

4 Turn Myself to Face Me

David Bowie in the 1990s and Discovery of Authentic Self

Bethany Usher and Stephanie Fremaux

INTRODUCTION

In the two years leading up to the release of *The Next Day* (ISO Records, 2013) there was renewed media interest in David Bowie's career due to two important milestones: the 40th anniversary of *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (RCA Victor, 1972) and the celebration of Bowie's 65th birthday. In focusing on Bowie as the red-haired, spandex clad icon of the 1970s, recent books and retrospectives (McLeod, 2003; Cann, 2010; Doggett, 2011; Jones, 2012; Trynka, 2011; Goddard, 2013) have largely overlooked what is arguably one of the most important phases of Bowie's development as an autonomous performer: his self-discovery during the formation and performance of Tin Machine and his solo output of the 1990s. Examining this work gives insight into the damage caused to his creative process by record company pressure and the domination of his created personae. While Bowie's success in the 1970s and early 1980s offered stability and leverage to reinvent himself "as often and as radically as he needed to", public and critic expectations, increasingly tense relations with producer Tony Visconti and record label demands (first RCA Victor and then EMI) for product and promotion had a deteriorating effect on his sense of autonomy as an artist (Doggett, 2011: 5). Bowie fully embraced the structures of the popular music industry, giving tours and interviews readily, reaching out to mainstream audiences and seizing new opportunities for promotion. But he also used his characters to comment on the darker side of celebrity and the society the industry fostered. They embodied alienation—"the other"—living within but also critical voyeurs of the world of fame. This chapter aims to initiate a re-examination of Bowie's work during this time. Through a detailed textual analysis of Bowie interviews and feature articles in *Q* magazine from 1989 to 1999,¹ as well as a critical examination of Bowie's 1990s' image, this chapter will demonstrate how Tin Machine enabled Bowie to emerge as a musician entirely on his own terms, freeing himself from the expectations of the personae from the 1970s and the commercial pressures of the 1980s. However, by acknowledging a post-structuralist approach to identity and the self, we propose that an examination of Bowie's authentic self is problematic, due not only to the many layers of artifice, but the way he *performs* versions of authenticity.

It is this performance of “the other” (Hegel cited in Taylor, 1975) and Bowie’s movement to a performance of authentic self during the period of 1989 to 1999 this chapter seeks to examine. It argues that while Tin Machine—the band he fronted from 1988 to 1992—was a commercial and critical failure, it acted as a catalyst to a cathartic cleansing of performance of characters and commercial pressures. By the mid-eighties, Bowie felt as though he was sliding into a cycle of the aged rocker, rehashing hits and churning out weak material. *Never Let Me Down* had been ordered by EMI after his impressive Live Aid performance in 1985, but had little artistic merit, and offered his worst chart performance since 1971 (Pegg, 2011). Reflecting on that period in a 1996 interview, Bowie commented, “I thought I was obviously just an empty vessel and would end up like everyone else ...” (Pegg, 2011: 374). Though critics remained sceptical about Tin Machine, the shift of focus from solo to collaborative artist enabled distance from past work and mainstream industry pressures, as fear of failure was shared. On album covers and photo-shoots Tin Machine members often sported dark suits, none outshining the next. However, while suited and booted Bowie hanging out with his friends had the appearance of authenticity—or at least normality—this chapter will show that while his time in the band helped him move beyond performance of “the other”, it was a simulacrum through which Bowie performed another “hyperreal” version of self (Baudrillard, 1994).

AUTHENTIC OR THE HYPERREAL: BOWIE’S VERSIONS OF SELF

The phases of the image Baudrillard outlines will act as the “markers” or “codes” established by Dyer (1991) and Marshall (1997) to identify authenticity in performance. Dyer (1991: 137) argues these markers are moments of lack of control, premeditation and glimpses into the private realm and that by identifying and analysing them it is possible to go beyond the controlled surface to find instances of authenticity. Marshall (1997) identifies certain codes used by celebrities that are specific to the mediums of film, television or the concert stage. Drawing on Baudrillard’s concepts of simulacrum and “ecstasy of communication”, he claims there is an issue “around the ultimate freedom of the sign from the trappings of permanent value” (Baudrillard, 1997: 11). This could clearly be applied to Bowie’s prolific pilfering of cultural references when constructing his own image, but also the way he subverts or builds on moments from past personae to support the construction of authenticity in the 1990s. It should be noted that our use of “authenticity” is informed by Rubridge who describes it as “not a property of, but something we ascribe to a performance” (original emphasis, Rubridge, 1996: 219) and, as noted by both Dyer and Marshall, authenticity is not fixed. Previous personae were fictional characters performed by Bowie, at least initially, as if he was an actor rather than a pop star. In

contrast, during the 1990s, Bowie takes elements of his own personality and interests, magnifying and manipulating them to offer new versions of self. Working within a collective not only allowed him to experiment with fresh ideas, but also enabled him to shed layers of artifice which his previous personae had required.

Bowie used his experience as a performance artist to challenge traditional spaces between audience and stage in order to give his characters a sense of authenticity. For many of Bowie's personae, this game play extended into the news media to the point of confusion. For example, an article about Ziggy by Roy Hollingworth, which reviews "The Farewell Gig" in *Melody Maker* dated 14 July 1973 opens, "There was nothing sad about Bowie's farewell concert ... his music was brilliant. Yet I'll shed no tear over his departure ..." (*Uncut*, 2011: 44). It is clear to see that Hollingworth struggles to grasp how Bowie is performing Ziggy. For him, Ziggy and Bowie are one and the same. This was not unique to Hollingworth. D. A. Pennebaker's 1973 film of that performance documents the audience's reaction to Ziggy's announcement by the shrieks of disappointment that echo throughout the venue. Bowie's tangled and often confusing use of personae on stage and off makes it impossible for the audience to realise that Bowie's announcement marks the retirement of a character, rather than of himself as an artist.

Popular music has always supported the creation of personae, both musically through lyrics and through the marketed image.² Often there are strong elements of authenticity, particularly demonstrated through the blurring of the public and private self. In essence the audience understands this as an extension of the real. This is very different to Bowie's use of personae. He creates fictional characters brought to life through live performance and media interviews. Indeed, it is well documented that Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, and the Thin White Duke each took over Bowie to the point of excess. Supported by narcotic abuse, the line between reality and fantasy became blurred, affecting his sanity and physical well-being. Press and fans' inability to differentiate between Bowie and his personae was supported by Bowie himself who, at times, spoke in character as Ziggy or emphasised them as being one and the same. For example, in the liner notes for the 1972 Santa Monica gig album, which appeared in the 2008 re-issue, Bowie writes of Ziggy, "It's no longer an act; I am him". In retrospect Bowie seems keenly aware of how possessed he became by the Ziggy character. In a *Melody Maker* interview from 29 October 1977 he describes Ziggy as a "positive artistic statement ..." and "a beautiful piece of art ... The whole guy ..." (*Uncut*, 2011: 73). However, he also describes his inability to leave Ziggy behind to the point where he questioned his sanity. He has moved from speaking as Ziggy to speaking about him in the third person, clearly emphasising it as a performance, but also highlighting that it was an all-consuming one. Frith notes the use of persona functions by "objectifying the artist as the medium of the art [and by]

subjectifying the artist as the site of the narrative” (Frith, 1998: 205). In this way, Bowie’s use of personae was meant to be a piece of performance art, reinforced through the ideas and themes presented in his lyrics, but is complicated by the way that Bowie framed the performance “*within the everyday*” (original emphasis, Frith, 1998: 207). By using joke telling as an analogy, Frith highlights the complexity in undertaking such a performance by stating how in the first instance, the performer needs to be skilled enough with the language to engage with the performance and in the second instance, the audience needs to be able to recognize and interpret the language (Frith, 1998: 208). This point becomes crucial when analysing Bowie’s interviews in *Q* during the 1990s.

PURPOSE, PERFORMANCE AND PROMOTION: BOWIE’S Q MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS 1989–1999

Bowie’s description of his personae as addictive demons from which he needed to free himself—using similar language to that of the addict describing kicking the habit—provides an interesting example of “the other” proposed within Hegel’s concept of the master/slave dialectic (Taylor, 1975). Hegel argues the struggle between master and slave can be carried out between the self-conscious developing out of consciousness. He argues all “men strive for recognition” to “achieve integrity” and the achievement of this by the master depends upon the instillation of the fear of death in the slave. However, this fear of death is a motivator for the slave to change their life and eventually gain advantage over the master, as it is the slave who actually has provided the labour for success. To examine Bowie and his personae against Hegel’s dialectic, he, at times, allowed his personae to be the master—to be in control and public facing—while Bowie was the creator, the labourer, the slave. (Taylor, 1975: 156). As Hegel argues, “the man-made environment thus comes to reflect him [the slave], it is made up of his creations” (Hegel cited in Taylor, 1975: 156). George Herbert Mead built on Hegel’s ideas to examine the split between the private and public self. He argues there is a “veridical self” represented by the ‘I’ and “the self as seen by others” represented by the ‘Me’ (Rojek, 2001: 11). If we examine Bowie in relation to Hegel’s argument he can be seen as having a number of master/slave struggles: the first is between his various personae and himself (the “I” and “Me” of Mead’s dichotomy), and another is his struggle for artistic autonomy within a highly structured music industry. The commercial pressures of the latter can lead to the blurring of the celebrity’s public and private selves by the media. When this occurs, the personality can experience identity confusion or even worse, a “clinical or sub-clinical loss of identity” (Rojek, 2001: 11). In the *Q* interviews this is clearly demonstrated when Bowie fulfils commercial duty by putting out Greatest Hits material and when he discusses periods where he allowed himself to be dictated to by his record label.

The difficulty in maintaining fictional characters, audience expectations and working under the pressures of the music business had a negative impact on Bowie's success as a mainstream pop star. The same press that he used as a performance space was criticized for never really accepting anything other than Ziggy Stardust, something that Bowie found to be creatively stifling (*Uncut*, 2011: 118). *Never Let Me Down* represented Bowie out of control and dictated to and was a commercial failure. Tin Machine was the vehicle in which Bowie was no longer solely reliant on artistic creation. By defusing pressure amongst a collective, Bowie could start to reclaim his identity. Bowie as part of Tin Machine may still be a performance, but it has clear elements of his authentic self. His involvement with the group was the cathartic catalyst in restoring his confidence to make music on his own terms. The slave is freed from *both* the dominance of his personae and the dominance of the industry. These dynamics are clearly illustrated when examining Bowie's *Q* interviews from 1989–1999. As demonstrated by Figure 4.1, the interviews themselves can be organized into two distinct categories: the retrospective, which considers Bowie in terms of a linear narrative of creative progression and the discussion of new material and current creative identity.

Clearly, Bowie's aim is to draw a line under his past as he moves into new creative territory by offering pieces focused on his histories. While the interviewers often aim to place Bowie's new material in some form of linear context, he often appears unwilling to do so. New material is seen as something distinct, particularly from the Ziggy identity of the 1970s and the commercial success of the 1980s. As interviewer, Adrian Deevoy describes:

You sense a flurry of retrospective activity might be attempts to reconcile the fractured, even splintered, elements of Bowie's complex, some would say schizophrenic character.

(*Q*, May 1993: 74)

In the first of the retrospective pieces in 1990, Bowie clearly outlines to the audience that this interview, and the Sound and Vision tour itself, are not a reflection of his creative self, but part of commercial duties, quipping, "Still in New York but taking a day off from rehearsals to attend publicity chores. I must do my duty as a good pop artist" (*Q*, April 1990: 61). His image for the accompanying photographs has also transformed. For the interview with Tin Machine the previous year he was in a dark suit, part of the crowd, wearing something he explained as similar to what he wore in real life. The over-styled bright coloured waistcoats and quaffed hair, which dominated his 1980s' image, returned. He has been re-restyled as the Bowie who sells to a mainstream MTV audience.

While the third image, which features the Aladdin Sane stripe, may suggest an element of performance of his past, the stripe was digitally superimposed and without Bowie's permission. He later contacted *Q* via email stating that he thought they had been "cheeky".³

Date	Title	Writer/ Journalist	Content synopsis
June 1989	Ready to Rock? David Bowie "back on course" with Tin Machine.	Adrian Deevoy	Bowie's excited revelation of new band and new material.
April 1990	Put your hands together for ... Ziggy Stardust! The Thin White Duke! The Laughing Gnome! (?) David Bowie in the <i>Q</i> interview.	Paul Du Noyer	Retrospective to promote Sound and Vision Tour.
October 1991	Are Tin Machine crap? Discuss.	Charles Shaar Murray	Bowie and Tin Machine discuss second album.
May 1993	"God, I remember this ..." David Bowie This Is Your Life.	Adrian Deevoy	Picture led retrospective piece. Brief mention of new album Black Tie, White Noise.
January 1995	The Diary of Nathan Adler or The Art-Ritual Murder of Baby Grace Belew. An occasionally on-going short story Internet Conversation Between David Bowie and Brian David Bowie Eno.	David Bowie	Short story which accompanies Outside album. Discussion of current artistic/digital and philosophical influence on material.
February 1997	Bowie at 50!	David Cavanagh	Discussion of new Earthling album placed within a linear retrospective of creative/public identity.
August 1997	Dizbusting David Bowie hopes you like his new-ish direction.	Martin Aston	Concert review from Earthling tour with supporting quotes.
April 1998	Looking Good, Davie! Feeling Good, Ig?	Steve Malins	Feature on David Bowie's relationship with Iggy Pop described as 1970s' 'Love Affair of the Decade.
October 1999	Now Where Did I Put Those Tunes?	David Quantick	Interview promoting Hours album with moments of personal/private identity.

Figure 4.1 David Bowie's *Q* Magazine Interviews 1989–1999.



Figure 4.2 The retrospective look (left) from April 1990, juxtaposed with Bowie suited for Tin Machine.



Figure 4.3 The superimposed Aladdin Sane stripe—Q cover from May 1993.

The separation of creative and commercial visions of self dominates Bowie's interviews throughout the 1990s. In the May 1993 interview, during which the journalist showed him a variety of pictures and asked him to comment, he states he was "never more uncomfortable" than during a particular promotional shoot adding,

This wasn't a happy time. I wasn't really interested and let everyone tell me what to do. A wave of total indifference came over me.
(Q, May 1993: 84)

These reflections by Bowie in regard to his past reveal a division of the body from self, especially in terms of his earlier 1970s' personae (see Descartes, 1993: 66; Cockburn, 2001: 112). This kind of separation of self is clearly evident in several of the retrospective pieces where Bowie moves to discussing moments of his past in the third person:

The thing that I found is the amount of enthusiasm and fire in the earlier stuff—there is a desperate edge to it. This guy really wanted to be heard.
(Q, April 1990: 63)

Bowie's use of third-person narrative when talking about his past demonstrates an ability to separate his personal and creative being, particularly at moments when he is not comfortable with his behaviour. While the separation from early versions of self in these retrospective interviews is not always characterized by the third person, the idea that he does not see himself as the same person in certain moments of his past appears both in the June 1989 and May 1993 articles. In these articles Bowie answers questions about the alleged 'Nazi salute' incident at Victoria Station in May 1976 and mentions how his time in Berlin was a time of being a "major drug period" when he was trying to escape himself and the drug dependency (Q, June 1989: 70).

Me at Victoria Station. What was I thinking? No I don't know. I really don't know. I was in another world by that time I have no idea what I thought between 1975 and 1977. I didn't give a Nazi salute. Not in this picture anyway. But I don't think I'd have done anything as daft as that.

(Q, May 1993: 82)

The question of the 'Nazi salute' is hotly contested by biographers (see Doggett, 2011: 256; Buckley, 1999: 228), and Bowie's lapse in memory and lack of affinity with his former self, can be partially explained by his drug use. However, his ability to separate the personal self from the image

of his creativity is paramount to the development of his different personae, particularly in the earlier moments of his career with Ziggy Stardust and Aladdin Sane. The main difference with the new personae he created in the 1990s is that they appeared to have a closer affinity to the reality of Bowie. The lines between his creative and personal beings blur, producing a new form of mediated persona.

Building on Descartes' work around the philosophy of mind, Parfit argued that in order to understand human beings at the varying stages of their life, we should not see them as static individuals who possess emotions or thoughts, but instead in terms of connecting these characteristics (cited in Cockburn, 2001: 122). For example, former Spiders from Mars keyboard player, Mike Garson (who rejoined Bowie's band in the mid-1990s after an 18-year separation) described the similarities between Bowie in the 1990s and Bowie in the earliest part of his creative journey. Speaking to *Q* in 1997 from the *Earthling* tour bus, Garson stated, "Spiritually [Bowie] had advanced ... his actions were a lot more sane and rational. But *in essence as an artist*, he was exactly the same" (cited in Cockburn, 2001: 58, authors' emphasis). While Bowie changed in terms of his image in the most simplistic sense—his physical and musical appearance do transform—what can be seen in the 1990s is a clear sense he has found something of his creative sensibilities again. This is characterised by similarities in his beliefs, interests and artistic character as demonstrated across the *Q* interviews. There is a sense that he lost his way in the 1980s and through Tin Machine he rediscovered his creative impetus and sense of self. This self has a range of key characteristics which reappear throughout the period: creative adventure seeking; the hunt for artistic influence and new "skins" to re-invent his image; a sense of constant performance; and a discomfort with the commercial realities of being a successful musician.

ADVENTURE, "ART-IFACE," AND THE ARTIST

I think there's still room for adventure. One of us is going to stumble on it sooner or later ... Please God, let it be me!

(David Bowie in *Q*, April 1990: 70)

Bowie's aim to be a creative and artistic adventurer categorises his musical material during the period of 1989 to 1999 and this desire permeates the promotional interviews in *Q*. The separation between creativity and commercial realities is also a key topic even when he achieves creative emancipation. At the turn of the decade it is clear he was uncertain of what the future would hold. In an April 1990 interview, Bowie discusses the crossroads at which he feels himself as a musician in a "teenage" medium, emphasising the pressures on him and his contemporaries as

they became the first generation of popular music stars to reach middle age. “Who of us is going to make a breakthrough and show it can really work? Jazz artists proved it can ... but rock ‘n’ roll hasn’t yet because we still have the baggage of it being a teenage music” (*Q*, April 1990: 69). Whether Bowie means “breakthrough” in the artistic or commercial sense—or both—is unclear, but what is clear is that while working with Tin Machine he had recaptured his artistic sensibilities. The two Tin Machine albums were not a commercial or critical success. While reviews for the first album were largely optimistic, they were lukewarm and negative by *Tin Machine II*.⁴ In fact, the challenging thrash metal with at times frankly bizarre lyrics, from the racist war theme of ‘Under the Sun’ to references about children “whoring their bodies” in ‘Crack City’, did not process the sensibilities of an artistic soul which categorizes so much of Bowie’s output. However, as Bowie himself articulated in a June 1989 *Q* interview, Tin Machine enabled him to remember himself as an artist rather than a commercial pop star. In that interview Bowie argues that he loves the ability to reinvent himself and to follow his artistic sensibilities wherever they may take him, even at the cost of disillusioning fans.

“COMMERCIAL SURVIVAL IS ROD STEWART. ARTISTIC SURVIVAL IS REINVENTION ...”

The tension between the artist and the commercial realities of the music business permeates the *Q* interviews across the entire decade. Adorno (2001) argued that popular music in capitalist societies is part of a culture industry which creates product rather than art. This, in his view, has led to a standardisation of music with songs and even artists becoming interchangeable. Bowie seems acutely aware of the pressures this has on him and his fellow artists, arguing, “... designed is the key word ... There’s a lot of very well designed music about. Poor real musicians” (*Q*, October 1991: 63). It is clear Bowie is trying to produce something from “real musicians” with Tin Machine and, ironically, it is the commercial failure of the band that finally frees him from his record industry prison. After demanding a greatest hits tour and album, EMI released him from contract and in doing so relieved commercial pressures that were preventing him from exploring new musical and creative directions. This is something he clearly embraces, giving him new drives and dreams. In Tin Machine guitarist Reeves Gabrels he found an artistic ally—or as Gabrels calls himself a “bad influence”—who stays with him across the decade and helps steer and support his experimental track. As Gabrels reminds Bowie during the 1997 *Earthling* tour, “commercial survival is Rod Stewart. Artistic survival is reinvention” (*Q*, February 1997: 59). It is clear by this point that Bowie’s concerns about whether he will do anything of musical merit during the decade have also been alleviated:

I know what happens when I play the classics ... So why would I want to do it again? I don't want to throw my chance to experiment away.
(Q, February 1997: 56)

Bowie argues that his contemporaries may be able to say in the future that he has no audience, but he wants to see how far he can take his music while there is still time. The removal of the commercial pressure allows him to move beyond Adorno's (2001) searing analysis that popular music is standardised with artists and songs interchangeable. This depends on the artist being tethered by commercial need or the desire to remain a commercial success. He has broken free of those shackles and has emerged an exciting and vibrant artist once more.

In some sense Bowie as commercial pop star was no less a performance than any of the other characters he adopted throughout his career. However, when reading the Q interviews it would appear the performance of characters is not only key to his artistry, but also part of his personal identity. On 19 different occasions there are references to him 'adopting a voice' or 'adopts the personality of' while answering a question. These range from Kenneth Williams to Bing Crosby, from South London civvies when wanting to appear self-deprecating, to Yorkshire dryness when making a point about his homeland. Indeed, the Q interviewers seem keenly aware that Bowie is performing for them and question the authenticity of their interaction. Adrian Deevoy mentions how Bowie is "one of the few people in the world who actually says Ha ha ha ha like a Martian who has taken an evening class in The Audible Expression of Human Amusement" (Q, May 1993: 74), while David Quantick describes how he is "notorious for agreeing with anything an interviewer says" and that during the course of the interview he will say "... Yeah 23 times and No only once" (Q, October 1999: 99). For Baudrillard, media itself—in this case Q—forms a "sort of genetic code which controls mutation of the real into the hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 1983: 55). He argues through media, the real is destroyed and degenerated until it is replaced with something which is hyperreal. This hyperreal is not dream or fantasy but a "hallucinatory resemblance of the real within itself" (Baudrillard, 1983: 142). The idea of perceived or performed reality eclipsing actual reality is something Bowie himself seems intrinsically aware of:

I am only the person the greatest number of people believe I am. So little of it has anything to do with me ...
(Q, October 1999: 90)

There is, perhaps, little surprise in the fact that Bowie, even in his supposedly authentic state (in this case being interviewed), is the hyperreality of his 'real' self. Since his earliest material there has always been a sense of "simulation" (Baudrillard, 1983), where the real is substituted for another form of reality. As discussed earlier this simulation has also "threatened the difference between the 'true' and 'false', between the 'real' and imaginary

(Baudrillard, 1983: 5). Other than the period when he was Bowie ‘the good pop artist’ (*Q*, April 1990: 61) and he allowed his image and sound to be dictated, his music and artistic identity have always relied on him creating personae which draw on a range of cultural influences. When looking back at his career for retrospective pieces in *Q*, he constantly discusses his searches for different ‘skins’ and identities. Commenting on his earliest material he remarks, “I didn’t know if I was Max Miller or Elvis Presley” (*Q*, April 1990: 65). When discussing how he created Ziggy Stardust he reveals it was an amalgamation of people he’d come into contact with either physically or artistically including one of his “favourites” The Legendary Stardust Cowboy and 1960s’ rocker Gene Vincent. During another interview Bowie makes reference to the fact that at one point he tried to “write like ‘Townsend’”, was “desperately keen on mime and ... trying out of images” during the early 1970s (*Q*, May 1993: 77). This magpie-like taking of creative jewels, the need to re-invent the creative image and to blur the line between reality and fantasy, drives Bowie. Was it Ziggy Stardust or David Bowie who was a gender bending alien-like creature? Did the Thin White Duke become a Nazi sympathiser or Bowie himself? The answer is that the reality of David Bowie has at times been replaced by another version of himself. While a representation offers an alternative where the reality still exists, simulation envelops the whole edifice. Bowie’s performances are hyperreal because they eclipse previous versions of reality and become the reality. In the 1990s this dynamic shifts; Bowie does not openly perform a character, he always presents himself as ‘David Bowie’. However, while the name may not change, the person appears to do so and this reveals an interesting dynamic. At times the simulation has eclipsed the reality, but the drive to simulate is also the reality of Bowie as an artist. Throughout his career he has passed through successive phases of Baudrillard’s image because the *desire to simulate is the driving force* behind his artistic vision.

It is clear that Bowie’s early 1990s work is the reflection of basic reality during a period when he is trying to re-establish himself as an artist on his own terms. The cover of *Tin Machine* (1989) is minimalist and stripped back, with a relaxed Bowie and the other members of the band all dressed in dark suits, mirroring the way they presented themselves for *Q* interview. Though Bowie is still arguably putting on a performance, his look appears more reflective of what he wears when not performing. Pegg argues *Tin Machine* was “an invaluable process of creative therapy” and quotes Bowie as saying, “It accomplished exactly what it was supposed to do, which was bring me back to my absolute roots and set me back on the right course of what I do best” (Pegg, 2011: 377). This process was achieved by “forcibly [jettisoning] the mainstream audience” whose expectations had reduced Bowie to trying to repeat his Ziggy Stardust successes and the commercialization of his image and music for the emerging MTV generation (Pegg, 2011: 376). It also took

Phases of the image	Bowie's output/personas 1989 to 1999
It is the reflection of basic reality	<p>Tin Machine: Bowie dressed in his 'own clothes.' Relaxed, enjoying being part of the crowd.</p> <p><i>"It's really like exposing yourself in a way. It's been an incredibly insular experience making it, almost tunnel vision at times. Finally breaking it open to other people – it's uncomfortable."</i> (June 1989: 64)</p> <p><i>"... we're finding a lot more about ourselves and it's given me a feeling for what I want to do again as a solo artist, no doubt about it."</i> (April 1990: 63)</p>
It masks and perverts a basic reality	<p>Hours: Bowie offering a vision of an alternative version of his life. Drawing on his own history but perverting and changing it.</p> <p><i>"So what I had to do was sink into a situation psychologically that was less than happy with life, which in my case is not true. I had to create the situations. There's lots about this guy falling in and out of love and being disappointed and all that ... what I see in my friends, they kinds of half-lived lives they have, and it's really sad."</i> (1999: 90)</p> <p><i>They are not necessarily my mother, father and brother; it was the nuclear unit thing. Obviously I am totally aware of how people read things into stuff like this."</i> (1990: 90)</p>
It masks the absence of a basic reality	<p>Bowie in Greatest Hits mode. Allowing others to dictate his clothes and choose the songs to make up the album.</p> <p><i>"I thought I should make as much money as I could and quit ... I was obviously just an empty vessel and wound end up like everyone else, doing these stupid fucking shows, singing Rebel Rebel until I fall over and bleed."</i> (1997: 58)</p>
It bears no relation to any reality whatever it is its own pure simulacrum	<p>Outside and Earthling Bowie's pseudo-person ritual art murder detective 'Nathan Adler' for the Outside album.</p> <p><i>"Our expectations of an ending or conclusion ... learned from a repeated story-film-narrative culture gives us a completely unjustified set of expectations for life, Brian. Read my Kant".</i></p> <p><i>"I would like to mention that Rob Athey the performance artist will commit an act of scarification on a friend and fellow artist in public on Thursday night here in NYC. What are we to make of this current move towards ritualisation."</i></p> <p>Techo-loving humanoid 'Earthling' character.</p> <p><i>"Tastes are in jungle, in nerve-shredding guitar, in computer cut up lyrics ... "</i> (1997:55)</p> <p><i>"I want to play a techo club straight after the gig ... "</i> (1997: 56)</p> <p>Some disembark, but not David Bowie or Reeves Gabrels. Still glowing a faint orange in their stage make-up from the Boston gig, they insert a Prodigy cassette into the tape machine. And with the afterhours Central Park traffic drifting past their drawn curtains, they get the all-night rave underway. (1997: 59)</p>

Figure 4.4 Bowie (1989–1999) and Baudrillard's Phases of the Image.

pressure away from the record label's demands for Bowie to tour as a solo artist. Bowie went on to release two more albums with Tin Machine before the group was disbanded, *Tin Machine II* (1991) and *Tin Machine Live: Oy Vey, Baby* (1992). Bowie's return as a solo artist saw the release of *Black Tie White Noise* in 1993⁵ and featured a simple, full frame close-up of Bowie's face. Despite a return to Niles Rodgers for production duties, the first time the two had worked together since *Let's Dance*, Bowie creates a new direction experimenting with jazz saxophone and electronic dance beats. *Black Tie White Noise* includes references to his recent marriage to Somalian supermodel Iman Abdulmajid in 1992 and this coupled with a song referencing the death of his half-brother, Terry ('Jump They Say'), begins to point to Bowie allowing the listener into his private world. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, Bowie commented on how the album reflected maturity and "a willingness to relinquish full control over [his] emotions, let them go a bit, start relating to other people" (Pegg, 2011: 381). The final album in this phase of his image is *The Buddha of Suburbia*,⁶ the soundtrack to the BBC mini-series broadcast in 1993. While the original cover does not feature Bowie on the front, the back image shows a similar photograph as to the cover of *Black Tie White Noise*. This is further emphasized by the long liner notes in which Bowie discusses in great detail the creative experimental process, revealing a new confidence to create music his way, without worrying about commercial pressures or audience expectations. To draw on Hegel, the 'real' slave has overcome the 'created' master.

While personae like Ziggy Stardust and the Thin White Duke were created as standalone, fictional characters, the personae Bowie experimented with for *Outside* (Virgin, 1995) and *Earthling* (BMG, 1997)⁷ were magnified parts of his inner self and inspirations. Bowie's image as represented in these two entities becomes a pure simulacrum; they rely on blurring the lines between Bowie and Adler and Bowie and the "Earthling" to intentionally distort. *Outside* saw the reunion of Bowie with Brian Eno for the first time since the Berlin trilogy. Eno's interest in "role-playing games" at the time and Bowie's interest in contemporary art came together to create the story for *Outside*, featuring Bowie's pseudo-person ritual art murder detective Nathan Adler (Pegg, 2011: 387). This package of music, fiction and art aimed to create a hyperreal dystopian world historically placed at the end of the last millennium. The protagonist, Adler, is not Bowie. However, he both references Bowie and, in the accompanying short story found in *The Diary of Nathan Adler or the Art-Ritual Murder of Baby Grace Belew*, establishes that he lived in Berlin at the same time. The artwork created by Bowie portrays Adler both investigating the scene of the "art-ritual murder" and standing in classic detective mode. In both images, his physical appearance is similar to Bowie's, although the faces in both pieces are distorted and grotesque. Bowie's image—or perhaps Adler's—on the front cover is also abstract and smudged.

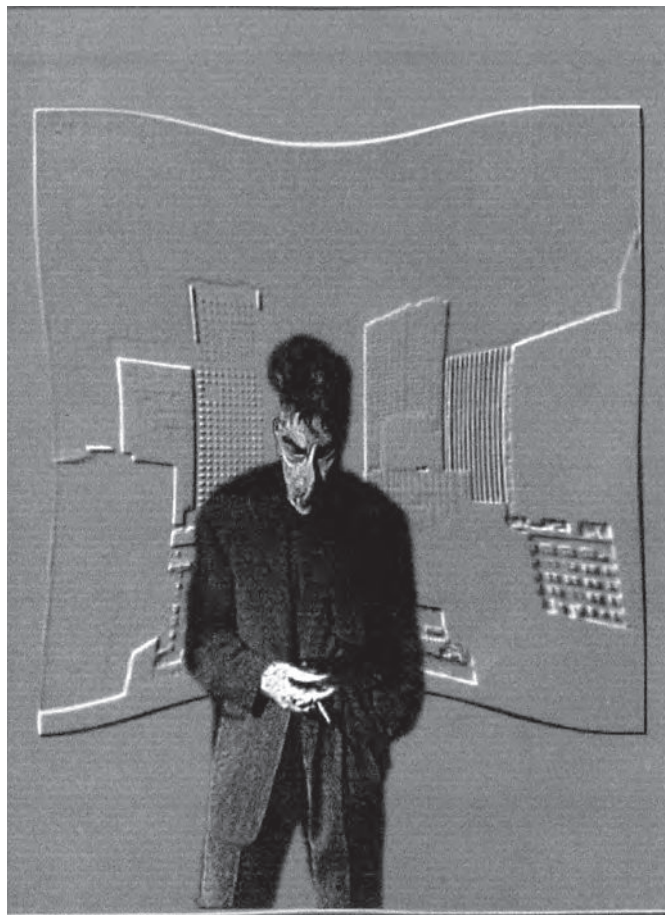


Figure 4.5 Nathan Adler artwork from *Q Magazine*, January 1995: 177.

The fact that this is a painting is also significant—it is not a real image of Bowie as previously captured by his early album cover photographs. The artwork included in *Outside* includes “computer-enhanced images in which ... Bowie’s face morphed into the features of each of the album’s characters” (Pegg, 2011: 391). Unlike previous characters, Bowie does not have to become Adler full time. He can experiment with identity and image within the space of this album. By creating a package that is both sonically and visually artistic, Bowie is able to demonstrate a sense of real artistic autonomy, moving beyond the conventions of the music industry.

The content in *Q*, which coincided with the releases of *Outside* and *Earthling*, offers insight into the increasingly complex and sophisticated way that Bowie draws on his own interests and inspirations to produce not only new music, but also simulacrum of himself. In January 1995, *Q* asked Bowie to produce something for their 100th edition. He offered the

first part of *The Diary of Nathan Adler or the Art-Ritual Murder of Baby Grace Belew* from the *Outside* album and an internet conversation between himself and Brian Eno dated 26 October 1994 in which the blurring of lines between Bowie and Adler continues. Both Adler as narrator of the short fiction and Bowie in his conversation with Eno, reference violent performance artists Chris Burden, Ron Athey and the ‘Gothenburg/Viennese castrationists’. In *Art and the Artefact*, published two years after Bowie’s *Outside*, Baudrillard discussed the contemporary art movement and how it uses not just three dimensions to produce realistic image, but a fourth dimension to make it hyperreal, which results in the extermination of the real by its double (Baudrillard, 1997: 9). He argues that art has become iconoclastic, producing and reproducing images so they become the (hyper) reality and that this is the “secret of simulation” as not only has the real world disappeared, but “the question of its existence no longer makes sense” (Baudrillard, 1997:12). When considering *Outside* and the blurring of lines between Bowie ‘the artist’ and Nathan Adler ‘the artist’s creation’, the real world has indeed disappeared. Bowie is going to watch Ron Athey the performance artist “commit an act of scarification on a friend in public” and Adler is going to watch the same event in order to investigate performance art and how it has inspired art-ritual murder. Bowie’s conversation with Brian Eno may aim to show off his intellectual prowess and knowledge of the art world as his authentic self—and he certainly makes reference in the conversation to shared experiences with Eno—but it is in fact a performance, a simulacrum through which he performs a ‘hyperreal’ version of self. This version of reality is both Bowie and Adler. For Baudrillard this is the pinnacle of a world of simulation. Reality has altogether disappeared, and at the same time what is left masks the disappearance and appears authentic.

For his next album *Earthling*, Bowie has moved from the narrator of a dystopian fictional world to an inhabitant of the underground dance scene. His latest simulacrum is that of the raver existing within 1990s’ subculture. To this end, Bowie played small underground venues and nightclubs, including the Dance Tent at the 1997 Phoenix Festival under the name the Tao Jones Index. In her 1995 study of rave and dance culture, Thornton draws on the work of Bourdieu arguing that one of the salient features of club culture is the way participants seek to advance their claims to being cutting edge by discovering new sounds and being ‘hip’ to new developments. Club culture has, Thornton argues, created a new structure of life—or what Bourdieu would term the ‘habitus’. Thornton claims that to be part of club culture is to be involved in a habitus which demands knowledge of clubs and records, ways of thinking and living, such as late nights listening to dance music, ways of dressing and even ways of moving (Thornton, cited in Longhurst, 2007: 187). In the Q interview from February 1997 and the review of a small gig at a London nightclub six months later it is clear that Bowie has completely immersed himself in this dance habitus. In total he spent almost 18 months touring dance nightclubs and

is clearly enjoying every moment describing how playing *Earthling* in dance clubs gives him a “buzz”. Involvement in this habitus—the all-encompassing lifestyle of the dance world—has helped Bowie create a new simulacrum, that of the electro-raver. This simulacrum has again overtaken aspects of his life.

As Thornton describes, some involved in the dance habitus may seek to be seen as leaders in the field. They may deploy their hipness as “subcultural” capital (Thornton, cited in Longhurst, 2007: 197).

David Bowie
 interviews the 50-year-old rock star and his new-ish direction.

Conc

attraction takes over. To the left of the stage stand long-time guitarist Reeves Gabrels and back-in-the-fold keyboardist Nile Garsen. On the other side are the “next generation”: shaven-headed bassist Gail Ann Dorsey and shock-haired drummer Zac Alford. And there’s Dazzling Dave, 50 years old but flame-haired and bristle-chinned, wearing a red turtleneck (the Union Jack-er of the last two years has thankfully been retired), black striders, strumming the opening chords to Quicksand (from *Hunky Dory*). At the line “I’m destiny”, the singer raises his eyes aloft, in mock self-deprecation, and grimaces still. Ground control to Major Tom: you have lift-off . . .

“It’s a different kind of performance, the club show.” Bowie tells Q during a break in rehearsals two days before the show. “It’s far more laid-back in a way, a lot more casual, because you don’t have to broadcast as big.”

Despite some “gimme your hands” communion with the front row that occasionally threatens to swallow Bowie whole, he’s undeniably “at ease” at the Grand. During *Battle Of Britain*, he attempts a dance that’s sub-Two Tone skank before thinking better of it. Then there are token gestures to the art of mime, most radically in *Fame*, when Bowie “takes” the kind of despair that, in years past, would have been taken for granted. “I suppose I’m self-satisfied these days,” he admits. “I like what I’m doing on all fronts and the more personal side of my life is very together. (Squinting his face) Yeah, it’s ‘brillie, I get so bored having to tell people!’”

Having followed Quicksand with a rearranged *V2 Schneider* (on which he parps away on sax), the band launches into a prolonged nine-song suite from the “difficult” 1. *Outside* and *Earthling* albums, interspersed with similarly visceral treatments of *Scary Monsters And Super Creeps* and *Fashion*. There’s a fascinating tug-of-war going on: the heavy presence of DAT tapes handling the stun-gun electronics while Dorsey and Alford’s thrashy playing ensures that the songs take on an altogether milder hue. On *Heels*, Spaceboy Bowie’s music has never sounded more brutal and Gabrels, though dispassionate of face, deploys his guitar as an incendiary weapon. (“Part of my function in the band is to be the loose cannon,” he explains afterwards.) At several points, Bowie steps back and watches his charges clearly reveling in their muscular din.

“Honestly, it would be a sin not playing live when I’ve got a band like this,” Bowie had enthused earlier. “They’re the best group I’ve had in twenty years, right up there with the Spiders in terms of cohesive musicianship and attitude. And they surprise everyone.”

It should be noted that Bowie’s Tin Machine is similarly high regard. As far as surprises go, opening with the long-lost Quicksand is only trumped by a cover of Laurie Anderson’s *O Superman*. “I’m doing it for Gail because I thought it would suit her,” Bowie reasons. “And it does. She sings the shit out of it.”

O Superman provides some much-needed breathing space amid all the drum’n’bass. Further, the song lies in a few old constraints – despite Bowie’s well-documented aversion to wheeling them out. He cheerily confesses to remaining “pretty much didactic about what I want to play,” and dismisses outright the rumour of an Aladdin Sane “re-visit” at next month’s Phoenix festival. “That was never my intention. It might be a lot of fun for the audience but not for me particularly.”

To make the point, Bowie introduces Little Wonder as “one from way, way back.” But almost as a passive offering, the set closes with barely noticeable renditions of Joan Jett, Queen Bitch, a hybridised *Fame* (borrowing Dr. Dr. Dr.’s keyboard parts from the rapper’s 1996 cover) and *Stay*. Either the band are shagged out or they haven’t mastered the later’s chugging momentum, because it’s pretty ragged. But the man waving a crucifix in the air doesn’t care: he’s been standing five feet from David Bowie for 90 minutes, and his book, that doesn’t happen every day.

Bowie pre-empts screams for an encore by announcing before *Stay* that the band will return after 20 minutes for a 50-minute “dance” set, including revised versions of *V2 Schneider*, *O Superman* and *Fame* (retitled *It Is Any Wonder*). With Dorsey concentrating on keyboards and Alford on drum pads, it’s a bit “hope you like our new direction”, and a slowly dwindling crowd stand mesmerized and rooted to the spot, more fatigued than mesmerized.

Of the genuine drum’n’bass luminaries present, opinions of Bowie’s efforts are mixed, with DJ Rag taking the parish’s stance: “There were some nice music bits, but for me it lacked rhythm and soul. Maybe he needs to work with some people in the scene, and study the form a bit more.”

Gabrels, however, waxes more supportive: “I still think that Bowie can go a bit further with this music, but it’s up to him to experiment. He should take it somewhere it hasn’t been before, outside the realm of linear drum’n’bass, so that no-one can judge it.”

After London, comes a hotel in Hamburg, before the band embarks on a whopping 32-date European festival jaunt. “We basically haven’t stopped working since July 1995,” Gabrels informs Q later. “David’s a little tornado of activity wherever he goes.”

Dorian Gray would be envious of this man’s stay-young regime. *North Alton*

They're the best band I've had in twenty years.

The artist: note ominous, fat-bumming second "dance" set.

Q

David Bowie
 June 2, 1997

Dizbusting
 David Bowie hopes you like his new-ish direction.

HANOVER GRAND, LONDON
 June 2, 1997

As with any *Intimate* showcase by a Major Rock icon, a palpable buzz surrounds the 720-capacity Hanover Grand this evening, not least because it's the smallest UK show that David Bowie has played since Ziggy Stardust first donned platform shoes 26 years ago, but also thanks to talk of last-minute giveaways to the ticketless deprived.

Once for removed from his "roots", Bowie is now getting to be a dab hand at this diminutive-scaled tank. While making *Earthling* last autumn, he slotted in an American East Coast club tour; tonight's event was preceded by a three-hour-plus extravaganza at the 300-capacity Dublin Factory, Bowie's first chance to fully test-drive the *Earthling*'s dizbusting drum'n'bass approach in a live setting.

The crowd (fellow South Londoner-in-exile Gary Oldman and drum'n'bass king Goldie included; Noel Gallagher will attend tomorrow night's performance) shuffle impatiently while Björk percussionist and Asian techno pioneer, Talvin Singh, DJs, adding live tables to an already disorientating jazz-techno blend that sets the evening's musical agenda titled, with Bowie's usual staginess, *Fatal Fame*.

As Singh retreats, the main

Figure 4.6 Bowie the Raver, *Q Magazine*, August 1997: 168.

At the Hanover Grand gig in June 1997 which is reviewed in *Q* (August 1997: 168), he plays “Earthling’s dizbusting drum n bass” in front of the ‘hippest’ members of the dance music scene, including popular DJ Goldie, while Björk percussionist and techno pioneer Talvin Singh is his opening act. His performance may not have the open artifice of Nathan Adler and *Outside*, but it is no less a simulacrum wherein he embodies his latest artistic influences and presents it as himself. There are also whispers of other selves represented in the “Earthling” character. On the front cover of *Earthling* his hairstyle is a hybrid of the red Ziggy mane and early spikes popular with dance groups such as The Prodigy. Bowie also wears a tattered Union Jack patterned jacket he designed with Alexander McQueen and is turned away from the camera overlooking green fields, popular places for underground raves. Pegg notes the “Colossus-of-Rhodes stance” could be read as Bowie comfortable in his place as artist and musician (Pegg, 2011: 395). He had taken control over his image and his work, becoming free from the music industry’s restraints and the demands of his record label. He can perform and tour on his own terms and the stance represents not only standing above his past confidently, but also looking towards his future. In 1997, in full ‘raver’ attire, Bowie was interviewed by Dave Fanning for Planet Rock MTV and his interactions and body language offer an interesting insight into his performance of authenticity during this period. Fanning asks, “There’s no way David Bowie wants to work with a safety net?” (12:55), to which he replies, “Not really, because when I’ve endeavoured to do that, I’ve just felt the most dissatisfied creatively as I *ever* could feel” (13:00) ... destroying everything worthwhile in my work” (13:10), before lowering his eyes and beginning to fidget, picking imaginary fluff off his jumper. Dyer argues it is moments such as this which expose “what is behind or below the surface” and therefore “unquestionably and vitally by definition, the truth” (Dyer, 1991: 136). This moment of ‘truth’ is extended as, while Bowie discusses how disappointed he was with himself for bowing to commercial pressure, the camera pans from his averted gaze to a close-up of his fingers fidgeting on his knee. Of course it could be argued that Bowie, the consummate performer, is aware that here he is performing a moment of authenticity to show how much he regrets allowing his artistic self to be tempered by the commercial imperatives of the music media machine. Through his performance of awkwardness, he gives the audience signals that this is the version they should accept as authentic and thus urges them to reject the moments of his past with which he is no longer comfortable. *Earthling* represents both Britain as the fabric of Bowie’s identity and his new home amongst the cosmopolitan, avant-garde urban landscape of New York City where the album was recorded. Pegg also notes that the figure on the front cover can be said to represent “the isolated visitor in an alien landscape evoked many years earlier by the *Ziggy Stardust* sleeve”. Taken together with *Outside*, both albums are

arguably “essential” parts of “Bowie’s creative rebirth” (Pegg, 2011: 395). By creating and facing these two key simulacra, Bowie prepares himself for the authentication of self in an album that sets up his retirement from creating within the confines of the music industry, *Hours*⁸.

In his final offering of the twentieth century, Bowie appears acutely aware that he is not offering a version of himself, but the authentic self, commenting on the world around him. He does not wish to embody a character *or* a simulacrum in his performance. He is not dressed in any form of costume, his hair is a natural brown rather than the Ziggy-esque neon orange sported for *Earthling*.

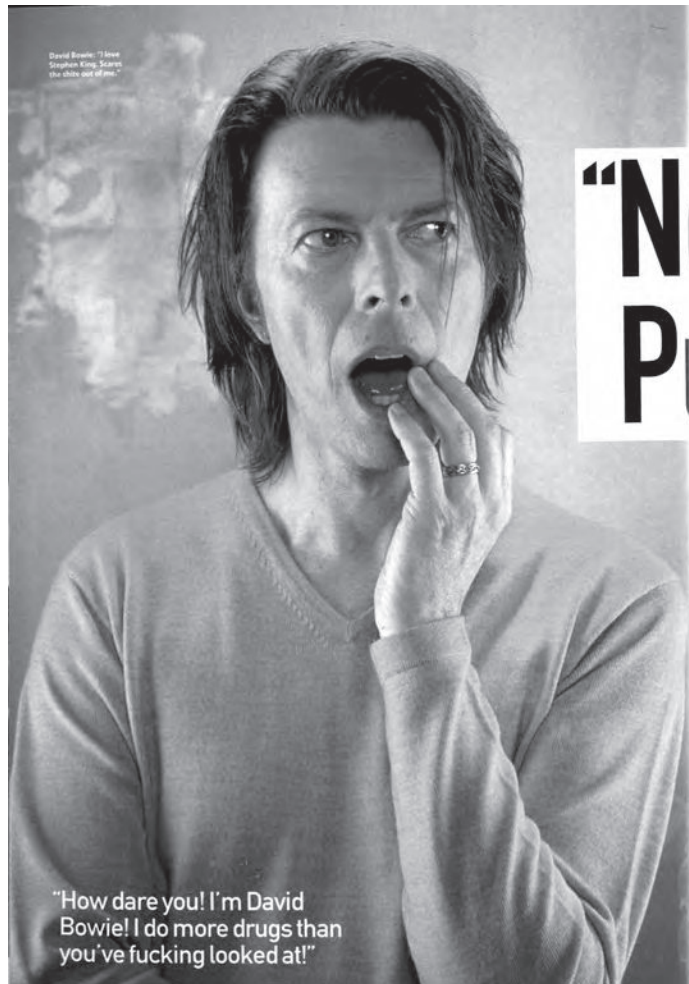


Figure 4.7 Bowie in “Dad’s clothes,” *Q Magazine*, October 1999: 8.

In the accompanying pictures he is wearing a range of jumpers. He looks like someone's Dad—which, of course, he is—and for the first time in any of the Q interviews across the decade he makes reference to how this intensely personal experience influences his life. Indeed the entire interview shows a new side to Bowie. He speaks of his family, his parents and brother, his "Uncle Jim", his son and his wife. For the first time the audience see a glimpse of the person behind the performer. The performance is still there; he still adopts voices for gravitas or comedy effect and he still agrees with the interviewer throughout, but he also reveals intimate details of the reality of his life and the people within it. When discussing his new material a new aspect to Bowie as performer is revealed. While the music—and as such the performance of it—is once again simulacral in nature, this time he is not trying to embody the person whom he is performing. Indeed he identifies, for the first time, the artistic process governing his artistic output of the last decade, and perhaps throughout his career. He psychologically tries to put himself into and embody the situation of the 'others' he creates:

This album was me trying to capture the idea of songs for my generation. So what I had to do was sink into a situation psychologically that was less than happy in life, which in my case, is not true. They are not necessarily my mother, father and brother; it was the nuclear unit thing. Obviously I am totally aware of how people read stuff like this.

(Q, October 1999: 90)

This moment of revelation of authentic self may be fleeting. Bowie seems aware that, as Baudrillard would argue, in order to achieve immortality as an artist, he must "get out" of himself and evolve eternally. When the interviewer comments that he could have made an entire career around just one of his albums he quips sarcastically, "Even me! Ha ha ha! I could still be doing that. Ooh I wouldn't half be unhappy". In this final statement Bowie reveals something telling about all the changes, characters and performances. He may have offered several hyperreal simulations of 'David Bowie' to the audience, but this presentation is *who* he really is. Performing 'the other' *is* his authentic self.

While, as these discussions show, Bowie had greater artistic freedom, the commercial pressures of the music business still had a significant effect on releases in the 1990s. Bowie's back catalogue was repackaged and remastered throughout the decade for the commercial benefit of the record labels, much to his dismay. Ziggy Stardust and his legacy continued to haunt him with the release of greatest hits and retrospective packages. *Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture* was re-released in 1992

shortly after the critical failure of *Tin Machine*. In 1994 and again in 2008 the *Santa Monica '72* gig was released in a variety of collectable formats including (in 2008) a 180 gram double LP set which included a Ziggy Stardust poster and remastered audio. Two key compilation/greatest hits packages were released during this period: a four-disc box set titled *Sound + Vision* (Rykodisc, 1989) and *Changesbowie*⁹ (Rykodisc/EMI, 1990). The cover for the *Changesbowie* CD was a montage of images of Bowie throughout his career, though most of the images represent Ziggy Stardust and the other Ziggy-esque images from *Diamond Dogs*, *Young Americans*, and *Scary Monsters*. These repackages of the past pass through the second phase of Baudrillard's image—they mask the absence of a basic reality—as in essence these personae or versions of Bowie no longer exist. During the period of musical silence before the release of *The Next Day*, this masking of absence by record companies through the reissue of new material became particularly popular with fans. These packages, including *Live Nassau Coliseum '76* (2010) and the deluxe *Station to Station* (2010, of which the Nassau gig is included), were embraced as if new releases with thousands of pre-orders and coverage across the music press.

CONCLUSION

In evaluating Bowie's hyperreal performances of the 1990s as played out in *Q* magazine some important questions are raised about the nature of his artistry in relation to celebrity culture. It could be claimed that Bowie's adoption of various personae is not unique, with reinvention key to maintaining many stars' relevance. However, in examining how Bowie moves from all encompassing fictional personae to a performance of a more authentic self, we can see how his reinvention works in a different way to readings of celebrity which see non-performed, but mediated, moments as indicators of the 'real' self. For much of the decade Bowie reveals authenticity through performance rather than through glimpses of his private realm. The question therefore becomes: were the 1990s' versions of himself given to his audience *actually* authentic? Certainly the fact it does not appear to have had any meaningful impact on wider media *or* audience suggests it was not accepted as such. The moment he stopped giving these performed insights into his authentic self, this version was forgotten, creating a vacuum filled by the forty-year-old Ziggy Stardust and Aladdin Sane. As t-shirts, mugs, handbags, earrings and even temporary tattoos fill high street retailers featuring this image and the Aladdin 'flash', it becomes the truth of Bowie again, even if this new consumer-driven audience does not fully grasp the original meaning or context of it. Taking Boorstin's assessment of celebrity as

being a “definable and publicizable personality” (Boorstin, 1962 cited in Marshall, 1997: 11), in Bowie’s absence from the public eye Ziggy/Aladdin have become identifiable and marketable once more. In this way, Bowie’s work runs the risk of taking on the very “ephemeral quality” that he, particularly in the 1990s, desperately tried to undo (Marshall, 1997: 11). Perhaps this is best evidenced by the coverage of the release of *The Next Day* in April 2013. *Q* issued a 30-page special which did not feature the new official photograph of Bowie but opted for the famous Brian Duffy photograph of Bowie as Aladdin Sane from 1973, demonstrating “mainstream media’s unwillingness ... to allow Bowie to escape the characters he created” (Usher and Fremaux, 2013: 394). Despite the fact that it was the 1990s when they had greatest direct access to the star, they give every other decade a large glossy spread, and their writers dismissed this period (e.g. Forde, 2013: 70). Thus, Bowie’s attempts as demonstrated through his interviews “to be accepted for a version closer to reality ... in order for his new material to be accepted as culturally resonate” (Usher and Fremaux, 2013: 394; see also Marshall, 1997; Meyers, 2009), clearly failed. It is perhaps Bowie’s own understanding of this failure which has led him to stay silent since the release of his new material. Dyer argues that media texts have a crucial role in the creation of celebrity authenticity but by not giving any interviews, Bowie has allowed his art—especially the videos for ‘The Next Day’, ‘The Stars (Are Out Tonight)’ and ‘Valentine’s Day’—to provide the “source for the presentation of the epitome of ... [sincerity and authenticity]” (Dyer, 1991: 135). He has learned a lesson from his interactions with the media in the 1990s, particularly that interviews in which he gives a sense of his authentic self do not resonate with his audience to the level of his complex personae of the 1970s. It was for that reason in 1993 *Q* superimposed the Aladdin Sane flash on his unmade-up face, changing the image from an ordinary Bowie in a suit, to the extraordinary figure of the 1970s. As such his self-imposed media blackout allows publications, and indeed individual audience members, to project the version they want him to be onto this new material. We can all superimpose an Aladdin Sane flash in our mind’s eye, if we choose. It is perhaps his savviest marketing move yet.

NOTES

1. The study is a detailed textual analysis of all *Q Magazine*’s original interviews with Bowie (1989–1999) and examines the artist’s interaction with music journalists. These issues have been taken from the lead author’s original collection and checked against the magazine’s archive. It should be noted that this study aims to consider both Bowie’s own perspective, but also the critical observations of the interviewer when viewing his performance and interaction with them.

2. Studies around authenticity in popular music and popular culture are numerous and more information can be found in key works by Dyer (1991), Frith, Goodwin and Grossberg (1993), Rubridge (1996), Marshall (1997), Auslander (1999), Moore (2002) and Vannini and Williams (2009).
3. In the 100th edition of *Q*, special issues editor Danny Kelly (1995) wrote: “This Bowie picture for the cover of *Q* was, when it arrived with us, just a rather nice contemporary portrait. We needed somehow to link it into the glories of David’s past. We had the idea of the cover of *Aladdin Sane*, and after much telephoning, discovered that a computer enhancement company called Jones Bloom had the very frontier technology we needed to convincingly paint David’s skin. I got a message back from Bowie himself saying that it was ‘cheeky’.”
4. As noted by Bill Wyman (1991: Online), writing in *Entertainment Weekly*, *Tin Machine* (1989) originally only sold 200,000 copies. The album spent nine weeks on the UK charts peaking at Number 3, though in the US, it peaked at 28. By comparison, *Tin Machine II* (1991) peaked at 23 where it spent three weeks on the UK charts and peaking at 126 in the US (“Tin Machine”: Online). David Bowie’s official website cites that in total over two million units (including the first two albums and a limited edition live disc) have been sold (“About David Bowie”, 2014: Online). *New York Times* writer Jon Pareles (1989) focused on the rock elements of *Tin Machine*, commenting on how it “strips away clutter and artifice”. Deevoy (1989) describes the album as “raw”, “soul scouring” and “a raucous rock album”, though his review focuses more on Bowie’s nervousness and occasional disappearances during the playback than on the album itself. Reviewers were less ambivalent about *Tin Machine II*, as Shaar Murray (1991) felt the follow up did not meet the expectations of the first album and Terry Staunton in *NME* argued it could “hardly be hailed as a classic ...” (Pattison, 2011: 146). Similarly, Wyman (1991: Online) writing again in *Entertainment Weekly* comments that the exercise is “a vain attempt to nullify his celebrity”.
5. *Black Tie White Noise* saw Bowie return to the top spot in the UK charts in 1993, though the album only peaked at number 39 in the US (*Uncut: Ultimate Music Guide: David Bowie*, 2011: 148).
6. *The Buddha of Suburbia* soundtrack peaked at number 87 in the UK charts and prompted critic Shaun Phillips, writing in 1993, to comment, “... there’s nothing here worth forgiving him for Tin Machine” (*Uncut: Ultimate Music Guide: David Bowie*, 2011: 150). Though in 2011, music journalist David Cavanagh noted in retrospect the importance of the soundtrack in influencing much of the approaches taken on *Outside* (1995) (*Uncut: Ultimate Music Guide: David Bowie*, 2011: 150).
7. *Outside* (1995) peaked at number 8 in the UK and at number 21 in the US, while *Earthling* (1997) charted at number 6 in the UK and at number 39 in the US (*Uncut: Ultimate Music Guide: David Bowie*, 2011: 152, 154).
8. *Hours* peaked at number 5 in the UK and at number 47 in the US (*Uncut: Ultimate Music Guide: David Bowie*, 2011: 162.)
9. *Changesbowie* was not only a platinum selling disc, but it also peaked at number 1 in the UK and at number 32 in the US (*Uncut: Ultimate Music Guide: David Bowie*, 2011: 174). Bowie returned to the number 1 spot in the UK again in 2013 with the release of *The Next Day*, his first studio album since 2003’s *Reality*.

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