to a combination of the planetary symbols for mars (Figure 2) and venus (Figure 3), representing male and female genders, and his androgeny. It also appears similar to an Egyptian Ankh, and to a cross. This is another way that Prince integrates references to religion into his work.

---

[8] Hendrix is a key influence on Prince's image and guitar playing. Led Zepellin are also an important influence, Prince having performed their music in his live concerts.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Prince had developed his iconography so well that he could be defined by and recognised from a graphical icon, something with which rock band Led Zeppelin had also experimented. Figure 4 is an icon used to represent occultist and guitarist Jimmy Page, the title of their fourth album was a series of four graphical icons representing the members of the band. Prince has since reverted to using his name, and the symbol is not reproduced here as Prince has restricted its use. He adopts an icon to represent him much as other products are marketed by a symbol, for example the twin arches of Macdonalds or the white tick of Nike. This marks his full-blown adoption of iconography as part of his work. Once free of the contract that caused him initially to adopt the symbol, Prince continued to use it, playing a guitar with a body made in its image, wearing symbol jewelry and branding his website, publicity and most of his products with the symbol. Despite protesting that his record company had turned him into a commodity, he has continued this commodification for his own benefit.

Conclusions

Prince's iconography was designed to reach the widest possible market. This included the use of sources from throughout popular music history, including blues, rhythm'n'blues, Motown, soul, gospel, psychedelia, Stax, rock, funk, disco and the new romantics. He included much that was transgressional, in order to court controversy and media attention. This included elements of black and white culture, transgressing traditional

genre definitions and classifications. He adopted an overtly sexual physicality that mixed the traditionally masculine and feminine, as well as using heterosexual and homosexual references. He mixes this sexuality with religion, and uses similar techniques to those seen within traditional religions, in order to create a godlike onstage character and engender worship from his fans.

The relationships between the sacred and the profane are often used to define the religious (Durkheim 1965). Clear boundaries between the two are necessary for this definition. Prince is part of, and also a result of, a spiritual revolution resulting from the emergence of postmodernity, in which popular cultural artefacts are fulfilling the roles traditionally associated with religions. This is part of the impact of postmodernity (or liquidity, re-enchantment, the post-historical or post-enlightenment) on religion. Postmodernity is characterised partly by the blurring of and tearing down of boundaries, especially those between high and popular culture, and also acts to make the boundaries between the sacred and the profane less clear. Prince uses techniques and methods from religious traditions, fulfilling some of the roles formerly played by mainstream religions. He uses these techniques to create a form of possession cult based around his personality, drawing (often young) fans into the semi-fictional world he creates, increasing his commercial success in the process. Through his music Prince promotes a spiritual (rather than religious) view of life, reflecting the growing interest within contemporary popular culture in unconventional expressions of spirituality, rather than traditional religious organisations (Heelas and Woodhead 2001). His is a spirituality that mixes and confuses religion, spirituality, physicality, sexuality, dance, music, identity, ethnicity and commerce. By mixing dance music and pop/rock traditions, he merges the sacred and secular, white and black, into a single hybrid form that is attractive, easily accessible and marketable.

He plays with and manipulates his public identity and uses iconography and the media as part of his art. He challenges us to understand and decode his secretive world and invites his fans to project themselves into his hollow iconographic shell, revealing ourselves as we try to understand him, empowering, deifying and enriching him through the process. Prince offers salvation though a temporary escape from normality into the

myth he has created around himself. His is not a world driven by morality or intellect, but by pleasure and the body. When a fan projects their self into the shell Prince offers, rather than living in their everyday existence, for a moment they are instead a sexual, spiritual, beautiful demi-god, attractive to men and women, dancing on a stage under concert lights. This entering of Prince by the fan (and/or vice-versa), also plays with sexual analogies, and spiritual analogies such as a spirit entering or possessing the body.

Whether in the audience at a concert or listening to his music at home, the fan feels they are part of Prince's world, that they understand him, they are the same as him. Filling in the spaces he leaves in his character, they create a Prince in their own image who is like them, allowing them to feel close to and part of him, to associate with him and feel reflected glory. The audience is able to live vicariously through Prince, and indeed he is vicar to his own congregation, representing or indeed replacing God as the object of worship, and as a representation of who and how the fan would like to be. Prince uses transgression to generate excitement and a sense of transcendence of the ordinary. By addressing and combining both the sacred and the profane he avoids the mundanity of the everyday and exists in the liminal world of the nightclub and rockstar lifestyle. 'That's what Prince is about - the twin sides of human nature. "Sin and Salvation," says the man who dedicates to God (the album) Dirty Mind' (Salewicz 1981).

An analysis of Madonna, U2 or many other famous popular music stars or bands could also illustrate how pop stars are worshipped by their fans. Whether one considers these groups of worshippers as constituting new religious movements, cults or implicit religion, or not, it is clear that their behaviour is similar in many ways to that of religious worshippers. It offers the homeless self of contemporary culture (Heelas and Woodhead 2001, 53) a place of belonging within Prince's world. Is there a cult of Prince? Are there those who worship him religiously? There are certainly those who have an image of him on their wall and who try to behave like him. Every would-be pop star sets out to be worshipped by adoring fans, using the power of the media to aid them. Prince is selling pleasure, selling a hollow shell that makes no pretensions that anything will be found inside. His is a material and materialist religion that is rooted in the sale and use of musical artifacts.

While many religions offer a spirit to live inside the body of the worshipper, Prince offers a shell to wear on the outside, a style. He is a triumph of postmodernity, of style as content. He rejects the concept of external content in a celebration of the individual. The imaginary world he has created began as a complex form of packaging for his music to try to ensure its success, but has evolved and become interwoven into his work as a vital part of a multimedia whole.

Pop stars acting as 21st century popular icons play a significant part in generating artificial needs and sustaining and developing consumer capitalism, by creating idealised consumers and training young people in brand loyalty, transforming traditions of religious observance, worship, ritual and devotion into consumer behaviours, by creating gods who have products to sell such as compact discs, posters and t-shirts. In western culture, Prince and his peers in the world of music are fulfilling roles traditionally played by religious figures such as Moses, Jesus, Mohamed and Buddha, as traditional religions rapidly decline, and consumer capitialism controls the structure and development of society and culture. Like many other popstars, once he gained fame and commercial success and was raised to the status of popular icon using a carefully constructed mediapheme, Prince struggled with his commodification by the music industry. By adopting a symbol as a name, and playing with iconography using his onstage persona, colour, graphics, imagery, music and religious references, he both adopted and challenged the use of popular icons as idealised exemplars of consumer culture in a creative and entertaining fashion.

Prince initially created an onstage character and developed a myth to surround him, to aid in the marketing of his music, and help overcome his shy personality. This has developed so that the semi-fictional character of Prince is now the main focus of his artwork. Prince's self, or that perceived as such by the public, is his primary text, his body is the principal instrument he uses, his guitar playing and singing subsumed as a part of the cult that surrounds him, represented by a graphic symbol, moving his form from musical artwork to performance art. More than within theatre, film, opera, television or any other multimedia form of performance art, within popular music culture Prince is able to confuse the boundaries between the real and the imaginary,

the concrete and the mythical. This enables him to involve, engage and interact with his audience by stepping off the screen or stage into the real world, and validate his artwork, through concerts and interviews, as being part of reality rather than fiction. This in turn allows him to adopt techniques usually seen within religions, as part of his work. It is as if he is creating a new religious movement as an artwork, with himself as the central author, text and performer. The audience takes part in the performance by consuming Prince and the artifacts he sells, projecting into his shell and allowing themselves to be possessed as members of his cult.[9]

Bibliography

Baitz, Dana. Let's Go Crazy Analysis. http://www.danabaitz.com/groove.php?s=2&t=l. [accessed 20 July 2007].

Baty, S. Paige. 1995. *American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic*. University of California Press: Berkeley.

Besancon, Alain. 2007. *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*. Trans. Jane Marie Todd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Boorstin, Daniel J. 1992. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Vintage.

Buxton, D. 1985. Rock Music, The Star System and the Rise of Consumerism. *The Critical Communications Review, Vol. III: Popular Culture and Media Events*. Ed. Vincent Mosko and Janet Wasco. Norwood, NJ: Greenwood.

Chastagner, Claude. 1999. The Parents' Music Resource Center: From Information to Censorship. *Popular Music* 18, no. 2: 179-192.

Church of England. Alternative Services, Series One: The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony. http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/1928/texts/marriage.html [accessed 7 December 2008].

Cooper, Carol. June 1983. Prince: Someday Your Prince Will Come. *The Face*. Wagadon: London.

Cowan, Douglas and David Bromley. 2008. *Cults and New Religions*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Durkheim, Emile. 1965. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Orig. 1912, English translation by Joseph Swain: 1915. New York: The Free Press.

Dyer, Richard. 1979. *Stars*. London: British Film Institute.

Frith, Simon. 1981. *Sound Effects; Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*. New York: Constable.

Goodwin, Andrew. 1993. *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Hallick, Mary Paloumpis. 2001. *The Story of Icons*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross.

Hamilton, Marybeth. 1998. 'Sexual politics and African-American music; or, placing Little Richard in history', *History Workshop Journal* 46:161-176.

Heelas, Paul and Linda Woodhead. 2001. Homeless Minds Today? *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*. Ed.

---

[9] The adventures of Prince in hyperreality continue as it is hard to tell if any news about him is factual. In 2007 he performed 21 nights of concerts at the 23,000 capacity O2 arena in London. He has also apparently become a Jehovah's Witness and surprised fans by knocking on their doors. 'It is perhaps unsurprising that, like many pioneering black artists before him, Prince has sought solace in the church. Though he was brought up as a practising Seventh Day Adventist he has recently, like Michael Jackson before him, become a Jehovah's Witness. The story of his conversion broke in typically surreal fashion last October, when a newspaper in his hometown reported how a married couple had answered their door to find Prince proffering a copy of the Watchtower. Though they were orthodox Jews, and it was Yom Kippur, they were also Prince fans. They welcomed him into the house where, with his friend Larry Graham, erstwhile member of Sly & the Family Stone, one of Prince's core influences, he spread the word of Jehovah for 20 minutes before moving on to the next house' (O'Hagan 2004).

Linda Woodhead, Paul Heelas and David Martin. London: Routledge.

Hill, Dave. 1989. *Prince; a Pop Life*. London: Three Rivers Press.

Johnson, Fred. 2004. U2, Mythology and Mass-mediated Survival. *Popular Music and Society* 27, no. 1: 79-99.

Longhurst, Brian. 1995. *Popular Music and Society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Lowenthal, Leo. 1944. *The Triumph of Mass Idols in Radio Research 1942-1943*. Ed. Paul Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton. Repr. Literature and Mass Culture. New Brunswick NJ: Transaction, 1984.

Marshall, David. 1997. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Murry, Charles Shaar. 1989. *Crosstown Traffic: Jimi Hendrix and Post-war Pop*. London: Faber and Faber.

O'Hagan, Sean. 2004. Royal Blush. *The Observer*, April 4. http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/features/story/0,11710,1186112,00.html), [accessed 8 January 2008].

Rein, Irving, Philip Cotler and Martin Stoller. 1997. *High Visibility: The making and Marketing of Professionals into celebrities*. Chicago, IL: McGraw-Hill.

Salewicz, Chris. 1981. Prince: Strutting With The New Soul Monarch. *New Musical Express*, June 6.

Stewart, Alexander. Funky Drummer: New Orleans, James Brown and the Rhythmic Transformation of American Popular Music. 2000. *Popular Music* 19, no.3: 293-318.

Sutcliffe, Phil. 1992. Prince: The Entertainment Centre, Sydney, Australia; Review and Interview. *Q magazine*, July.

Till, Rupert. 2007. The Blues Blueprint: The Blues in the Music of the Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin. *Cross the Water Blues; African American Music in Europe*. Ed. Neil Wynn. Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press.

Tosches, Nick. 1999. *Unsung Heroes of Rock'n'Roll*. New York: Da Capo.

Tudor, Andrew. 1975. *Image and Influence; Studies in the Sociology of Film*, New York: Allen and Unwin.

Von Appen, Ralph. and André Doehring. 2006. Nevermind The Beatles, here's Exile 61 and Nico: 'The top 100 records of all time' - a canon of pop and rock albums from a sociological and an aesthetic perspective. *Popular Music* 25 no. 1: 38.

Vincent, Rickey. 1996. *Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of the One*. London: St. Martin's Griffin.

Vout, Caroline. 1996. The Myth of the Toga: Understanding the History of Roman Dress. *Greece & Rome*, 2nd Series. 43, no. 2: 204-220.

White, Charles. 2003. *The Life and Times of Little Richard: The Authorised Biography*. New York: Omnibus.

Discography

'Ain't Got Nobody to Grind My Coffee', Clara Smith, Columbia Records (1928).

'Darling Nikki', Prince and the Revolution, Purple Rain, Warner Brothers Records (1984).

'Fire', The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Are You Experienced?, Reprise Records (1967).

'Kitchen Man', Bessie Smith, Colombia Records, (1929).

'Let's Go Crazy', Prince and the Revolution, Purple Rain, Warner Brothers Records (1984).

'Pig Meat Papa', Lead Belly, Library of Congress (1935).

'Purple Haze', The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Are You Experienced?, Reprise Records (1967).

'Shave 'Em Dry', Lucille Bogan, Banner Records (1935).

'Soft and Wet', Prince with Chris Moon, For You, Warner Brothers Records (1978).

'That Black Snake Moan', Blind Lemon Jefferson, Paramount Records (1926).

Filmography

Prince - Live at the Aladdin Las Vegas, Directed by Hamri, S. (dir.), Universal Music, (2003) (DVD).

Purple Rain, Magnoli, A. (dir.), Warner Brothers Pictures (1984).

Purple Rain, Prince and the Revolution, Warner Brothers Records (1984).

The Blues Brothers, Landis, J. (dir.), Universla Pictures (1980).

Software

Guitar Hero software for various games consoles, Activision, 2007.

Singstar software for various game consoles, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2004.