

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Barron, Lee (2009) Droogs, electro-vooodoo and kyborgs: pastiche, postmodernism and Kylie Minogue live. *Nebula*, 6 (1). pp. 78-92. ISSN 1449-7751

Published by: Nebula

URL:

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<https://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/3405/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

## **Droogs, Electro-Voodoo and Kyborgs: Pastiche, Postmodernism and Kylie Minogue Live.**

By Lee Barron

“Do you like what you see?” (Kylie Minogue, ‘Spinning Around,’ 2000).

Given that her career has involved multiple incarnations and personas since its beginning in the late 1980s, it is little surprise that the Australian pop performer Kylie Minogue’s concert performances have a distinctly postmodernist character. In a previous article, ‘The Seven Ages of Kylie Minogue’, I presented a chronologically-structured overview of Minogue’s musical and visual performances, from her beginnings as a ‘cute’ pure pop performer, through her ‘Sex’ and ‘Dance’ phases, through to ‘Gothic,’ ‘Camp,’ ‘Cyber’ and ‘Bardot’ manifestations. In that article, I linked Minogue with postmodernist practices and cultural theory. This article picks up the Minogue cultural ‘story,’ and further explores Minogue’s connections with postmodernism. However, the difference is that within this article I will focus exclusively upon her live performances, and particularly one case study, the *KylieFever2002* tour that was undertaken to promote her 2001 *Fever* Album. Within this article, I will explore the ways in which that concert displayed a distinctive form of postmodernity in terms of its persistent cultural borrowings, and Minogue’s active toying with her performative identity. Hence, I will link postmodernist theorizations of identity with Minogue’s performative approach throughout the concert.

With regard to postmodernism and popular music, Connor (1989) argues that rock music has a claim to be the most representative of postmodern cultural forms, while other commentators identify rap and hip-hop as a key postmodernist musical expression via its habitual use of cultural pastiche and sampling (Strinati, Lemert). However, I will argue that Kylie Minogue’s performance within *KylieFever2002* is a perfect (and deliberate) illustration of the postmodern form within pop music, as evinced by the stylistic strategies employed in the staging, direction, thematic structure and content. The source of this manifest presence of postmodernism stems directly from Minogue’s association with her creative director, William Baker, who, in the design of the concert and costumes

actively plundered cinematic and televisual western culture for inspiration and effect, and who also reflexively toys with the Minogue persona, or rather, personas, throughout the course of the performance. Therefore, through a critical analysis of *KylieFever2002*, I will argue that Kylie Minogue is a quintessential and reflexive postmodern cultural figure.

### ***KylieFever2002: Pop Culture Plundering and the Multi-Mediated Self-Referential Kylie***

With regard to Minogue's performing history, the *KylieFever2002* tour would represent, in terms of scale and spectacle, a decisive development in Kylie Minogue's career. As Whiteley states, in the 1990s, Minogue's popularity had appeared to waver, certainly commercially, but 2002 represented a triumphant cultural return, symbolized by her five Brit Awards at the annual UK Music Industry Awards (for which she acted as host in 2009). The abandonment of the more introspective 'Indie' incarnation was driven by a self-reflexive acknowledgement that 'her status within pop music necessitated a return to her earlier fun-image – sexy but clean' (Whiteley 338). Subsequently, 'Indie' and 'Gothic' gave way to the rise of 'Camp Kylie,' the pop persona which would see her ride to the top of the UK charts once more, and which laid the foundations for the commercially-triumphant 'Cyber-Kylie' and her global mega-hit, 'Can't Get You Out Of My Head' in 2001 (Barron).

In this sense, Kylie Minogue's transformative ability to shed performative personas illustrates a social and cultural conception of identity that stresses the primacy of fluidity over fixity in the contemporary consumer world. As Kellner argues, within 'traditional' societies, identity was habitually perceived to be fixed, solid, and stable, a function of predefined social roles. Then, within the 'age of modernity,' identity became more 'mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and innovation. Yet the forms of identity in modernity were also relatively substantial and fixed and identity still comes from a circumscribed set of roles and norms (Hall 141). However, 'from the postmodern perspective, as the pace, extension, and complexity of modern societies accelerate, identity becomes more and more unstable, more and more fragile' a

process whereby identity is not reducible to a set of roles (mother, father, brother, sister, occupation) but rather a 'game' 'that one plays, so that one can easily shift from one identity to another' (Hall 153). For Hall, encapsulating the quintessence of this emergent postmodern form of identity and subjectivity:

The Postmodern subject is conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self.' Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about... The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy (277).

Whether valid or not on the wider social and cultural stage, this kind of postmodernist conception of a fantasy-related fluidity of identity does resonate with Kylie Minogue. It would become the essence of her recording image, with each album presenting an alternative 'Kylie,' but, under William Baker's direction, the postmodernist conception of identity is the very essence of *KylieFever2002*, a concert that represents the Minogue persona as a subject of continual play.

William Baker first met Kylie Minogue in 1994 when working at Vivienne Westwood's clothing boutique, *Flagship*, in London and she visited the boutique. Baker persuaded her to have coffee with him and then 'bombarded her with ideas' (Baker and Minogue 1). He subsequently became her creative director and effectively 'postmodernised' her, a process identifiable from the 'Indie Kylie' period onwards. Certainly, his discussions of Kylie Minogue as a cultural icon are littered with philosophical references, from Plato to Feuerbach (Baker is a theology graduate). As Baker states:

My dabblings in religious theory are not really at odds with my current occupation as Kylie's creative director. For me, there was a latent mystery and power in the language and imagery of religion. To a pop fan and child of the MTV generation, the connections between pop, celebrity and religion seemed

obvious. Like religion, pop is an opiate of the masses. Reproductions of pop icons and celebrity idols have replaced religious imagery as the dominant form of iconography in the late twentieth century (Minogue, Baker, Farrow, and Heath 3).

Baker injected philosophical ideas into the creative direction of Minogue's career, as became manifestly apparent within *KylieFever2002*. While the previous, and far more low-key, tour for *Light Years* was dominated by a suitably over-arching camp attitude (befitting the 'Camp Kylie' period), the *KylieFever2002* arena tour, staged on a grander and more spectacular scale, exhibited a deliberately postmodern ethic. Rather than any overarching theme, *KylieFever2002* was a purposefully designed theatrical event, split into seven distinctive 'Acts:'

- Act 1: Silvanemesis
- Act 2: Droogie Nights
- Act 3: The Crying Game
- Act 4: Streetstyle
- Act 5: Sex in Venice
- Act 6: Cybertronica
- Act 7: Voodoo Inferno

The concert commences with the faintly camp strains of 'The Hills are Alive' from *The Sound of Music* then *Act 1: Silvanemesis* beings. As the concert starts, dancers begin to thread across the stage wearing metallic helmets which completely obscure their faces. Then, a metallic, silver-armour-clad Kylie Minogue appears; slowly rising from beneath the stage upon a platform in the guise of the 'Kyborg Queen' (her introduction alludes to Madonna's 'Dita,' which involves a similar entrance from beneath the stage at the beginning of her 1993 *Girly Show* concert). For the image of the 'Kyborg,' Baker drew his inspiration directly from Fritz Lang's silent classic film, *Metropolis* (1926) and its central female robot, Maria. Similar to Lang's female-machine, Minogue is dressed in a metallic exo-skeleton and breastplate which slowly unfolds and is then shed. Dressed in silver shorts, bra, and metallic-looking thigh-length boots, 'Cyber-Kylie' first walks across the stage, and then begins to dance in a slow, mechanical manner, as she begins to perform the first song of the concert, 'Come Into My World,' drawn from the *Fever*

album. Having left behind her Kyborg-guise, she now invokes a series of other science-fiction images. As she sings, she interacts with her robotic dancers in a manner evocative of the Borg Queen from *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996). Additional cultural references within this sequence also include the female Borg character Seven of Nine from *Star Trek: Voyager* and the supporting dancers, with their skintight bodysuits and opaque reflective visors, are styled in accordance with a 1970s Jon Pertwee-era *Doctor Who* episode (MacDonald and Baker). Therefore, if, as Wood argues, postmodernist culture includes ‘multiple styles, which are juxtaposed with one another, creating a polyphony of styles’, the Silvanemesis sequence of the concert ably demonstrates this process and sets the scene for further polyphony as the performance unfolds (Woods 216).

The Second Act of the concert, *Droogie Nights* extends and develops this postmodern play. Whilst Silvanemesis is landscaped on backscreens showing images of computer grids to convey the cybernetic/sci-fi tone of the Act, *Droogie Nights* is introduced via a rapid succession of images of Beethoven, the relevance of which is revealed as the female dancers emerge from the side of the stage dressed in ‘futuristic’ 1970s fashions revealing that this sequence of the performance represents a homage to Anthony Burgess’ 1962 dystopic novel *A Clockwork Orange* concerning violence, gangs, and the ‘curing’ of violent tendencies, and especially Stanley Kubrick’s 1971 film adaptation. Hence, Kylie returns to the stage to perform ‘Spinning Around’ dressed as the head-Droog, Alex and is flanked by male dancers who represent her fellow Droog gang, all dressed in the now iconic uniform of white boiler suits and black bowler hats, complete with stick, batons, coshes and even an inflatable ‘K,’ that alludes (albeit less visually and sexually provocatively) to the sculpture used within the film’s infamous rape scene. This sequence demonstrates the performance’s boldest postmodernist moment, in which the concert explicitly draws upon textual and visual cues derived from a film which was the focus of an early 1970s media-driven ‘moral panic,’ a film that was called a ‘celluloid cesspool which would destroy the impressionable and the immature’ (Petley 92). Arguably, this visibly reinforces the distance Minogue has travelled from *Neighbors* and her Aitken and Waterman ‘Cute’ musical beginnings, and strives to exemplify her cool, postmodernist status and cultural savvy.

Thus far, the concert demonstrably accords with the cultural magpie quality critically attributed to postmodernism, with its active process of re-working and the emphasis upon a surface borrowing of striking imagery from a text, and the rejection of any ideology or encoded meaning (Humm 146-147). For example, as Von Gunden (1991) points out in relation to the science fiction classic, *Star Wars* (1977), commentators have pointed out the similarities between the end sequence of *Star Wars*, in which Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Chewbacca walk between ranks of cheering Rebel troops, with Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* (1935), wherein the images of the film have been appropriated but the ideological meanings and themes have been discarded. And *KylieFever2002* operates in exactly the same postmodernist manner as any associations with violence are over-written in the quest for style, image and 'look.' Ultimately, Kylie looks great in a Droog costume, and that is, in accordance with the creative ethos of the concert, the underlining objective.

*Act 3: The Crying Game* continues with this intertextual theme; however it takes a very different form, both visually and in terms of the tempo. Within this segment, the Droog-inspired costume is replaced by a demure evening dress to mark a 'ballads section' of the concert. This section of the concert takes its name from the song 'The Crying Game,' originally performed by Boy George, and used prominently in Neil Jordan's 1992 film *The Crying Game*. The issues of artifice and mimicry are central to the film, and it is an inspired choice for the concert, which is also predicated on these concepts. Moreover, it reinforces the maturity of post-Millennial Minogue as this segment of the concert draws upon a film concerning redemption from a life of violence and sexual difference, a film whose narrative concerns 'the love affair of an IRA terrorist and a gay transvestite' (Giles 9). With special relevance to Minogue, her career and the concert, it is a film that is centrally about 'the fluidities and complexities of sex and gender identities' (Bruzzi 186). This segment constitutes a medley, with the 'Crying Game' representing the central song, but giving way to the older Minogue songs, 'Put Yourself In My Place' and 'Finer Feelings,' before returning to the 'Crying Game' for a rousing Gospel-tinged finale. The cultural reference to the *Crying Game* therefore serves to highlight Baker's creative mission concerning Minogue's image, as it is a cinematic

text that is predicated upon mimicry and masquerade, the central stylistic qualities of Minogue's oeuvre.

From 'The Crying Game,' the concert then segues into Act 4: *Streetstyle*, which again plunders controversial 1970s cinema for its primary visual inspiration. The mise-en-scène is ostensibly 'New York/The Bronx' in the early 1980s, characterized by brightly-coloured graffiti and the motifs of early hip-hop/breakdance culture (Bennett, 2001). As a 'scratch/rap' version of 'Confide In Me,' drawn from the 'Dance Kylie' era begins, a lone male dancer performs on the stage in the guise of a graffiti artist. Kylie then enters the stage to join the dancer and to initiate the 'narrative' of this sequence: a story which gives this segment its explicit postmodern performative aspect. Within this section, Kylie is dressed in a police uniform; however, it is *not* a conventional uniform, it is a de-contextualised parody which makes a stylistic reference to the film *The Night Porter* (Liliana Cavani, 1974), a film centred upon a sadomasochistic erotic relationship between former SS officer, Maximilian Aldorfer (Dirk Bogarde) and former concentration camp prisoner, Lucia Atherton (Charlotte Rampling). And the reference is precise as William Baker has stated, the look for Minogue within this Act, although ostensibly portraying a 'New York Cop,' features braces which cover her breasts and a peaked cap, elements directly inspired by the classic poster image of Lucia/Rampling used to advertise the film (MacDonald and Baker). Furthermore, the choreography of the early part of *Streetstyle* also mirrors aspects of the film's narrative. As Keesey and Duncan state regarding the relationship between Max and Lucia:

In the changing power dynamic of their sadomasochistic relationship, it is not clear who is really the slave and who the master. This erotic tension is epitomized in the scene where a bare-breasted Lucia vamps Max by performing a cabaret number in long black gloves and a Nazi cap (147).

Within *Streetstyle*, the dance routine, designed as a form of choreographed struggle, similarly reflects a hierarchical relationship of dominance between Kylie's 'authority figure' and the dancer's defiant 'criminal.' Like *Droogie Nights*, *Streetstyle* instantiates a postmodern deconstruction of cultural texts and imagery. They eject the controversial aspects of the sources and displace and dismantle authorial intent (Derrida, 1997) in the

pursuit of performative spectacle and pastiche, a pastiche which functions as ‘a neutral practice of mimicry’ (Jameson, in Butler: 138). The practice is neutral because the primacy is upon the power of the images, and the context of the performance and the audience, which includes children, effectively demands that any signification is on the part of knowing audience members. To those who have no knowledge of *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Crying Game*, or *The Night Porter*, the spectacle is just that, a dazzling display of costume and movement, with Kylie as the focal point.

The next sequence of the show is Act 5: *Sex in Venice* and this too retains the significantly postmodernist tone, albeit in a modified manner. This is because *Sex in Venice* eschews any of the overt pastiche of the previous segments, but instead provides a pastiche of Kylie Minogue herself as *Sex in Venice* resurrects ‘Sex Kylie’ and most explicitly, ‘Camp Kylie,’ and combines them. The setting is a ‘boudoir,’ flanked with projected chandeliers and Kylie sings ‘On a Night Like This’ from atop a bed, dressed in lingerie in the guise of a ‘courtesan.’ However, this aesthetic of sexuality and mock decadence transforms into pure Camp as Kylie leaves the bed and joins her female and male dancers for a re-worked version of ‘The Locomotion,’ her first hit single, to perform a languid version of the accompanying locomotion dance which proceeds to progress along a platform into the audience area. In addition to the obvious nostalgia of the number, the imagery is also pure Camp. The male dancers wear visible make-up and are themselves dressed in a similar fashion to Minogue in lingerie, thus reflecting the oldest conception of Camp as a practice ‘addicted to actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis [which are] pleasantly ostentatious’ (Robertson 3). Consequently, Minogue’s use of Camp does not engage in that aspect of Camp Meyer defines as ‘an oppositional critique, embodied in the signifying practices that constitute queer identities’ (5). Rather, Minogue’s employment of Camp, as it is expressed throughout the *Light Years* recording, accords with Sontag’s conception that ‘Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical’ (277).

This is conspicuously evident the performance of the song ‘In Your Eyes,’ which seamlessly shifts into a segment of the 1980s DeBarge track ‘Rhythm of the Night.’ This section is purposefully designed as a carnival, with its excess and garish quality, and is suitably ‘carnavalesque.’ The connections between the carnival and pop have been

explicitly stated by Stallybrass and White, who argue that ‘the carnivalesque might erupt from the literary text, as in so much surrealist art, or from the advertisement hoarding, *or from a pop festival or a jazz concert*’ (292, my emphasis). Hence, *Sex in Venice* consciously evokes the carnival, and arguably the concert unfolds as a constant procession of images, costumes, dance and exuberant ‘escape’ for the audience for the duration of the show. And, with a coincidental but rather apt carnivalesque touch, one instance of the concert sees Kylie perform an impromptu wiggle of her bottom (now a star in its own right due to Minogue’s ‘Spinning Around’ video) in response to a placard held up by one spectator which reads: ‘Kylie Wiggle It 4 Daniel and Nick,’ and the ‘showing off of bottoms’ was an archetypal characteristic of the medieval carnival (Humphrey 32). Thus, Camp and carnival collide in a performer who also recognizes that her body has its own performative autonomy, and whose delight in her audience is evident.

*Sex in Venice* is followed by Act 6: *Cybertronica* which is predicated firmly upon the celebration and reiteration of the differing eras of Minogue’s career. *Cybertronica* begins with ‘Limbo’ and ‘Cowboy Style,’ drawn from her ‘Indie Kylie’ era, then Minogue performs the ‘Camp Kylie’ anthem, ‘Light Years,’ a version that is interspersed with snatches of the Giorgio Moroder-produced Donna Summer proto-electronica/disco classic, ‘I Feel Love’ to accentuate the dance orientation and inspirational origins of the song and the album from which the song is drawn. This section also features an updated, synth-laden ‘cyber’ version of ‘I Should Be So Lucky.’ The performance of this song elicits a delighted response from the audience and the sleek, sophisticated and contemporary version pays homage to her musical origins. The songs also serves to compellingly emphasize the distance that she has traveled throughout her recording career, and it illustrates the ease with which she can combine her ‘difficult’ *Kylie Minogue/Impossible Princess* album with the critical and commercial return of *Light Years*, reflexively channeling the ‘Singing Budgie’ through the postmodern, chic 2000s Kylie. As the concert moves into the final act, *Voodoo Inferno*, the differing periods of Minogue’s career and her thematic identities are further brought together. Songs such as ‘Better The Devil You Know’ continue the nostalgic return to her SAW period, while the

concert ends with an encore of the Cyber-Kylie anthem 'Can't Get You Out Of My Head' bringing the concert to Minogue's present musical incarnation.

Throughout *KylieFever2002* the various personifications of Kylie Minogue come and go, sometimes visually realized, sometimes in the form of musical selections. Although ostensibly promoting the *Fever* album, the concert draws upon the entire spectrum of her recording career. Throughout the performance she symbolically enacts the shifting, unstable conception of the postmodern self, a conception of self that is constituted theatrically through role-playing and image construction, by which it is possible to switch identities with the changing 'winds of fashion' (Kellner). Kylie's identity is grounded in play, in gamesmanship. Yet, while one might doubt the extent and validity that such play is, as Callincos argues, possible in real life, in which access to the props and costumes of theatricality are economically and materially limited, *KylieFever2002* represents a visual and cultural exercise in such postmodern 'play' as is limited to the fantasy microcosm of the arena and the spectacular space of the concert stage. Perhaps we cannot change our selves with the turbulent winds of fashion, but within her performative guises, Kylie Minogue can, and has.

### **Cyber-Charlene and Popular Postmodernism**

*KylieFever2002* represented a significant development within Kylie Minogue's performative status. It was, arguably, Minogue's transition to concerts on the scale of Madonna's conceptually-based *Girly Show*. Like Madonna's performances (though without their overt sexuality), *KylieFever2002* was a multi-faceted and media-driven extravaganza that was radically different in scope and scale to her previous tour, and which has established the template for her subsequent tours. And, with its deliberate and consistent use of pastiche, *KylieFever2002* accords with one of Caillois' key components of play: mimicry. For Caillois, in his categorization of the principal forms of gaming (agon, alea, mimicry and ilinx) 'all play presupposes the temporary acceptance, if not of an illusion...of a closed...imaginary universe' (19). Play, in this sense, which Caillois terms 'mimicry,' involves 'make-believe,' the shedding of identity, and masquerade

(ibid). For Caillois, at the heart of mimicry is a process of incessant invention, but invention which is governed by a unique rule that concerns:

...the actor's fascinating the spectator, while avoiding an error that might lead the spectator to break the spell. The spectator must lend [him/herself] to the illusion without first challenging the décor, mask, or artifice which for a given time he is asked to believe in as more real than reality itself (23).

Masquerade is, for many commentators, the epitome of a constructed identity and masquerade is at the essence of Minogue's recording career, it is the defining aspect of *KylieFever2002*, William Baker and Minogue's particular 'closed imaginary universe'; a postmodern space that is located on stage and temporally fixed (with regard to the concert's duration). Unlike Minogue's previous tour for the *Light Years* album which, while still exuberant, garish and vivid was far more modest in scope, *KylieFever2002* reflected a commercially and culturally resurgent performer. Throughout the performance, Minogue (guided by Baker) artfully and knowingly engages in a demonstrative and flamboyant display of 'artifice and transformation', the epitome of Kylie Minogue's musical career (Marshall 194). Therefore, the trajectory of Kylie Minogue's career is one of a progressive, reflexive awareness of the efficacy of transformation, a process decisively captured and expressed and celebrated within *KylieFever2002*. As Rojek states:

Postmodernism associates modernity with the heaviness of being, that is, a psychology dominated by responsibility, morality and guilt... postmodernism claims that postmodernity is associated with the lightness of being. It recognises play, change and anomaly as the province of humankind. It urges us to live without guilt (in Rogers, 1999: 146)

*KylieFever2002* reflects and engenders such a guilt-free state and foregrounds similar celebratory values and 'lightness,' and may therefore be said to illustrate the *progressive* aspects of postmodernism, principally the potential freedom to play with identity (Kellner). And, although limited to the stage and a world of performative make-

believe, *KylieFever2002* plays out this postmodern ideal. However, in doing so, it also highlights the pitfalls of postmodernism, because postmodern society

Takes into itself whatever is produced from a counter-culture, such as punk rock and sexually explicit material. Far from this material being condemned by the establishment, it is rather made into a successful commercial commodity (Kaplan 146-147).

But this is exactly the point of Baker's vision. It is performance as celebration, an inter-textual rollercoaster of divergent cultural sources and Minogue's performative history. Thus, in a critical era in which discussions of postmodern culture are potentially passé – the high watermark for such analysis was the 1980s and early 1990s (Denzin, 1988; Degli-Esposti, 1998) – and the very concept of the postmodern is a cliché, Kylie Minogue revitalizes its rhetorical strategies. This is because *KylieFever2000*, from Act 1 to Act 7, is a purposely designed postmodern spectacle that toys with the differing incarnations of Kylie Minogue since 1988's SAW period to 2001's 'Can't Get You Out Of My Head,' and interweaves it with de-contextualised references to a range of media texts, from the nostalgic science fiction of *Metropolis*, *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who*, to the more controversial referencing of *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Night Porter*.

Ultimately, throughout the performance, Kylie Minogue's various incarnations, her differing 'ages,' are constantly invoked and re-presented in a phantasmagoric musical/visual medley. Because, from beginning to end, *KylieFever2002* is explicitly predicated on the visual impact such textual sources generate. Any ideology or meaning-fixing 'meta-narrative' is simply discarded and creatively neutralized in the pursuit of style. Thus, with William Baker's design, direction and understanding of the concept of postmodernism, *KylieFever2002* is an exercise in postmodernist stylistic pastiche, with Kylie Minogue as the switching centre. And, with a nod to more critical theory-minded appraisals, it is also a very successful commercial commodity.

Consequently, the lavish 'pomo' spectacle of *KylieFever2002* marked a significant progression of Minogue as an artist and as a live performer. Although she has consistently toured throughout her recording career, this tour represented a definitive advance in scale and creative vision. Moreover, such spectacle has continued in Minogue's subsequent tours. Kylie took to the stage in 2005 in the lavish guise of the

‘Showgirl,’ a performance that divided Minogue into various and distinctive incarnations of the Showgirl identity (Las Vegas Showgirl, Follies Showgirl, Disco Diva, Space Age Showgirl, Torch Singer), and which also featured, as with *KylieFever2002*, cultural references to *Doctor Who* with dancers flanking Kylie in Cyberman regalia. Similarly, the tour for Minogue’s 2007 *X* album, *KylieX2008*, is stylistically divided into eight Acts and sees Kylie display a series of images, from a distinctly Erotica-era Madonna-like outfit (complete with ‘cyber-gauntlets’), a Toni Basil-inspired cheerleader routine, the return of the Showgirl (against the backdrop of a Barry Manilow cover, ‘Copacabana’), a Japanese-inspired Geisha sequence (that also illustrates Baker’s cultural edginess by having dancers slowly lowered to the stage bound in masochistic Japanese bondage techniques), and Minogue in Napoleonic-style French period costume for a ball gown segment. Furthermore, Kylie performs ‘Spinning Around’ on a stage transformed into a 1970s-stlye disco, complete with her dancers dressed in gold lamé hotpants, again emphasizing her ability to draw upon wider popular culture for inspiration, but also to cite her own, now extensive performative history and cultural iconography to furnish her performances.

Postmodernism is alive and well in post-Millennial popular culture, and can be identified and experienced within the live extravaganzas of Kylie Minogue. And, thanks to the artful, pop culturally-literate, philosophically aware and design-orientated direction of William Baker, she *knows* that she is postmodern. How very postmodern.

### **Acknowledgement**

I must express my thanks to the anonymous *Nebula* reviewer for their incisive and critically encouraging comments, stylistic and conceptual suggestions, and above all, for their enthusiasm for the research and my Kylie studies.

## References

- Baker, William. Minogue, Kylie. *Kylie: La La La*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2002.
- Barron, Lee. The Seven Ages of Kylie Minogue: Postmodernism, Identity, and Performative Mimicry, *Nebula*, Volume. 5, Issue 4, December, 2008.
- Bennett, Andy. *Cultures of Popular Music*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001.
- Bruzzi, Stella. *Undressing Cinema*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.
- Caillois, Roger. *Man, Play and Games*. (Trans Meyer Barash) Urbana and Chicago: University Of Illinois Press, 1958.
- Callinicos, Alex. *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.
- Degli-Esposti, Cristina. Postmodernism(s), in, Degli-Esposti, Cristina. (ed) *Postmodernism in the Cinema*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp 3-18, 1998.
- Denzin, Norman. Blue Velvet: Postmodern Contradictions, *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 5, pp 461-730, 1988.
- Giles, Jane. *The Crying Game*. London: BFI, 1997.
- Hall, Stuart. The Question of Cultural Identity, in Hall, Stuart. McGrew, Tony. (eds) *Modernity and its Futures*. Open University Press, 1992.
- Humm, Maggie. (1997) *Feminism and Film*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Humphrey, Chris. *The Politics of Carnival: Festive Misrule in Medieval England*. Manchester and New York Manchester University Press, 2001.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism and Consumer Culture*. New York and London: Routledge, 1988.
- Keeseey, Douglas. Duncan, Paul. *Erotic Cinema*. Taschen, 2005.
- Kellner, Douglas. Popular culture and the construction of postmodern identities. In, (1992) Lash, Scott. Friedman, Jonathan. (eds) *Modernity and Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp 141-178, 1992.

- Lemert, Charles. *Postmodernism is Not What You Think*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- MacDonald, Alan. Baker, William. (Directors) (2002) *Kylie: La la la. KylieFever2002* (EMI), 2002.
- Meyer, Moe. *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Minogue, Kylie. Baker, William. Farrow, Mark. Jeffrey, Jonathon. Heath, Chris. *Kylie*. London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1999.
- Rogers, Mary Frances. *Barbie culture*. London: Sage, 1999.
- Robertson, Pamela. *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp From Mae West To Madonna*. London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 1996.
- Sontag, Susan. Notes on "Camp." *In Against Interpretation*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- Stallybrass, Peter & Allon White "Bourgeois Hysteria And The Carnavalesque" in Simon During (ed) *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Strinati, Dominic. Postmodernism and Popular Culture. In, Storey, John. (ed) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.
- Von Gunden, Kenneth. *Postmodern Auteurs: Coppola, Lucas, De Palma, Spielberg and Scorsese*. London: McFarland, 1991.
- Whiteley, Sheila. Celebrity: The Killing Fields of Popular Music. In. Holmes, Su. Redmond, Sean. (eds) *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, pp 329-343, 2006.
- Woods, Tim. *Beginning Postmodernism*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999.