



MFCO Working Paper Series

SPECIAL ISSUE: ENVIRONMENTS, SPACES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Expansion/contraction: Shifting spaces within the rock music documentary

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Abstract: In this paper, I wish to compare historical subgenres of the rock music documentary, taking Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the literary chronotope, expressing “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships,” and transposing it to the medium of film. More specifically, I wish to trace the spatial and temporal transformation that occurs between the chronotopic 1960s rockumentaries and 1970s rock documentaries, and the antichronotopic late 1970s/early 1980s punkumentaries. In that respect, the rockumentaries are notable for their spatial expansiveness, onto which can be read the expanded time of the counterculture’s utopian visions. While the 1970s rock documentaries appear equally expansive, it is largely the size and scale of the rock concert spectacle that is foregrounded, the expansion of time mainly extending to the (imaginary) past. By contrast, the “concrete and visible” premises of the punkumentaries are the cramped and claustrophobic urban punk clubs. They are temporary spaces converted for the purpose, located within the wider economic downturn of the late 1970s, with the prevailing mood of the participants one of disillusionment and perverse celebration of the absence of any future. The contraction of space is matched by the contraction of time.

Introduction

Until now the word 'punkumentary' has only been used in a wider, non-academic sense to describe any documentary that contains live footage of punk music. Here, I will apply it in a more restricted and specific fashion to describe a form of the music documentary that not only documents, but also expresses what might be called a punk ethos. In that respect, I wish to focus on documentaries such as *The Punk Rock Movie* (Letts 1978), *D.O.A.: A Rite of Passage* (Kowalski 1980) and *The Decline of Western Civilization* (Spheeris 1981), each released contemporaneously with the movement they seek to capture, as well as *The Filth and the Fury* (Temple 2000) which I believe also (though retroactively) enacts a punk sensibility.¹ By using the term 'punkumentary', I am drawing an analogy with the 'rockumentary', used in an academic context by documentary theorists such as Keith Beattie to refer to 1960s rock documentaries such as *Dont Look Back* (Pennebaker 1967), *Monterey Pop* (Pennebaker 1968), *Woodstock* (Wadleigh 1970) and *Gimme Shelter* (Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin 1970). In order to establish the punkumentary as a distinct form in its own right, I intend to contrast it with other historical subgenres of the rock documentary, such as the 1960s rockumentaries, the 1970s rock documentaries and the wider category of punk documentaries, mostly retrospective overviews of the punk movement.

To provide the critical language to analyse the differences between these subgenres, I propose to employ the concept of the 'chronotope' (literally 'time-space'), adapted by Mikhail Bakhtin as a model for literary analysis (1981).² For Bakhtin, the chronotope expresses 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (1981, p. 84). He goes on to elucidate that 'out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in the work (in the text)' (1981, p. 253). In this paper, I follow Michael Montgomery (1993) and Vivian Sobchack (1998) in transposing Bakhtin's concept to the medium of cinema, a medium that is itself uniquely expressive of both time and space. More specifically, I would submit that, in relation to what had become the established chronotopes of the rock documentary, the onscreen world of the punkumentary resembles another model explored by Bakhtin (1984), the world of the carnivalesque, which uses laughter and parody to mock established societal norms and to overturn previously taken-for-granted hierarchies. As Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson

(1990) have suggested, carnival can be understood as an 'anti-chronotope', a process by which the wholeness and unity of the chronotope disintegrates and in which expectations (from previous examples) of a normative generic time-space are destabilised.

The Rockumentary

As Sobchack points out, a key feature of the chronotope is that 'it is *literally*, not metaphorically or allegorically, grounded in its historical and cultural context' (1989, p. 130). More than anything, the 1960s rockumentaries are marked by their spatial expansiveness onto which can be read an equally expansive temporality that not only draws on the past, but also looks forward to the future, in a manner reminiscent of the 1960s counterculture's utopian visions. This co-ordination of space and time is evidenced, for example, in D. A. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back*, which documents the 1965 British tour by the American folk/rock musician Bob Dylan. The performance spaces of *Dont Look Back* are the formal but slightly dilapidated British concert halls of a bygone era, part of an 'olde world' culture also represented in the film by the BBC reporter, the stuffy hotel staff and 'the high sheriff's lady'. At the same time, the film's wider temporal context is the mid-1960s, an era of relative economic prosperity (at least for many in the West) and of raised expectations, but also one that heralded an explosion of long-simmering generational discontent. As such, *Dont Look Back* depicts the old world of 1960s Britain confronted by Dylan, a force for change who literally comes from the new world. To echo the title of the film, he is depicted as an artist who refuses to 'look back', a quality emphasized by the film's staged prologue, featuring his latest single, 'Subterranean Homesick Blues', which consigns the documented 'present' of the remainder of the film to the already past.

This expansion of space and time is even more to the fore in festival rockumentaries such as *Monterey Pop* and *Woodstock*, both grounded in their seemingly unrestricted 'natural' settings. In addition, the documented festivals are represented as idyllic in a manner that recalls a much older literary chronotope also explored by Bakhtin: the 'idyll' (1981, p. 224-242), a cyclic time-space, usually pastoral, and representing 'the conjoining of human life with that of nature' (1981, p. 226). Beginning with the construction of a stage in the opening scenes of each film, there are recurring chronotopic motifs. As happened traditionally, the festivals take place on the outskirts of town, in locations removed from the

city (or in the case of *Monterey Pop* removed from the big city, San Francisco). Also, both *Monterey Pop* and (particularly) *Woodstock* document the journey to the festival site in such a way that it appears to have the spiritual significance of a religious pilgrimage.³ Not only are these spaces where the counterculture can be itself, where it no longer has to stand in relation to the dominant culture, but they are also spaces from where it is possible to imagine a very different future to that already prescribed.

Monterey Pop highlights the convergence of space and time as if it were an astrological occurrence. For the purposes of the film, Monterey becomes the semi-mythical 'San Francisco', spiritual home of the 1960s American counterculture and celebrated in soundtrack songs such as The Mamas and the Papas' 'California Dreaming' and Scott McKenzie's 'San Francisco'. The time is the summer of 1967, in the media-constituted 'Summer of Love' when the counterculture was at its most optimistic.⁴ This is despite the wider historical context of the Vietnam War and race riots in major American cities.⁵ Nevertheless, a procession of audience members face the filmmaker's camera and smile as if welcoming the cinematic spectator to become part of the documented chronotope. The impression conveyed is of the coming together of an extended family, made more so by the film's selection of live footage, which includes artists from around the world, for example British group The Who, the transatlantic Jimi Hendrix Experience and Eric Burdon and the Animals, the South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela, and the Indian sitar player Ravi Shankar and his trio.

Spatially, *Woodstock* appears even more unrestricted than *Monterey Pop*. The size and scale of the festival audience is not only documented, but expressed hyperbolically in shots that portray the almost half a million audience members spreading out over the surrounding countryside. It also exemplifies what Sobchack calls the 'idyllic and timeless' (1998, p. 167) nature of the pastoral idyll. The idyll is foregrounded early in the film, in shots of the pre-festival site and pristine green fields stretching to the horizon, then in a montage of hippy families arriving in colourful hand-painted buses and setting up tents that resemble native American tepees, their children playing contentedly in the natural surroundings as if dislocated from the time-space of the dominant culture. At the same time, a studio recording of Canned Heat's 'Going Up the Country' plays on the sound channel, the song's country/blues style evocative of an idealised rural America. The desire to go back to nature

and basic life processes is also literalized in *Woodstock's* celebration of (natural) marijuana, in its footage of yoga workshops, and in shots of people enjoying the mud and the rain and swimming naked in the nearby lake. At the same time, there are also implicit contradictions within the countercultural idyll that would later come to the surface in the Altamont scenes of *Gimme Shelter*. For example, several *Woodstock* performers refer to a dysfunctional present characterised by racism and the Vietnam War⁶ and the film's penultimate scene documents the sea of rubbish left behind by the audience at the festival's conclusion.⁷

Initially, *Gimme Shelter* is expressive of the normative generic time-space familiar from *Monterey Pop* and *Woodstock*. In a similar fashion, it highlights the rock concert as a collective, communal experience and enacts utopian relations between the onstage performers and concert and cinematic audiences through formal structures such as sound bridges and shot reverse-shot.⁸ However, in the film's Altamont scenes every chronotopic motif is inverted. The sense is of the wrong place and the wrong time. Where *Monterey Pop* and *Woodstock* were located in what appeared to be idyllic natural surroundings, the Altamont site is normally a speedway, the car noise and petrol fumes the antithesis of the pastoral idyll. From the cinematic spectator's first glimpse of the festival site from the air, as The Rolling Stones and their entourage arrive by helicopter, it appears chaotic and overcrowded. When the filmmakers venture into the audience prior to the show, there hardly seems the space to breathe amongst the freak-outs and violent attacks on other audience members by the Hell's Angels. Even before the Stones take the stage, the filmmakers (and the spectator) have already distanced themselves from the onscreen audience. As onscreen spaces within the rockumentary contract, any semblance of countercultural celebration turns to apprehension and fear. That the Altamont Speedway is a place from which there is no escape is evidenced by shots of frightened but resigned expressions on the faces of many people within the audience. Also, the frequent interruptions and the apparent randomness of the violence work against the normal rhythms of the rock documentary. The sense of a disaster waiting to happen is compounded by the fact that the cinematic spectator already knows the outcome. Furthermore, the time is the end of the 1960s, just four months after the gruesome Manson murders and against the backdrop of the long-running Vietnam War and race riots on the streets of major American cities. In that respect, *Gimme Shelter's* Altamont scenes embody the actual

violence and racism of the film's wider socio-political context, in the process disrupting the by-then-established chronotopes of the rock documentary and unwittingly providing the perfect anti-chronotopic model for the late 1970s/early 1980s punkumentary.

The 1970s Rock Documentary

Nevertheless, the chronotopes of the rock documentary would be restored, albeit with some changes, in 1970s rock documentaries such as *Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii* (Maben 1972), *The Song Remains the Same* (Clifton and Massot 1976), *The Last Waltz* (Scorsese 1978) and *The Kids are Alright* (Stein 1979). The expansive spaces of the rockumentaries are re-inscribed, with the onscreen audience either subsumed within the mass rock concert spectacle or removed entirely, as in *Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii* and (to all intents and purposes) in *The Last Waltz*.⁹ As Keith Beattie has noted, Scorsese's film even excludes the conventional rockumentary shot that portrays the band in front of 'their' audience from the back of the stage (2008, p. 73). The chronotope whereby the large-scale rock concert is experienced as a communal time-space, with the onstage performers and the concert and cinematic audiences grouped together as part of a unified countercultural 'family', is also reconfigured. Instead, the rock star is idealised as the main focus of both the concert and cinematic audiences' attention. Backstage access to the performers is also restricted. The ability of the filmmaker's camera (and the cinematic spectator) to traverse the various physical spaces of the rock performance was now fully recognized, contributing to a much more cautious approach from both the musicians and their management. The 1970s rock documentaries also move away from the documentary form entirely, with both *The Song Remains the Same* and *The Kids are Alright* including numerous fictional scenes and *The Last Waltz* actually scripted, with 'a two hundred page script of the shoot' (Beattie 2008, p. 73).

While the spatial expansiveness of the 1960s rockumentaries remains, the overriding impression is now more of the extended size, scale, and opulence of the rock concert spectacle. The documentaries also highlight the extent of the technology involved, for example, *Live at Pompeii* includes footage of Pink Floyd setting up their vast array of equipment before the show, the focus on technology amplifying the onscreen presence of the musicians. Spatially, the opening scene of the director's cut of *Live at Pompeii* is particularly grandiose. It begins with a rocket launching into space followed by shots of

(fictional) planets before it cuts to a vast landscape of Roman ruins and the ancient amphitheatre in which the band's performance takes place. The grand scale appears in accordance with the era of 'stadium rock', so-called because contemporary advances in sound amplification technology meant that rock concerts could be presented in huge stadium venues originally designed for major sporting events. With ticket prices correspondingly higher and the shows part of extensive national and international tours geared to promoting a band's latest album, the 1970s rock concert spectacle moves well away from the egalitarian impulses of the rockumentaries, with commercial imperatives overshadowing any agenda for social change.

Where the festival rockumentaries were located in spaces physically removed from the city and symbolically outside the confines of the dominant capitalist culture, the onscreen locations of the 1970s rock documentaries are much more closely linked with the economic and political status quo. For example, the venue for the Led Zeppelin concert documented in *The Song Remains the Same* is Madison Square Garden, a dominant culture citadel and venue for only the most economically 'successful' musical acts, as well as major American sports events and from time to time both the Democrat and Republican Party national conventions. In addition, the individual members of Led Zeppelin are shown travelling to the venue in chauffeur-driven limousines, accompanied by a police escort, which enables them to by-pass the traffic jams experienced by everyday people.¹⁰ The scene serves as another reminder of the rock documentaries' contemporaneous cultural-historical context and the way that major label 1970s rock music comfortably reflects the status quo, along with the fact that in this era the multi-national music industry had become one of the most economically powerful in the world.

In spite of the fact that the second half of the decade was also a time of widespread economic recession, the 1970s rock documentaries purport to be apolitical. It appears that evocations of the past and excursions into fantasy worlds perhaps represent safer ground (economically speaking) than any continuation of the 1960s counterculture's social and political radicalism. In many respects, the rock documentaries epitomise the way that, as Christopher Lasch has suggested, the decade saw 'a retreat from politics and a repudiation of the recent past' (1979, p. 5). This distancing from the troubles of their own space and time is exemplified by their restoration of the idyllic chronotope. *The Last Waltz*, for

example, is located in the 'historic'¹¹ Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco, its sepia-tinted nostalgia for an idyllic, semi-mythical 1960s hyperbolized onscreen in shots of velvet drapes and crystal chandeliers from a bygone era. Ostensibly a document of The Band's final concert, Scorsese's film includes live performances by a succession of musicians generally associated with the previous decade.¹² It also includes interviews with the individual members of The Band who express fond recollections of life 'on the road', depicted as a rock 'n' roll rite of passage and part of an unbroken lineage extending from the 1950s and 1960s to the present day, in the process imposing a mythic historical continuity on a period marked by profound social conflict.

In other 1970s rock documentaries that mythic historical continuity extends to the distant past, even further away from the contemporary context. For example, *Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii* is located in the ruins of an ancient Roman city destroyed by a volcanic eruption in 79 AD; the borrowed historical associations apparently intended to enhance the epic scale and significance of the show. Likewise, *The Song Remains the Same's* fantasy sequences enact individual Led Zeppelin band members' dreams of medieval Vikings and heroic Arthurian knights. At the same time, the latter documentary also includes footage of the musicians at 'home' in lavish rural mansions and on the grounds of geographically remote private estates. A scene featuring vocalist Robert Plant with his partner and two naked children (a boy and a girl) picnicking by a deserted mountain stream constructs an image of an idealised countercultural family in a context that appears both idyllic and timeless, while paradoxically also appearing as a banal reinforcement of dominant culture values, the nuclear family, and heteronormativity.¹³ At the same time, the scene also highlights the way that the idyllic chronotope has been transformed. Where in the rockumentaries it was presented as an inclusive, collective time-space to be enjoyed by all, here it is the preserve of the wealthy rock star removed and insulated from an actual world fast descending into the malaise of economic recession. In that respect, *The Song Remains the Same* provides an example of the way that the 1970s rock documentaries not only nostalgically re-enact the rituals of rock, but also celebrate the trappings of rock celebrity and its excesses. In retrospect, it was only a matter of time before someone pointed out the extent of their departure from rock's own founding mythologies.

The Punkumentary

It was the very excesses of the 1970s rock documentaries that established the context for punkumentaries such as *The Punk Rock Movie*, *D.O.A.: A Rite of Passage*, and *The Decline of Western Civilization* to emerge. If the naturalised chronotopes of the rock documentary provide a normative generic time-space for onscreen events, in the screen-world of the punkumentary every expectation is subverted. In contrast to the idealised, 'natural' environments of the festival rockumentaries and the spacious concert halls and stadia of the 1970s rock documentaries, the punkumentaries are grounded in the cramped, overcrowded and temporary urban punk clubs, such as the Roxy in London or the Masque in Los Angeles. In the 1960s rockumentaries there is a sense of time stretching out, but in the punkumentaries it appears to contract in a way that brings to mind *Gimme Shelter's* chaotic Altamont scenes. Moreover, this spatio-temporal contraction is accentuated cinematically. In the same way that wide-angle shots highlight the expansiveness of the rockumentaries and 1970s rock documentaries, close-up shots and tight framing in the punkumentaries serve to accentuate the claustrophobia. Rockumentaries such as *Monterey Pop* may portray a succession of smiling, welcoming faces, but the likes of *The Decline of Western Civilization* document the simmering tensions within the audience. Indeed, the punk club appears as a microcosm of a dysfunctional social world. In that respect, it recalls Bakhtin's model of the carnivalesque, an anti-chronotopic world in which, to quote Morson and Emerson, 'value is divorced from any specific time frame, real history is not registered, and space becomes thoroughly fantastic' (1990, p. 440). In the spirit of the carnivalesque, the punk carnival uses laughter and parody to mock what had become the established norms of the rock documentary and to overturn its taken-for-granted hierarchies. Where the swirling, 'psychedelic' patterns beneath the opening credits of *Monterey Pop* resemble a portal through which the cinematic spectator is encouraged to enter a new world of expanded consciousness, the 1950s B-grade horror movie graphics that introduce both *The Punk Rock Movie* and *D.O.A.* self-consciously position punk as a 'bad trip'.¹⁴

To borrow Sobchack's expression, it is the 'concrete and visible premises' (1998, p. 130) of the punkumentaries that most clearly foregrounds their divergence from other historical subgenres of the rock music documentary. The clubs themselves appear dingy and dilapidated. For the most part they are located in areas where the only other designated activities are industrial or criminal. They have been reinvented because they have fallen on

hard times. It is the era of late capitalism, in which all novelty has been exhausted, the greater threshold to shock leading to more and more outrageous intensifications, of which punk can be seen as one. Some of the clubs had previously been warehouse spaces, now left empty due to the economic downturn. Others had been nightclubs, cinemas, or discos: leisure spaces selling overpriced drinks and entertainment to young working people and where contemporary courtship rituals occurred and young people might meet their future wives or husbands before setting down to a life in suburbia. As places where workers spent money and relaxed after a hard day's work and places that sold the legal drug alcohol, they were inextricably bound up with the dominant economic system.

By contrast, the punk clubs are only tangentially part of that system. It is not only the premises that look 'down-at-heel', but also the participants. Many will be unemployed, depending on the unemployment benefit to provide enough money for them to live from week to week. In effect, the 'dole' becomes a recurring anti-chronotopic motif throughout the punkumentaries, highlighting the lived experience of everyday life for audience members and musicians alike, in contrast to the idyllic time-space depicted in the 1960s rockumentaries and 1970s rock documentaries. Rather than alcohol, the punk audience is just as likely to use illegal drugs such as speed or heroin, as documented in the scene in *The Punk Rock Movie*, which shows two people shooting up in the toilet at the Roxy. Their actions are not only performed in front of, but also *for*, the filmmaker's camera in a way that recalls the explicitness and the ambivalence of the exaggerated 'degradations' of 'the grotesque body' in the carnivalesque (1984, pp. 303-368). The role of the music changes too. In the punk clubs' previous lives the primary function of the (mostly pre-recorded) music was to entertain, to encourage people to dance and spend money on drinks. By contrast, the music documented in the punkumentaries is mostly live, its volume, abrasiveness, and charged lyrical content making it hard to ignore, with an *active* audience,¹⁵ an audience who interact freely with the onstage performers, in contrast to the relative passivity of the audience in every other form of the rock documentary.

Not only space, but also time contracts. The clubs' existence is temporary: they only become 'punk places' for a short time, in a sense transformed by what occurs inside. Onscreen subtitles in *The Punk Rock Movie* inform the viewer that the Roxy only lasted for 'one hundred days' and in fact none of the clubs featured in the punkumentaries lasted for

more than two years. The shows themselves only take place late at night. They have a clandestine feel, perhaps reflecting the fact that in hiring the venues the organisers were frequently forced to misrepresent the true nature of the show, with no mention of the word 'punk' lest permission be refused. Inside, to use Fredric Jameson's phrase, everything appears stuck in 'a perpetual present' (1985, p. 189), like a scratched record running in an endless groove. In this hyperbolic sense of the present every gesture is exaggerated. Punk performance becomes over-performance. Rather than any conception of the music as empowering, to use Simon Frith's phrase (borrowed from 1960s group The Lovin' Spoonful)¹⁶ as 'the magic that can set you free' (1981, pp. 159-168), punk ritually enacts and re-enacts the prior conditions of alienation and boredom as part of the live punk show. Songs are played faster and faster until they become a blur. The role of the voice as giving pleasure, in singing and communicating, is inverted. Instead the punk voice involves shouting, confrontation, graphic and grotesque stories, and in the likes of Germs' singer Darby Crash a complete refusal to communicate.¹⁷ The constrictedness of space and time is literalised in practices whereby punk embraces its own bondage, in leather s/m clothing, chains and dog collars. The punk dance, the pogo, parodies the freedom and expression of the dance and its traditional role as a mating ritual. If there is no future, it follows that traditional courtship rituals have no place. By extension, punk rejects the institution of the family as a basic unit of society and even parodies the idea of sex as pleasure, as well as its societal role for reproduction. Where children were an important part of the pastoral idyll at the heart of the festival rockumentaries,¹⁸ here there are no children to be seen anywhere.

In the world of the punkumentary there is no outside. The chronotopic motif whereby a stage is constructed from scratch and the journey to the festival site or concert venue is documented in such a way it appears to have the significance of a religious pilgrimage is overturned. Instead, the cinematic spectator is immediately thrown into the midst of a punk carnival in which every taken-for-granted norm and every fixed hierarchy appears to be inverted. The contrast with idyllic scenes in the festival rockumentaries, which highlight the warm glow of the afternoon sun shining down on smiling people in the festival audiences could not be starker. The punk club appears dark and shadowy and the participants pale as if drained of blood, suggesting they have an aversion to sunlight and only come out at night. Close-up shots in *The Punk Rock Movie*, *D.O.A.* and *The Decline of*

Western Civilization focus on grimy walls covered in punk graffiti, both an expression of punk materiality and a means by which the premises are marked and therefore 'converted' to become punk spaces. We never see the clubs' exteriors or their entrances on the street. The space within is confined, with no visible entrances or exits. The only exit sign appears briefly beneath the closing credits of *The Punk Rock Movie* and even then it is only an indication that the film is about to end. Where *Monterey Pop* documents the Monterey festival as if it were an unfolding dream, punkumentaries such as *The Punk Rock Movie*, *D.O.A.* and *The Decline of Western Civilization* depict a world in which space and time collide. Onto the punkumentary's constricted spaces and fleeting temporality can be read the day-to-day lived experience for many in the wider context of the economic recession of the mid-to-late 1970s, reinforced cinematically by a punk anti-aesthetic in which any semblance of conventional Hollywood narrative continuity is replaced by a jarring discontinuity.¹⁹ In a sense 'California Dreamin'' has become a nightmare.

A scene from *The Decline of Western Civilization* that documents a performance by the Los Angeles punk group X enacts this spatial and temporal collision. As X's song 'Nausea' plays on the sound channel, there is a closer focus on the Masque Club audience. Long takes accentuate the underlying sense of menace in the music, with the moving subjects becoming a blur of fragmented, disconnected faces and bodies and flailing and grabbing hands on the screen.²⁰ Moreover, the depersonalised nature of the scene, accentuated by the machine-like repetition of the song's insistently grinding riff, is reminiscent of the depersonalising of the carnivalesque and Bakhtin's clarification that the 'grotesque body' at the centre of the carnival is not an individual body, but rather has 'an all-peoples' character' (1984, p. 19). Moreover, the shakiness and sudden movements of the handheld camera not only recall the 'nausea' of the lyric, but also communicate the feeling that even the cinematic spectator might feel imperilled, as if the mediation can generate a body response and the violence might cross the barrier of the screen, in a way reminiscent of *Gimme Shelter's* Altamont scenes in which the camera-person seems physically under threat.

In that respect, punk always returns to the body and the lived, embodied experience. Speed, the main punk drug of choice, stimulates the central nervous system²¹ and the body's experience of the moment. The music is thin and trebly, but ear-splittingly loud. It is not just heard but experienced throughout the whole body. The confined space of the punk

club sees a continual jostling between sweaty bodies. The interaction between bodies is taken a step further in the pogo, which, as recounted by Sid Vicious in *The Filth and the Fury*, provided the opportunity to inflict actual violence on other audience members. In that respect, it seems appropriate the language of punk is the profane, recalling Bakhtin's description of carnival speech: 'Abuses, curses, profanities, and improprieties ... that refuse to conform to conventions, to etiquette, civility, respectability' (1984, p. 187). In fact, as documented in the opening scene of *The Punk Rock Movie*,²² the ritual exchange of profanities between performer and audience becomes an integral part of the live punk show. Furthermore, punk's profanity cannot be contained within the carnival and spills over into the world outside, most notably on the British *Today* show,²³ fronted by presenter Bill Grundy, in which the Sex Pistols swear, in a sense 'blaspheme', on national television.

The spirit of the carnivalesque is further embodied in the practice whereby the audience spits ('gobs') on the punk (anti-) star.²⁴ This recalls Bakhtin's account of the 'uncrowning' (1984, pp. 197-205)²⁵ of the king at the centre of the carnival, first 'elected by all the people' then 'mocked by all the people' (1984, p. 197) in a ritual that symbolises the overturning of existing hierarchies. It also recalls Morson and Emerson's observation that Bakhtin 'praises abusive laughter not for its own sake but as a *formal* constituent necessary to destroy epic distance' (1990, p. 443). While Sex Pistols' lead singer Johnny Rotten is the closest thing to a punk star, featured in *The Punk Rock Movie*, *D.O.A.* and as both a documentary subject of, and voiceover narrator for, *The Filth and the Fury*, he is mostly presented (and presents himself) as a jester who cannot be taken too seriously. His use of humour as critique is redolent of what Morson and Emerson refer to as the 'laughing truth' (1990, p. 433) of the carnivalesque and his adopted persona recalls 'the rogue, the clown and the fool ... who laugh not just at others but at themselves' (1990, p. 436). While his voiceover narration to *The Filth and the Fury* articulates punk's rejection both of 1970s rock culture and contemporary mainstream society, the Sex Pistols' singer is just as cynical about his own role as media-appointed punk 'spokesperson'. That cynicism comes to the fore in *The Filth and the Fury*'s penultimate scene when, as the final bars of a loose, extended cover of the Stooges' 'No Fun' lurch to a halt, he asks the onscreen audience 'Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?' For a brief moment, as Rotten leaves the stage, his sardonic

expression appears to meet the camera's eye, giving the impression that he is also addressing the cinematic audience.

Conclusion

Where the 1960s rockumentaries and 1970s rock documentaries can be characterised by their spatial and temporal expansiveness, punkumentaries such as *The Punk Rock Movie*, *D.O.A.: A Rite of Passage*, *The Decline of Western Civilization* and *The Filth and the Fury* are grounded in the cramped and claustrophobic urban punk clubs in which both space and time contract. Within this onscreen world, expectations (from previous examples) of a normative generic time-space are thoroughly destabilised in a manner reminiscent of Mikhail Bakhtin's model of the carnivalesque. In the spirit of the anti-chronotopic carnivalesque, the spatio-temporal contraction is accentuated cinematically as part of a process by which the punkumentaries employ laughter and parody to subvert and invert every taken-for-granted norm and seemingly fixed hierarchy of the rock documentary. At the same time, the punk clubs' very existence is temporary and in that respect they reflect the day-to-day lived experience of space and time for many of the films' documentary subjects. For the latter, time is reduced to a series of fleeting moments in a frantic and intensified present. Moreover, the wider contemporaneous socio-political context of the punkumentaries is one of ever-increasing unemployment and fast-approaching economic recession, the bleak prospects for the future appearing as a literal embodiment of the chorus to the Sex Pistols' 'God Save the Queen', 'No future, no future. No future for you'.

Endnotes

1. For the purposes of this article I will restrict my analysis to a paradigmatic sample from Britain and the US.
2. Bakhtin notes that the term chronotope 'is employed in mathematics and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity' (1981, p. 84).
3. The notion of the religious pilgrimage is also expressed in the film's title song 'Woodstock', written by Joni Mitchell and performed by Crosby, Stills, and Nash, which begins 'I came upon a child of God. He was walking along the road'.

4. Significantly, Country Joe and the Fish's bitterly cynical anti-war song 'The-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die-Rag' did not make *Monterey Pop's* final cut.
5. For an account of the casualties of the Summer of Love experience see Lee, M and Schlain, B 1985, *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD, the CIA, the Sixties, and Beyond*, Gove-Weidenfeld, New York.
6. Anti-war and anti-racist sentiments are expressed by *Woodstock* performers such as Country Joe MacDonald ('The-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die-Rag'), Joan Baez ('Drug Store Truck Drivin' Man'), Richard Havens ('Handsome Johnny') and The Jefferson Airplane ('Volunteers'), as well as by Jimi Hendrix in his deconstruction of 'The Star Spangled Banner'.
7. *Woodstock's* closing credits restore the spirit of the idyll in a shot of pristine pre-festival green fields, accompanied by the lyrical optimism of Crosby, Stills, and Nash's 'Long Time Gone'.
8. As The Rolling Stones' tour continues the space of the stage comes under threat from adoring but slightly crazed 'fans' that climb onstage in a vain attempt to get closer to the band's lead singer, Mick Jagger.
9. While *Live at Pompeii* documents a Pink Floyd performance direct to a cinematic audience, *The Last Waltz* documents the onstage performances but not the concert audience.
10. Elsewhere in *The Song Remains the Same* the individual members of Led Zeppelin are only seen backstage in the company of managers and industry insiders.
11. The Winterland Ballroom (originally called the 'New Dreamland Auditorium') was built in 1928. See <http://en.geomapedia.org/information/winterland-ballroom.html>.
12. *The Last Waltz* includes live performances by Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Neil Young and Ringo Starr.
13. The idyllic family scene is perhaps intended to counter sensational media stories of Led Zeppelin band-members' sex and drug excesses.

14. The punkumentaries' horror movie graphics can be seen as both an ironic reflection on mainstream media portrayals of the live punk show and as an example of punk's self-negation.
15. The punk audience verbally abuses and spits upon the onstage performers.
16. The phrase is originally from The Lovin' Spoonful's song 'Do You Believe in Magic'.
17. See also Dolar, M 2006, *A Voice and Nothing More*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
18. Children are also part of the idyllic chronotope reproduced in *The Song Remains the Same*.
19. Both *The Punk Rock Movie* and *D.O.A.: A Rite of Passage* feature abrupt cuts between scenes and multiple graphic mismatches.
20. The scene recalls Bakhtin's explanation that 'Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it' (1984, p. 7).
21. For a description of the effects of methamphetamine (speed) on the body see: <https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/methamphetamine>.
22. In the opening scene of *The Punk Rock Movie* someone in the audience heckles Johnny Rotten 'You fuckin' wanker', to which he replies 'Fuckin' old hippies all over again'.
23. The Sex Pistols *Today* show interview aired on December 1st, 1976.
24. The punk ritual of spitting recalls the grotesque body of the carnivalesque and its 'excrecences' (Bakhtin 1984, pp. 317-318).
25. 'Uncrowning' is also translated as 'discrowning' by Morson and Emerson (1990).

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