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The Live Album or Many Ways of Representing Performance

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Abstract

The analysis of live albums can clarify the dialectic between studio recordings and live performances. After discussing key concepts such as authenticity, space, time and place, and documentation, the author gives a preliminary definition of live albums, combining available descriptions and comparing them with different typologies and functions of these recordings. The article aims to give a new definition of the concept of live albums, gathering their primary elements: “A live album is an officially released extended recording of popular music representing one or more actually occurred public performances”.

Keywords

performance, rock music, live album, authenticity

Introduction: recording and performance

The relationship between recordings and performances is a central concept in performance studies. This topic is particularly meaningful in popular music and even more so in rock music, where the dialectic between studio recordings and live music is crucial for both artists and the audience. The cultural implications of this juxtaposition can be traced through the study of ‘live albums’, both in terms of recordings and the actual live experience. In academic studies there is a large amount of literature on the relationship between recording and performance, but few researchers have paid attention to this particular type of recording.

Live albums play a particularly important role in rock music, but in this paper I will use the more general concept of ‘popular music’ for two main reasons: since live albums can also be found in other popular music genres, such as jazz and mainstream music, researchers must first focus on live albums in general, before approaching sub genres; secondly, the concept of ‘rock music’ still lacks a broadly accepted definition and it is therefore difficult to use with the unambiguity required in a scientific investigation.

The dichotomy between studio and live has some parallels in academic discourses; its extreme positions can be exemplified, on

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the one hand, by John S. Gunders' PhD thesis, targeted against "an academic suspicion about authenticity as a valuing and explanatory mechanism" (Gunders 2009: vi), and on the other hand, by Mag Uidhir trying to demonstrate with sagacious but quite sophistical 'quibbles' that "there is no in principle aesthetic difference between a live performance and a recording of that performance" (Uidhir 2007: 311).

The discussion in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* about Theodore Gracyk's article "Performance and recordings" (1997) between the author and Howard Niblock is an interesting example of this dialectic: Gracyk argues that "the experience of listening to recorded music is not obviously an aesthetic loss as compared to hearing the same music in live performance" (Gracyk 1997), while Niblock specifies that "*both* recordings and live performances have their particular advantages and drawbacks; and a world without *either* of them would be aesthetically poorer" (Niblock 1999: 368; see also Gracyk 1999). Gracyk focused on the central role of recordings in rock music, a point of view shared by other scholars (Clarke 1983; Fisher 1998; Perna 2006; Duffett 2009: 39). As P. Auslander assesses, although "there is no question but that rock exists primarily as recorded music and that rock culture is organized around recordings [...], [i]t is equally the case, however that rock music is performed live and that, within rock culture, such performance is important and demanded" (Auslander 1998: 2). The importance of recordings in popular music (especially in rock) does not prevent live experiences from playing a significant role, as most researchers admit, including those who point at the centrality of recordings (Kania and Gracyk 2011: 88–89; Clarke 1983: 201; Fisher 1998: 119; Duffett 2009: 48). Simon Frith summarizes the different functions of these two types of music experiences: "the recording offered one sort of pleasure (the perfection of a form, a dream state) while live performance offered another (the pleasure of a process, risk and excitement, intoxication)" (Frith 1996: 232).

Live albums, as we will see, refer to both these functions.

Sources and key concepts

When selecting the sources for an analysis of live albums, a fully **quantitative** criterion is made impossible, primarily due to the enormous number of live albums, but also because official statistics usually do not distinguish between live and studio albums (see e.g. www.officialcharts.com). A **qualitative** criterion presents problems as well: lists of the best live albums are quite common, but they strongly differ from one another, and none of them emerges as the most authoritative. Official charts of bestselling albums have an undoubtedly

objective element that cannot be disregarded; however the popular music market is excessively bound to a specific context in order to be raised as the main criterion for value. In my research, I used Wikipedia's category 'live album', presenting more than 2000 records from 1948 to the end of the nineties (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Live_albums_by_year); it is probably the only big albums database, discerning live from studio albums, and it gives a good picture of the popular perception of live albums, though we must not forget the nature of Wikipedia (anyone can create and edit the entries), making unavoidable incongruities and mistakes (for example, some studio albums are labeled as live albums or *vice versa*, and the date of the recording is sometimes confused with the release date). I used a qualitative criterion as well, creating a list of 114 live albums, through a combination of nineteen different top lists available in printed and Internet journals and blogs (see references), giving a co-efficient for every album relative to the ranking in every list (in the article every album appearing in the list is marked with an '#').

Before approaching the issue of live albums, we must highlight some key concepts and first define what we mean by 'performance' and 'recording'. John Fisher asserts that a **recording** can be conceived "both as temporally ordered sets of sounds and as physical objects", and he proposes the following definition: "the extended sound event (the sequence of sounds) produced by a studio quality standard playback (circa the time of creation) of a master tape" (Fisher 1998: 112–113). The medium used for the recording (LP, cassettes, CD, mp3, etc.) is obviously not irrelevant for the listening quality of a sound event, I will therefore only consider the first release of every album, that is, at least until the 1980's, usually the LP edition (see also Mednick 2013: xv).

A **performance** can be conceived in the broader sense of Goffman's definition: "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (see Duffett 2009: 45). In Richard Schechner's performance theory, performance can be divided into ten parts, but in the common sense, only the central one named 'public performance' is considered as a proper performance (Schechner 2002: 225). In this article the term 'performance' will mostly refer to this narrower meaning of an exhibition with the presence of an audience (see Kania and Gracyk 2011: 81), or, more precisely, "a public situation in which an audience attends to the actions of one or more performers, during which specified sounds are intentionally generated for the expressed purpose of being attended to as music by the audience" (Gracyk 1997: 139).

In approaching live albums, another key concept to be outlined is **authenticity**, a concept connected with liveliness and live performance (see Cooke 2011: 10; Behr 2012). As Kotarba argues,

“[p]opular music scholars and journalists, the music industry, and fans themselves tend to treat authenticity as an objective reality” (Kotarba 2009: 153), but the reality is that “the ontological liveliness of the live is a fiction, the projection of a desire that cannot (and, indeed, must not) be fulfilled” (Cooke 2011: 17). Auslander similarly states that “the creation of the effect of authenticity in rock is a matter of culturally determined convention, not an expression of essence” (Auslander 1998: 6), but he adds that “the fact that the criteria for rock authenticity are imaginary has never prevented them from functioning in a very real way for rock fans” (Auslander 1998: 5). According to P. Vannini and J. P. Williams (2009: 3),

“[a]uthenticity is not so much a state of being as it is the objectification of a process of representation, that is, it refers to a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place have come to agree represent an ideal or exemplar. As culture changes – and with it, tastes, beliefs, values, and practices – so too do definitions of what constitutes the authentic. Authenticity is thus a ‘moving target’”.

As Arnold Schoenberg affirms, “music is an art which takes place in time” (see Frith 1996: 267). Authenticity in respect to music is usually related to a single occasion, in other words, to the **space and time** in which it is performed. In this respect, it can be useful to outline the concept of **place**, “as point in space and time where music occurs” (Kotarba 2010: 4).

Interestingly, the vast majority of live albums, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, are titled with the name of the artist and the location of the concert the recording is taken from. However, the degree to which a recording can be considered an authentic **documentation** of a concert depends on different factors, including genre features. As Gracyk (1996: 69) states, “there is a continuing temptation to regard recorded rock as a mere substitute for — a documentation of — performances we cannot attend”. In some musical genres, such as jazz or classic music, “the recording may be viewed simply as a documentation of one important live performance of the work” (Fisher 1998: 110), but even if “we tend unreflectively to think of all recordings as necessarily veridic” (1998: 115), it is far from being true for many live albums.

Another key concept comes from Schechner’s theory dividing the performance into three parts in terms of before/present/after, and especially the sub-partition of the aftermath in **archives** and **memories** (see Schechner 2002: 225). Glenn Gould, in Simon Frith’s words, “argues against live recordings as being, by their nature, ‘archive’ recordings: they reveal in documentary fashion something about their times – how Beethoven was interpreted then – but they are therefore

‘indisputably of and for their time. They spurn that elusive time-transcending objective which is always within the realization of recorded music’” (Frith 1996: 230). But besides documentation, a performance continues to affect its participants through memory, through the personal re-elaboration of the experienced event; as Diana Taylor (2003: 2) argues, “[p]erformances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity.”

As far as what has been stated above, it should be clear that the relationship between recording and performance is extremely complex, and cannot be reduced to dichotomous schemes. What seems to be an assessment shared by almost all researchers is that authenticity, as the fundamental parameter for judging a recording in relation to the event they claim to document, is “a matter of degree” (see Kania and Gracyk: 93; Fisher 1998: 117); not only because it depends on social and contextual interpretations, but also because “performances may be better or worse approximations to what the work prescribes” (Kania and Gracyk: 93). As we will see, “many records are far removed from any originating live performance, others are closer” (Fisher 1998: 117).

Definition

The main requirement of a scientific definition is maximum precision, that is, every single unit of the defined object must fit in the definition and every unit fitting in the definition must be included in the defined object (see Jarkho 2006: 90–91). In our particular case, if one live album does not fit into the definition or one non-live album does, the definition deserves further elaboration. This does not prevent the existence of ‘intermediate’ types, unavoidable in nature (2006: 24), which in the analysis must be considered separately as ‘hybrids’, since they are not fully representative of the defined object. Secondly, in approaching a definition, we have to discern primary (constant) and secondary (variable) elements (2006: 50): the former are those elements that must be present in any unit of the defined object, while the absence of secondary elements, even when frequent and important, does not make the unit less representative.

The commonly accepted meaning of live album is well expressed in Donald S. Passman’s (2006: 108) words: “A *live album* is recorded during a live concert (with lots of screaming and applause), rather than in a studio”. This definition is too generic (and sometimes incorrect, as we will see) but it points to the contrast with studio albums; Mednick significantly excluded any live album in his first book about “greatest rock’n’roll albums ever [...] mainly to avoid comparing apples with oranges” (Mednick 2013: xv). Wikipedia’s definition underlines this dichotomy as well:

„A live album is a recording consisting of material (usually music) recorded during stage performances using remote recording techniques, commonly contrasted with a studio album.

Live albums may be recorded at a single concert, or combine recordings made at multiple concerts“ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Live_album).

This definition offers some additional important elements, such as the use of remote recording techniques and the variability of the number of concerts from one to many, but it still lacks precision and a clear distinction between primary and secondary elements. Lalioti connects the concept of ‘live’ to the “concept of ‘presence’ of the embodied (in the sense of the physical) presence of both performers and members of the audience in a specific time and space” (Lalioti 2012: 7). S. Alexander Reed proceeds further in this direction, arguing that “[t]he one textual universal [...] in effectively all recordings whose pretext declare them to be ‘live’ is the presence of crowd noise—the cheering, applauding, and mumbling of a concert audience” (Reed 2005). Important as this element may be, there are still some albums labeled as ‘live’, eliminating completely or almost completely the audience’s presence. Heckling should therefore be considered a secondary element of live albums, along with overdubbing and engineering, allowing ‘control’ of the the audience’s reactions, both eliminating live sounds and/or adding them from different sources (see Duffett 2009).

In the *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* we find what is most likely the most accurate description of a live album:

„A live album is an extended recording that is perceived to be a document of a live performance or performances (with time and place usually indicated). [...]

The modern ‘live album’ is distinguished by its difference from the ‘studio album’ and its technological tricks, even though both use similar multitrack equipment. The live album is defined by a perceived sense of spontaneous performance, emotional directness and audience interaction. [...] The live album asserts an idea of sound recording as a transparent mirror that can reveal the undistorted truth of an actual event – a live concert with real, live people – regardless of the subsequent technical improvements that may have been made (remixing, overdubbing, added applause)“ (Shepherd et al. 2003: 620).

This definition adds a fundamental ‘subjective’ element, introducing the concept of ‘perception’. The essence of a live album is not in something objectively existing, but in what is considered to be

such (compare the concept of authenticity in §2). However, a complete definition of ‘live album’ should explain, in addition to ‘liveness’, the second element as well. The *Continuum Encyclopedia* allows us to complete the definition:

„An *album* is a work of *popular music* of extended duration, usually a collection of songs. Albums have existed across a range of recording media and may be issued in formats yet to be invented“ (2003: 612).

It shows important elements (an album as a ‘collection’, the use of different media), and especially distinguishes primary from secondary elements (‘usually’, ‘may be’). But, again, another important element is omitted.

Albums (and thereby live albums) should be defined in opposition to unofficially released recordings, e.g. the so-called *bootleg* as a musical recording “assembled and sold without the consent of the performer or the performer’s exclusive record company” (Schwartz 1995: 613). It must be added, as Lee Marshall explains, that

„[u]nlike counterfeiting and pirating, which reproduce the sounds of recordings already released by official record labels (and the artwork in the case of counterfeiting), bootleg albums contain recordings that have never been given official release. The vast majority of this officially unreleased material is of two types: live concerts [...]; and ‘out-takes’“ (Marshall 2004: 165).

By revising Shepherd’s description and combining it with the other fore-mentioned elements, we obtain the following definition: *A live album is an officially released extended recording of popular music that is perceived to be a document of a public performance or performances. It is commonly contrasted with a studio album and a bootleg recording and usually presents crowd’s heckling and a varying degree of engineering and overdubbing.*

We must now ‘try out’ this definition with different typologies and functions of live albums in popular music context.

Typologization

There are many possible typology methods, depending on the selected criteria. It is beyond the aim of this article, for example, to sort live albums by genre (jazz, blues, pop, rock, etc.), although the very broad label ‘popular music’ used in my definition excludes some albums that are considered to be ‘live’ in non popular music genres, such as traditional and classical music, though official recordings that

are considered to be ‘live’ do exist in traditional and even classical music (see for example, Maria Callas’ albums with a ‘live’ label on their sleeve). I also avoid taking into account the medium used for the recording, although it is difficult not to agree with P. Scaruffi stating:

“I feel that it is unfair to compare two media that are actually very different: the album of the 1960s that went through a painful selection process because it cost a lot of money to make, and the album of the 2000s that goes through virtually no selection process because it is so cheap to make” (Scaruffi 2009: 10).

The medium used for a recording significantly changes not only the perception of a recording, but also its objective features (consider for example the different sound of the same recording on an LP as opposed to a CD); however, as we read in the *Continuum Encyclopedia*, “albums have existed across a range of recording media and may be issued in formats yet to be invented” (Shepherd et al. 2003: 612), and they will not cease to be ‘albums’; in our case, live albums continue to be live albums in any medium through which they are recorded.

As Kania and Gracyk state, “[m]ere listening does not necessarily reveal the appropriate category. The functional relationship to performance practice, rather than the kind of musical work that is presented, determines which kind of recording presents the music” (Kania and Gracyk 2011: 85). Focusing on one of the main primary elements of the fore-mentioned definition, I propose a typology method based on the relationship between the recording and the ‘place’ of the performances it refers to. In a scale from one to many, we can recognize: 1) one-happening live albums; 2) one-period live albums; 3) no-happening live albums.

The first category refers to recordings from a single performance with the precise location indicated on the album’s sleeve. This is probably what Mednick refers to with “actual recordings”, which he sustains “are the best” (Mednick 2013: xv). Many of the best live albums ever recorded belong to this category (in our list: The Who’s *Live at Leeds*, 1970, #1; Johnny Cash’s *At Folsom Prison*, 1968, #2; Nirvana’s *Unplugged in New York*, 1994, #4; James Brown’s, *Live At The Apollo*, 1963, #5; AC/DC’s *If You Want Blood, you’ve got it*, 1978, #11); however, there are many other live albums that belong to the other two categories, that is, live albums not claiming to be a ‘document’ of a precise performance. In the second category the unifying element is a more or less large period of time, usually a tour (Neil Young’s *Live Rust*, 1979, #12; Peter Frampton’s *Frampton Comes Alive!*, 1976, #13, etc.), rather than a single event, but it can be also a year (Grateful Dead’s *Europe ‘72*, 1972, #39), or a larger

period (Springsteen's *Live 1975–1985*, 1986, #36). The third category does not refer to any particular event, and even when the place of each recorded performance is shown in the album sleeve, the focus is on the live experience as such, without a relevant connection to any time and space.

There are no sharp boundaries between these typologies, representing a *continuum* where every album can more or less fit into one of the categories. Many important albums were recorded in the same place on two or three different dates (The Allman Brother Band's *Live at Fillmore*, 1971, #6), or even in different, but relatively close locations (Led Zeppelin's *How the west was won*, 2003, #7; Deep Purple's *Live in Japan*, 1972, #10), but they are still perceived (and presented) as one unique performance. *Live 1975–1985* covers Springsteen's almost entire career before its release, and is therefore very close to the third category.

Other typologies of live albums can be outlined based on different criteria, but most of them are quite strictly linked to one of the fore-mentioned categories. Some subtypes of live albums can be associated with the first category, referring to a 'special event', in contrast to those taken from a 'normal' concert; for example, concerts organized for an 'exceptional' *revival* of a disbanded group; slightly different occasions can be a *farewell* concert of a band, declaring its imminent break-up, and a *reunion* concert, when the band announces its return to the music scene. These three subcategories share the element of being related to the end (or the 'new beginning') of an artist's career; as far as these kinds of concerts, A. Behr (2012) quite cynically but unlikely incorrectly, argues that they are motivated by "the inevitable pull of the reunion and the tacit acknowledgement that however much they may hate their erstwhile colleagues they'll fill much bigger venues alongside them and travel first class". There are significantly no albums of this subtype in our best live albums list.

The most typical kind of musical events are obviously *festivals*, Woodstock being the most famous example. Festival live albums are usually recordings of more than one artist, such as *benefit* (e.g. George Harrison's & Friends' *The concert for Bangladesh*, 1972) and *tribute* concerts (e.g. *The 30th Annual John Lennon Tribute*, 2011); a related category is that of albums recorded at concerts *featuring* other artists (e.g. Delaney & Bonnie's *On Tour with Eric Clapton*, 1970).

The most common subtype of the fourth category is that of *greatest hits* live albums, collecting an artist's best songs or those that were best performed live. The Wikipedia database contains more than 30 albums simply named 'greatest hits live', but many more were conceived as such. Geddy Lee, Rush's leader (a band particularly famous for its live performances) explains the making of *A show*

of hands (1989) with these words: “That one was an attempt to kind of over-exaggerate how perfect you could make a live album. [...] There was a lot of meddling with the tapes and trying to make sure we had the best performances” (Popoff 2004: 98); this is very similar to his words about *All the world’s a Stage* (#86): “We basically took the best of what we had” (2004: 52). These kinds of live album, in Geddy’s words “basically taking handful of shows and choosing the best you’ve got” (2004: 143), are very common, including our best list (The Rolling Stones’ *Get yer ya-ya’s out*, #3; Kiss’ *Alive*, #8; Thin Lizzy’s *Live and Dangerous*, #9, etc.).

Another typology of live albums not related to any particular event is a quite rare, but very significant kind of recording: the so-called fake live album, recorded in a studio, but presented as live, mainly thanks to the overdubbing of crowd sounds from other sources. As Duffett claims,

“fake live albums can be found in many different genres of music and seem particularly numerous in heavy metal. [...] While a common explanation of these recordings is that audience sounds have been staged or overdubbed to ‘add atmosphere’, in a few cases a more plausible explanation is that a simulated live crowd allows musicians to control an otherwise unruly noise generated by real hecklers” (Duffett 2009: 52–53).

Completely fake live albums are quite rare (e.g. *Charles Mingus presents Charles Mingus*, 1960; *Chuck Berry on stage*, 1963; *Beach Boys Party*, 1965), but the practice of overdubbing crowd noises is more widespread that it may appear. The Rolling Stones first live album, later excluded from the official band’s discography, contains at least two fake live songs; in Ozzy’s *Speak of the Devil*, similarly disowned by Osborne, three songs are taken from rehearsals with overdubbed crowd noises; it is interesting to cite an interview with the producer of Slayer’s *Live Undead*, also supposed to be at least partially fake, who was asked if the album crowd noises were authentic:

“I don’t know if I should tell you! Isn’t that one of those great industry secrets? Let’s just say that when you’re doing a live record, you want live sound – even if perhaps the microphones didn’t pick up the audience properly” (McIver 2009: 45).

Another producer, Tony Visconti, similarly claims that Thin Lizzy’s *Live and Dangerous* is “75% recorded in the studio” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Live_and_Dangerous).

Since *Get Yer Ya-Ya’s Out* similarly does not give information about the concerts it is taken from, the main difference between the

first two The Rolling Stones' live albums, and the real reason they refused the first one, seems to be the mere fact that *Got Live If You Want It!* as been revealed as a fake. Evidently a 'fake' live album is not perceived as such until the producers' 'secret' is naked. The inclusion of greatest hits and fake live albums in the same category is thus far from being casual and meaningless.

Focusing on criteria different than the one-to-many performances, other typologies of live albums may be outlined, such as *post-career* (Nirvana's *Unplugged in New York*, 1994, #4), *serial* (Dylan's *The bootleg series*, volume 4, 1988, #18), and *studio album live versions* (Jethro Tull's *Aqualung Live*, 2005), and others. The last subtype of live albums I want to focus on, is that of albums taken from non official recordings, sometimes called 'official bootlegs'. From the time they have been officialized onwards, these albums fully fit in our definition, and hence are no longer hybrid recordings. They can be subject to a degree of engineering that is similar to that of other live albums, and should be better named as *officialized bootlegs* rather than *official bootlegs*, that is a contradiction in terms.

Having provided a definition and a typology of live albums, we can move onto their function. In other words: why release a live album, rather than a studio album? And, from the point of view of the listener: why purchase it?

Functions or how a live album should be

Journalist D. Spence holds that, "[t]he live album is both boon and bane to the existence of rock 'n' roll and other popular forms of modern music" (Spence 2007: 1). This particular role of live albums is more evident in the "relative commercial and critical failure of live recordings" (Gracyk 1996: 81), in comparison to studio albums, which usually have higher sales and are more appreciated. In Rolling Stones magazine list of the "500 greatest albums of all time" (Levy 2005), for example, only 18 are live albums (3,6%). According to K. Baskett (2006: 17),

"[l]ive albums tend to have two big problems that hinder a broad appeal. The first is recording quality. [...] The second problem with live albums is the fact that most people interested in a band's live recordings already own most of the songs on the record in studio form. Why shell out for songs they already own to hear them played worse?"

Another music journalist, G. Brown, associates the negative aspects of live albums with the aesthetics of liveness:

“When fans have seen you in the sweating, all-dancing flesh on stage, argument against the *live album* went, they will not want to hear you in the *sterility* of their homes doing the same show without the dances, spins, dips, splits and cape. And if that argument did not convince, there is an extension – if you give fans a live show which they can play in the comfort of their homes every night, why should they go to see you next time you’re in town?” (Brown 2009).

Live albums have always represented a commercial risk, at least until the 1990’s, when recordings became significantly cheaper to produce. As J. Stratton states,

“[t]he important thing, from the point of view of the record companies, is that the individual record should represent a commercially meaningful unit. From this point of view, live albums present more problems within the discourse than studio records because of the ambiguity surrounding the focus of uniqueness” (Stratton 1983: 154).

However live albums have determined functions for both artists and their record companies. In Spence’s words, “a live album is pumped out by a group and/or record company as filler to hold hardcore fans over until an album of all new material can be delivered. It’s also historically been the stop gap used by a band to fill their quota with a label” (Spence 2007; see also Gracyk 1996: 81). Live albums can also be produced in order to cover the cost of a studio album, as for 1980 Public Image Ltd’s *Printemps au Paris* (according to Wikipedia, the singer in a BBC radio interview will later claim: “don’t buy this live record, because it’s not very good”, (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_au_Printemps)). A live album can be used also “to take it easy a bit”, as J. S. Jacobs writes about Tori Amos, deciding that

“her next album would be a live album. [...] Not only that, she realized that she had become one of the most bootlegged artists in music. She was tired of inferior recordings of her live music and rare non-album tracks being out there, making money for criminals and cheating her core fans with questionable sound quality. Maybe it was just as simple as the fact that Tori Amos is hugely territorial about her work, and she wanted to make sure that at least one live recording lived up to her high standards” (Jacobs 2006: 87).

A live album release is often justified as a way to counter the diffusion of ‘non-listenable’ bootlegs (from an artist’s point of view); according to Marshall (2004: 176), the name of Bob Dylan & the Band’s *Before the Flood* (1974, #31) refers to the “flood of bootlegs” of their tour.

These more or less ‘commercial’ or at least ‘extra-musical’ functions of live albums do not help, of course, to better the view of live albums “as cheap records and killers of a band’s reputation” (*Barfoot Christian* 2011: 8). In a 1980’s review of The Kinks’ *One for the Road* (1980, #107), David Hepworth even writes that the album is “as convincing an argument for banning live albums as you’ll find” (1980: 28).

However live albums must also play a ‘positive’ role that is significant for the aesthetics of popular music, since artists continue to release them (and people to buy them, at least to some extent). Live albums can be compared, as Judas Priest’s singer Rob Halford states about *Unleashed in the East* (1979, #45), to “an ace card to play really – you have to know exactly when to release them or you can put one out and it’ll do absolutely nothing for you” (see Krannila). Most live albums sound like copies of the studio versions, however, as Spence argues:

“At any rate, like most things of this nature every once in awhile a stellar live album slips through the pike, an album that raises its head above the rest of the detritus and screams ‘Listen to me because I am good!’. These are the live albums that are not filler, the live albums that actually capture the essence of a band as they are in concert” (Spence 2007).

But which are the aspects that make a live album ‘good’? Music journalist Tim Chester (2011) makes a list of the

“things that constitute a great live album. In no particular order these are: set list, sound quality, on-stage banter, crowd reaction, and a palpable sense of time and place. [...] The best live albums comprise most or all of these, and transport you directly to the front of the crowd in the opening few moments. They give you a real sense of being there”. Many sources relate the required qualities of live albums to a ‘time machine’ functions: “Only precious few live albums are able to do that: transport you into another time and place where worries of the world do not seem to matter” (Krannila; see also Mednick 2013: xv).

Summoning the popular representation of live album functions: *live albums are for the most part poor recordings, but sometimes a ‘great one’ is released, which is able to offer ‘something special’ and transport the listener to another time and space.*

Conclusions: live album and performance

Before concluding, I would like to return to the definition of ‘live album’ (§3), in order to find its essential function. As Perna underlines (2006: 93), in a live recording there is no practical possibility of understanding whether the instruments we hear have actually been performed live. Reed similarly argues that

“an audio recording of [...] a concert – whether altered after the fact or not – is of course ‘flattened’ down to its sonic content, leaving not necessarily any intrinsic differences between itself and a fully produced studio recording. Not only is the division between live performance and studio production confounded by the mere existence of concert recordings, but it is deeply blurred in practice by the highly studio-centric process of engineering, mixing, remixing, and otherwise producing a contemporary live record” (2005: 1–2).

The essence of a live album, in opposition to a studio album, has an undoubtedly subjective element, as the term ‘perception’ in the fore-mentioned definition highlights. However it is not clear who the subject of the perception is. The artists? The record companies? The audience? The majority of listeners? A more-or-less wide portion of the audience not considering a live album as such does not imply that this album ceases to be a live one.

Live albums – T. D. Stimeling argues – “create a simulation of the concert event that allows consumers to feel as if they are part of an unmediated musical experience”. However, “[l]ive albums, like all others, are highly mediated cultural products shaped by the marketing strategies of record companies, the postproduction manipulation of producers and engineers, and the musical choices of the artists” (Stimeling 2011: 79). In other words, it is not the audience that makes an album ‘live’, but its producers. It is therefore better to substitute the concept of ‘perception’ with ‘representation’. In this respect it is useful to mention Kenia and Gracyk’s distinction “between three distinct modes of providing access to performable compositions: (1) real-time performance instantiations, (2) recordings of such performances, and (3) studio-constructed representations” (Kenia and Gracyk 2011: 86; see also Gracyk 1996: 80). But in live albums the boundaries between the second and the third modes, as we have seen, are so blurred that they can be better described as two different subtypes of the same mode, and may be juxtaposed only in terms of ‘degree’. Every officially released recording, is a more or less ‘studio-constructed’ representation of a performed composition, even in the case of officialised bootlegs: in an increasingly recording-based society, “[i]f a performer

coughs during a live performance, we dismiss it as an irrelevancy, but if someone coughs on a record, our knowledge that the cough could have been deleted (or another ‘take’ released) invites us to regard it as part of what is communicated. Indeed, the cough may be retained precisely because it lends the recording an aura of transparency on a ‘real’ event” (Gracyk 1996: 79).

Reed associates live recordings with Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreal and Auerbach’s distinction between history and legend:

“Legend is a good way to think about live records, because our understanding of legendary events concedes that maybe they didn’t really happen the way we tell it, and maybe they never happened at all, and maybe their characters never even existed, but that makes them no less true” (Reed 2005: 10).

In order to fulfill their function and especially be appreciated (and bought) by fans, live albums must represent the hyper-real, more than the real, offering “a perfect crowd at a perfect concert that perhaps never even happened” (2005: 3).

Every live album is aimed to represent a live performance, but it can do that in different ways, with a more or less large manipulation of the original recording. In the listeners’ perception, there is to some extent a “line between presenting an actual and enjoyable live document and something that’s essentially rendered unreal” (Kranila), but this line is far from being clear and it changes depending on different contexts, and especially through time. We can thus correct our definition of live album with the idea of ‘representation’ (because of the ambiguity of this word, I added the term ‘actually occurred’ to the definition, in order to exclude non-live albums, abstractly representing a performance, such as Bad News’ parodist album *Bootleg*, 1988). *A live album is an officially released extended recording of popular music representing one or more actually occurred public performances.*

The objective of live albums, and their main difference from a studio album, is expressing the ‘truth’ of performance, rather than its ‘reality’ (Reed 2005: 10), or, in Schechner’s terms, focusing on the memory, rather than the archive. This article aims to provide a basis for further research on live albums, primarily using a wider and more accurately selected database. Secondly, as the next step after synchronic analysis, we must describe the evolution of live albums, focusing on the change of secondary elements. Thirdly, we must carry out an insight analysis of the music and sounds recorded in live albums, comparing them with real-time performances and non studio-constructed recordings. Live albums deserve wider and deeper

attention, not only as a way of representing performances, but also to highlight differences between popular music sub-genres within the art/traditional/popular music trichotomy (see Fabbri 2008: 3).

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АЛБУМ УЖИВО
ИЛИ
МНОГОСТРУКИ НАЧИНИ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЈЕ ИЗВОЂЕЊА
(Резиме)

Дијалектички однос који се успоставља између студијских снимака и „живих” наступа од кључног је значаја у популарној музици, а посебно у естетици рока. Културалне импликације ове јукстапозиције могу се пратити кроз проучавање *албума уживо* / *живих албума* (live albums), што се односи како на снимке, тако и на „жива” искуства. Да би се објаснила суштина ове врсте снимака, у раду су укратко описани кључни појмови: *ауџенџичносџи*, *џросџор*, *време и месџо*, *документџација* (а посебно дијалектички однос између појмова *архив* и *сећање*). Аутор комбинује расположиве описе *живих албума* како би скицирао прелиминарну дефиницију, коју ће укрстити са различитим типологијама и функцијама ових снимака. Овакви албуми се по правилу дефинишу као супротност, с једне стране, студијским албумима, и, с друге, аматерским незвачничним („пиратским”) снимцима (*bootlegs*); обично се на њима чује добацивање из масе слушалаца / публике и препознаје одређени степен обраде и доснимавања звука. Предложена је типологизација *албума уживо*, заснована на односу између снимка и локације извођења на коју снимак реферира. Иако многи од најбољих албума те врсте представљају по један догађај, многи други су састављени од исечака са више наступа; они се понекад и не могу разликовати од „лажних“ *живих албума*, који су снимљени у студију и код којих се наводно присуство масе придодаје из различитих извора. *Албуми уживо* су увек представљали комерцијални ризик, бар до деведесетих година XX века, када је производња снимака постала знатно јефтинија; отуда су у односу на студијске албуме обично лошије продавани и мање цењени. Међутим, уметници и продуценти настављају да их објављују, будући да постоји њихова практична функција (нпр. попуњавају временски размак између студијских албума) и будући да код публике још увек постоји потражња за њима. Повремено, посебно током седамдесетих година XX века, успели *албум уживо* био је у стању да слушаоцу пружи „осећање да је био тамо”, а да продуценту обезбеди добар приход. Циљ таквих албума увек је исти: представити „живо” извођење – али се то чини на различите начине, уз већу или мању „дораду” оригиналног снимка и у већини случајева уз „хиперреалну” представу савршене гомиле (публике) на савршеном концерту. На крају чланка предложена је нова дефиниција *албума уживо*, која резимира његове примарне, есенцијалне елементе: „*Живи албум* је званично издат проширени звучни запис популарне музике, који репрезентује један или више стварних јавних наступа”.

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