"I DON'T FEEL HATE": A LONG SHORT TIKTOK JOURNEY TO THE ESC 2021

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ABSTRACT

In (media) popular music, "personas" are usually media personalities. They mainly appear in mass media. As the media landscape has changed over the last 150 years, so have the media appearances of these musician-personalities - from sheet music to radio, records, film, television, music videos and finally YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. Popular music is dominated by stars, media personalities who present a musical performance - but the way this performance is presented has varied historically. In "old" media, record companies had considerable power with regard to access to markets, but also regarding production, marketing and perpetuation of star images. This has changed dramatically with the rise of the internet and various social media platforms. Now potentially everyone has access, everyone can present oneself publicly, everyone can have his or her "15 minutes of fame" (Andy Warhol). The article describes these transformations to the principle of stardom using a case study: the creation of the German entry for the Eurovision Song Contest in Rotterdam 2021. The previously unknown singer Jendrik Sigwart talks about his application on TikTok and in particular about the production of a music video for it. His application on TikTok for one of Europe's oldest TV events is an interesting moment in media history, in which old narrative strategies mix with new ones.

KEY WORDS

Stardom; Post-digital; Eurovision Song Contest; TikTok; Media History

INTRODUCTION

It hardly needs to be emphasised that digitalisation, and in particular Web 2.0 and social platforms, have changed the everyday lives of most people enormously. When analogue, non-media practices mix with digital (social) networks as Twitter/X, Instagram or TikTok, apps and algorithms, we speak of post-digitality. This term does not describe a world that has already mastered the processes of digitalisation, but rather that the analogue and the digital are closely linked. The digital is no longer perceived as such, or the changes induced by the digital, such as the establishment of the smartphone, appear as a change in everyday life. Smartphones, in particular, have become "portable meta-media machines" (Gunkel 2019, p. 18) with which the boundary between the analogue and digital worlds can be easily crossed. Smartphones enable post-digital modes of action in an ideal way because they allow analogue and digital spaces to interact with and within each other regardless of time and place and offer different modes of reception, interaction, and production.

> Smartphones have little in common with previous mobile phones. Instead, they function as a portable version of the location-based personal computer, helping to realise Turing's vision of a now portable and therefore ubiquitous universal machine. Due to their open application, they can combine an almost infinite

> number of functions in a single device and thus go far beyond the possibilities of verbal or text-based communication via classic mobile phones as well as the limited possibilities of many previous devices. (Gunkel 2019, pp. 18–19)[1]

In the age of post-digitality, the technological and media conditions for popular music, for example, its staging and performativity, the creation and emergence of stardom and participation and fandom have changed. Transmedia transitions between various media stages are more frequent and more dynamic. They are less influenced by traditional cultural-industrial gatekeeping. As a result, they firstly enable different forms of participation and reception, and secondly open up new stages for self-presentation. Thirdly, they open up new, easier and more independent ways of becoming a star.

This article discusses how self-presentation on social platforms provides access to stardom and shows how different media structures and formats come together. The first part of the text provides an overview of (self-)presentation and stardom on social platforms. The second part offers a case study, focusing on the example of Jendrik Sigwart's application for the Eurovision Song Contest, which was prepared with a TikTok story. I show how new (TikTok) and old (TV) media are combined with each other in terms of staging and dramaturgy, and how Sigwart picks up on contemporary issues with his TikTok videos and his music video clip.

SELF-PRESENTATION AND STARDOM IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

In "old" Hollywood, from the 1920s to the 1950s, star images were largely conceived and carefully controlled by the publicity departments of film studios (see Lowry 2003; Dyer 1979). Actors and musicians themselves often had little control over how they were portrayed and as what "type" they were marketed. In the early 20th century, stars were 'made' by film, music studios and the press, but the various transformations of the media landscape up to the present day have brought about fundamental changes. Stardom itself has developed in various directions, first by television, which has produced its own TV stars, but also so-called reality stars as well as "celebrities", and finally by YouTube and various social media platforms. Sovereignty over the image and careers of stars is less and less in the hands of the cultural-industrial production companies. Madonna has already secured more influence on her image than it had previously been the case (see for example Levine 2018), and Adele is also known to assert her autonomy.[2] Stars like Justin Bieber, Billie Eilish, and Jacob Collier started their careers without major labels. Also, over the last 10 years, social media platforms such as YouTube and streaming services such as Spotify have shifted the balance of power in the music and film industry and gained market share against the "old", pre-digital culture industry. Artists have more opportunities than before to influence their image via their own channels such as Instagram or TikTok, even at the beginning of their career. Gatekeeping for actual public access no longer rests unilaterally with the culture industry but is accompanied as well as countered by the well-kept secret of algorithms that can lead to more or less distribution. Nevertheless, in the digital world of Instagram and TikTok, Warhol's statement that in a media society everyone could have "15 minutes of fame" seems easier than ever to realise – even if in many cases the 15 minutes may turn out to be only 15 seconds.[3] As passionate and engaged as people are in following, liking and sharing on social networking platforms, it usually doesn't take long for the next thing to be followed, liked and shared just as passionately. Few trends, excitements, and scandals last more than a few months in the never-ending stream of new ideas, challenges, and trends.

The appeal of social media platforms is in the presence of their communication, more than in its duration or depth. It is in the availability of communication and exchange, and in the coexistence of analogue and digital spaces. In the post-digital age, social media platforms function like a revolving door between the analogue and digital world through which one can pass over and over again – location-independent caused by the mobile internet. Networking and maintaining contacts, self-expression, and – essentially – entertainment[4] are simultaneously

organised by various digital platforms. For many so-called digital natives, the analogue and the digital are no longer separate spheres. The Internet, especially the mobile Internet, is simply a normal part of their everyday life: it offers stages of self-presentation as well as occasions and places of communication, and as work equipment and work environment it is equally analogue and digital, and in this sense also transmedially organised.

The desire for a "media" profession that offers attention and fame, which for more than a hundred years has led young people to dream of a career in entertainment, as a revue girl, film star, pop singer, rock, or pop star, can now potentially be realised faster and easier. In the twenty-first century, the internet offers access to publicity and self-promotion to everyone. Instagram in particular has made it possible, in addition to the established technical or performing media professions, to engage in other income-generating activities such as influencing. Unlike "classical" stars (see Lowry 2003), influencers are not known because they are good at a particular publicly visible activity (acting, sports, music), but because they show and represent something mundane, such as a lifestyle or a hobby. "Influencers have made it their business to understand the algorithms that govern visibility on social media as a means of growing their follower-base" (Cotter 2019, p. 896). They try to reach a large number of followers and, if successful, frequently use this social capital to gain access to financial resources (Abidin 2015): they monetise their online content by sponsoring, so-called affiliate units, classic advertising and sometimes with their own shops. Their personal life becomes – at least in part – the content, they are known for being, not for a specific work. Influencers are therefore not real stars in Lowry's sense, i.e. media personalities whose image and work are received together but are visible as separate spheres. They are more like the successors of celebrities, who have no "work" but primarily market a once-acquired media fame (for example, the Kardashians). Celebrities, however, are still TV phenomena; they still need TV formats and channels to establish a kind of fame. Influencers organise this part themselves via social networks.

A career goal such as becoming an influencer is a consequence of the post-digital media experience: some people, especially young ones, no longer want to go through the revolving door between analogue and digital only by means of social media. They want to organise and design the revolving door. For such forms of public self-presentation, the concept of staging – originally a term used in theatre studies for the "planning, testing and determining of strategies" according to which a performance is produced (Fischer-Lichte 2005, p. 146) – needs to be modified and expanded. Staging is then to be understood as a basic category of modern media societies. It is no coincidence that Marin Jurga and Herbert Willems speak of a "staging society"[5] (Willems & Jurga 1998). In this sense, staging describes a strategy of production and representation that can refer to media contexts, as well as to everyday life-world contexts. The anthropological dimension of the term is reinforced in this new modification: "[m]an has to stage oneself in order to appear" (Fischer-Lichte 2005, p. 153). In this sense, enactments and self-enactments are a ubiquitous part of everyday life – "the presentation of self in everyday life" (Goffman 2022). In the course of digital media production, and especially by the presence of social media, both dimensions – the aesthetic-medial and the everyday-anthropological – are increasingly blurred and decreasingly distinguishable. The manifold possibilities of digital editing but also falsification of images, texts, and data make the staging processes themselves more difficult to assess. What is staged, by whom, to what extent and with what means, and what is "real" – and what is the difference between the two – is becoming increasingly intransparent.

Even in so-called scripted reality or factual entertainment formats (programs such as "Big Brother", "I'm a Celebrity … Get Me Out of Here!" or the "backstage" narratives of "XYs Next Top Model"), the degree of media staging was no longer equally apparent to all recipients (cf. Doeveling et al. 2007 or Klug 2016). Although Instagram and TikTok undoubtedly serve as prominent platforms for staging and self-staging, such staging processes are often hardly marked as such. The technological possibilities of digital editing rather serve to create effects of "naturalness" and "authenticity" and thus to reduce the media distance. Even what is obviously

staged and edited – cut, with small images and effects – serves to stage spontaneity, and the more imperfect it appears, the more "real" the game is.

The production of seemingly "real" glimpses of everyday life on Instagram or TikTok (along with "closeness" or "intimacy") allows for something like an everyday relationship that is, by far, more intense than it used to be in traditional media. Influencers and stars who appear on Instagram or TikTok are part of the private sphere to an even greater extent. They appear as instantly and "spontaneous" on the personal timeline as messages from real friends, presenting their food, their leg stubble, but also their feelings of anger, happiness, or even mental health issues. In this way, these media figures become part of the personal environment. Where the stars of traditional media (cinema, TV) were merely projection surfaces, social media figures appear as "friends" and thus no longer merely as projection figures, but also as representations of one's own life. This life can be shared which enables the recipients, in turn, to stage themselves and their own media experience. This has also expanded the experience of "pleasure" in the sense of cultural studies: part of the "pleasure"[6] still takes place during the concert and in music itself. Another part is in the processing and communicative reworking of the event, in which one can be both narrator and protagonist at the same time.

Moments in which the new digital social and the old analogue media meet, and thus also their technologies, mechanisms, narrative modes, and forms of reception, are of interest for media history. This also shows that "new" media use the old ones like a media-aesthetic archive: narrative conventions, strategies of self-staging, genre references are often quoted or adopted and adapted to new formats (for a discussion of differences and continuities between old and new media, see, for example, Manovitch 2001).Within the post-digital age, analogue and digital are no longer opposites: just as the new digital narratives refer to the old ones, the "old" media take up the impulses of Internet productions. TV events have long been the subject of transmedia accompaniment, whether it is a debate on Twitter, the "second screen" with live coverage of sporting events such as the Olympic Games, the re-use of TV material in media libraries or the consistent promotion of series formats aimed at young audiences on the internet.

CASE STUDY: JENDRIK SIGWART'S TIKTOK VIDEO STORY

The post-digital interplay of "old" and "new" media creates new media moments and offer new access to the public as well as new forms of fame or stardom, however fleeting. An example of this is the bid for the German entry for the 2021 Eurovision Song Contest, in which the organising broadcaster NDR chose a previously relatively unknown singer, Jendrik Sigwart, who had been showing the genesis of his entry on TikTok for months.

This is how it began: on the 28th of June 2020, a video was released on TikTok entitled: "How to make a music video when you have virtually no money, but a cheesy song, and would love to apply to the Eurovision Song Contest, because you really want to perform on this stage, Part 1." This video has been produced and uploaded by Sigwart, a by then unknown 26-year-old musical performer from Hamburg. The video embodies the start of a series showing the conception and preparation of a music video as well as a making-off, in 27 parts. On the 26th of February 2021, the German contribution to the ESC was presented: Sigwart was chosen with his song "I Don't Feel Hate". On the same day the music video, which had been "prepared" on TikTok for months, was released. Eight months had passed between these two media events, in which 38 more TikTok videos were shared online. This chain of events represents an interesting moment of media AND popular culture history because of the appearance on one of the most current and hottest media platforms in the world was aiming for an appearance on one of the oldest audiovisual media in the world: television. Both come together in one song and music video, which, in turn, cannot be watched on TikTok neither was it shown on the final – televised ESC-stage and yet can be understood as being the essence of both.

This might be a good example to raise and discuss some questions relevant for popular music in general, e.g., for its production, its reception and also its research. These questions concern the technological and media conditions for popular music and take on issues of staging and performativity as well as stardom, fandom, scenes, and their codes. They also pertain to popular music's cultural significance and relevance for the present. All of these aspects have always been relevant to popular music. The creation and presentation of the star persona is influenced by technological possibilities, but also by economic factors. It is influenced by the access artists have to mass media and the influence they can have on their own marketing. The participation of fans in popular culture, as well as the agency of stars, is changing and expanding using the new possibilities opened up by digital media environments. Finally, popular culture always correlates, although to varying degrees, with the society and the present from which it emerges. This forms the attractive and productive possibilities allowing it/social media forms to capture moments of contemporary history.

Since it is not possible to explore all these different aspects in detail, I will briefly highlight some in the form of a research overview:

1) The application story of Jendrik Sigwart as a moment of media history.

2) The aesthetic strategies of the song and the music video.

3) The reception and meanings offered for the audience.

4) The TikTok narrative and its relation to the present.

1) A Moment of Media History

The Eurovision Song Contest is not merely another TV occasion, but a kind of "TV dinosaur". Since 1956, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) has been hosting a live musical showcasing which brings together the entire European region; the show's format has stayed mostly unchanged through the years: a composer's contest, conceptualised and presented as a live television program.

However, this TV spectacle has undergone some changes over the years including the number of participating countries as well as the rules of participation. Additionally, the requirements and ideas of taste, decency, and national representation have shifted over time, as has the reception of the contest. Originally, the contest was a highly serious platform for nations' self-presentation. Elements of high culture permeated the hall, the audience, and the staging with rows of chairs, evening attire, and national dignitaries as guests of honour (cf. Dreyer & Triebel 2011; Feddersen 2010; Pajala 2012 and 2013; Raykoff & Tobin 2007; Scherer & Schlütz 2003; Tragaki 2013; Wolther 2006 and 2012). Initially, there was no intention to associate it with popular music contemporary to its time. In its early decades, the "Grand Prix" (this also and especially applies to the German entries) was a somewhat outdated Schlager show, far away from youth culture and international pop trends. However, a fan culture emerged, primarily amongst the gay and queer communities which watched this TV event with adoration and fascination, so that it eventually took on a campy attitude. Particularly in this regard, the ESC gained increasing significance throughout Europe, which is why the competition, since the likes of Dana International (1998) or Conchita Wurst (2014), is now commonly regarded as a major European event for the queer scenes. In 2020, participating in this competition is Sigwart's declared dream and goal as he launches his video series on TikTok. The question is: why had it to be on TikTok of all places? Does TikTok really fit the ESC and its fan base?

TikTok is one of the most successful apps in recent media history. It is the social media platform of the moment. It originated from the Chinese/American start-up Musical.ly, which mainly featured lip-sync clips, but has significantly expanded its portfolio. Today, TikTok is available in 75 languages and unites 1.2 billion monthly active users, two-thirds of whom are

under the age of 25. TikTok's content consists of short mobile phone videos that used to be 15 or 60 seconds long, which has been extended to 3 and now 10 minutes. The videos are usually motivated by a line of text or a snippet of a melody. The focus is on quick gags, games, or challenges (cf. Zeh 2020 regarding TikTok in the recent history of audiovisual media). However, a more diverse aesthetic as well as new narrative forms have emerged on TikTok (cf. Albrecht 2021) such as serialised stories or even documentary-style videos. In 2021, TikTok stories were nominated for the first time for Germany's prestigious "Grimme Preis" for television and won the Grimme Online Award.

Sigwart's aesthetic is characteristic of TikTok. His videos have a performative, sometimes theatrical and always self-reflexive style. Text panels depict dialogues in a way known from silent films, voice-overs provide insights into his thoughts and emotional world. (cf. Albrecht 2021) Thus, the videos refer to established forms (such as the silent film) and take on a diary-like character by allowing a seemingly intimate insight into Jendrik's mind. In addition, there are meta-narrative, ironic comments on the level of image and sound. The videos contain frame stories and stories within stories as well as recurring narrative motifs: the desire to participate in the ESC, the idea of making a music video, the lack of money and the do-it-yourself approach, as well as the "launderette" setting.

A recurring motif – both in the videos and in the header – is Sigwart's doubt about whether he has taken on too much. He repeatedly establishes a direct relationship with the audience by breaking the so-called fourth wall and interacting directly with the camera – a strategy that has long been a rare exception in fictional cinema and television but is now an established self-reflexive tool. In music videos, it is actually quite normal to directly address the viewers. The ironic self-reflexivity and theatrical gesture simultaneously protect the performance and Sigwart himself from becoming too "private" and turning the audience into voyeurs.

Sigwart follows the technological and performance requirements of TikTok and reaches a relevant number of users there: his third video received 250.000 clicks. The videos are also published on Instagram and partly on Facebook. The narrative purpose or vanishing point, however, is still the ESC in the "old" medium of television. Thus, old and new media are constantly in relation to each other. Sigwart shows a use of media that is characteristic of his generation: he differentiates between different media and platforms in terms of their format, content, and performative quality, and moves confidently between them. In the aesthetics of TikTok, he documents the work on the music video that will eventually be released on YouTube, while the goal of all his efforts remains the TV show. The TikTok series creates an emotional connection with the fans. On the one hand, the ESC-event on television can build on this closeness, while it creates distance and glamour on the other. It is precisely this tension between closeness and distance that is constitutive of pop – and of Stardom in particular.

With the serial, Sigwart's choice fell on the dominant pop culture genre of the last twenty years. In doing so, he picks up on generational viewing habits and a central promise of the serial: the best is yet to come!

2) The Aesthetic Strategies of the Song and the Music Video

The song and music video are also characterised by a mixture of traditional and new elements. The song is a catchy up-tempo "good energy" number containing a simple but ESC-compatible message: "I don't feel hate. I just feel sorry". The song speaks out against hate and discrimination towards marginalised groups, as we experience it especially in social networks. The lyrics are more playful than complex, the song does not seem to be dedicated to the theme of hate but to its opposite. This is supported by the arrangement and the sound: the verse and especially the chorus are reminiscent of electro swing, including tenor saxophone, rhythmic doo-wop vocals, and some light whistling. Contributing to this is the wah-wah swing trumpet within the instrumental section. The dominant acoustic and visual element is the ukulele as an

uncomplicated feel-good instrument and a kind of hipster accessory. In addition to this, the German audience associates it with Stefan Raab (and his ukulele-played "Raabigrams"), a very successful ESC personality. The counterpart to this swinging pop is the post-chorus, a remix melange of rock guitar and synthesiser in the style of the 80s.

On the one hand, the contrasts are reminiscent of musicals – and since Sigwart himself is a musical singer and performer, this is hardly surprising. But such aesthetic breaks are also typical of Music used in TikTok videos. In terms of form, however, the song follows the rules that have emerged algorithmically for Spotify and TikTok: it has to show its character and potential in the first 20 seconds. Recognition is essential for going viral on TikTok as well as for the ESC (cf. Léveillé Gauvin 2018). Hence, it is a logical decision to start the song with its central motif and to skip an intro. However, this intro is somehow moved to the video and really celebrated there without any music at all.

The music video begins as a silent, theatrical performance: we see a line of people waiting. In the following scene, they change from people being watched (by us) to spectators – in other words, the audience – when a sofa with the performer is pushed into the room and placed opposite them. The symbolic middle finger is theatrical as well. It is not technically animated and inserted via a green screen, but "naturally" shown by a performer in costume.

After this deliberately theatrical start, Sigwart makes use of a broad aesthetic repertoire in the music video. Typical elements of musicals are cited (tap dancing, precisely choreographed sequences such as the opening high five). We are further confronted with entertaining slapstick and comedy elements, video clip classics like text cards (Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" comes to mind), slow-motion parts or split screens. Also, there are show elements such as the closing credits included, in which the convention of the pop singer meets that of the show master. In its visual density and the lightness of its colours, the video constantly offers numerous anchor points for the production of meanings and the licence to take pleasure in doing so (cf. Fiske, 1989).

This pleasure is enhanced by the skilful staging of the imperfect: the tedious pushing of the sofa takes three attempts to get it where it needs to be placed, the scenery is cheap but, like the washing machines (which are turned into stage props) show, often multifunctional. Even the glamour elements are DIY, such as the ukulele covered in 4,000 rhinestones – a reference to the history of popular music (Elvis Presley) as well as to ESC's famous bling. This DIY aesthetic fits the playfulness of the song and confirms Sigwart's TikTok story: it's about someone doing something with little money, a bit of cheek and a lot of friends that actually has little chance of success – just because it's fun. Hence, the self-reflexive demonstration of the imperfect is not a detriment to the overall narrative. On the contrary: because Sigwart acts "naturally" in this sense, because he seems to be "just himself", he actually authenticates himself and his story.

3) The Reception and Meanings Offered to the Audience

The musical nature of the music video is of course due to Sigwart's musical background. But it also fits – and many "react videos" from ESC fans show – the aesthetic preferences of a queer fan community to whom the message means much more than to non-queer people, because people with non-conforming gender identities or non-heterosexual orientations are significantly the target of homophobic, anti-queer, and anti-trans sentiments and hate comments online. But they are also familiar with different aesthetic codes of queer communities. In his TikTok narrative, Sigwart already uses a more or less offensively queer sign apparatus. The most obvious is probably the rainbow as a pride flag. It appears repeatedly in the TikTok videos, and its colour dramaturgy also forms the colour concept for the scenes in the music video.

The rainbow colours are used as a Holi explosion, as patterns and as single colours. The rainbow is a diverse but always positively charged symbol that can be used in any way to emphasise the song's message of "I Don't Feel Hate". In the queer scene, and therefore in an

important fan community of ESC, the rainbow colours are the symbol of pride and diversity, known as the "pride flag". The rainbow appears frequently in Sigwart's TikTok videos. He himself describes his use of the pride flag colours in the music video in a dramatic way by linking them to certain forms of discrimination:

1) Bodyshaming: yellow ≙ light / optimism.

2) Discrimination based on class, political views: green ≙ nature.

3) Hate towards the LGBTQI+ community: red ≙ life.

4) Discrimination based on faith: purple ≙ spirituality.

5) Public pressure and hate speech: blue ≙ harmony

6) Sexism: orange ≙ healing

Based on the colour concept and the musical elements, Sigwart offers an opportunity to produce meaning and empowerment for the LGBTQI+ community, but also for people who show solidarity with this community.

However, the rainbow and its colours are not exclusively queer symbols, but also appear regularly in other contexts. To name just two: in spring of 2020, the "Rainbow against Corona" campaign was launched: children painted colourful rainbows and hung them on windows and doors. In April 2021, Apple presented its new product range using the 7 colours of the rainbow revisiting one of its own advertising symbols from the 1980s. In the music video, the bright and colourful colour scheme, the costumes, and props such as the chessboard floor, combined with the guitar sound and the children's birthday party attitude reminiscent of Neue Deutsche Welle (German new wave) evoke the 1980s and thus appeal to a wider audience. In Sigwart's performance in the final show of the ESC, however, only the Holi colour explosions are taken up, while the rainbow is not shown on stage.

4) The TikTok Narrative and Its Relation to the Present

All of Sigwart's storytelling, including the music video, is situated at an interesting point in media history because it combines different media: old mass media like television, which are still familiar and relevant, and new social media in the digital space, which allow for a different form of participation and self-presentation. The storytelling strategy is cross-media and serial, linking different media eras and demonstrating a pop cultural sensibility. "Anyone competing for attention in the profession needs a new form of pop sensibility" (Gerhardt, 2020).

If one looks at the online reactions to the music video, it becomes clear that this is a classic Marmite song: people either love it or hate it. Those who love it describe the video using the adjectives: crazy, uplifting, pure fun, cute and just "what we need" (Hill-Brown, 2021). There is a feel-good factor that should not be underestimated, and I think it is particularly noticeable against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic in Europe. Even non-Germans seem to be feeling it. Possibly therein lies the relevance of this narrative for those who have followed the TikTok journey in light of the contemporary and cultural-historical background. Sigwart's TikTok videos as well as his song and music video convey a feel-good moment, which, as reactions on the internet show, is particularly appreciated in times of an ongoing pandemic crisis. In addition, his TikTok story is a self-fulfilling fairy tale: a young man has a dream and no money, hence he relies on improvisation, creativity, and, most importantly, friends to make his dream come true. The videos are about socially successful relationships and a sense of ease – it is the summer of 2020, after the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. For most recipients, however, autumn marked the beginning of another phase, in which a seemingly endless lockdown and a leaden period of frozen social activities swept the country, and in which the harshness of the debate on social networks – and not only there – regarding Covid-19 increased. In keeping with the logic of the song's title, "I Don't Feel Hate", the music video and the TikTok series retain their

lightness even during this period. They show a moment of successful life in which stagnation, exhaustion, loneliness or hate otherwise dominated. Sigwart offers a narrative that counters the "racing standstill" (Virilio 1999) with a movement that actually takes place, transcending the limits, severity and social fractures of the pandemic. As the "Honest Vocal Coach" Georgina Hill-Brown, who did YouTube Videos on all ESC contributions of 2021, puts it: "It's just fun. Which is what we need" (Hill-Brown, 2021).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While Sigwart's TikTok story and music video were quite successful, the transfer of their characteristic aesthetic elements to the stage of the ESC final was not. The (seemingly) unfinished, spontaneous, and self-deprecating music video, which unfolded its charm on the small screen of a smartphone, seemed rather powerless and lost on the big TV stage. The media transfer was unconvincing. The reasons for this lack of success are not clear. For example, it is difficult to say why NDR, the broadcaster in charge, replaced the cheeky but no longer scandalous middle finger with a victory sign. While the music video fulfilled the requirements and framework of TikTok, the television event failed to do so: the performance could not fill the stage, it lost the quirky charm of the DIY music video without creating anything new and interesting for the big TV stage.

Transmedia transitions are no longer exceptional nowadays, but as Sigwart's case shows, they are also potential breaking points. Media are never homogeneous, they have their own formats, requirements, audiences, and transmedia transitions are only successful where the content is suitable for the new media environment. An example of a successful media transfer in the opposite direction – from a series to TikTok – is Kate Bush's song "Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)" (1986) being used in the fourth season of the Netflix series Stranger Things (2021). The scene, in which the song accompanies the character Maxine's escape from Vecna and the Upside Down, so aptly links the original song to the narrative that the moment was subsequently shared millions of times on TikTok, including various new adaptations.

In the post-digital age, transitions between media, but also between analogue and digital, have become more frequent and common. This does not mean that they are always successful. It is still up to the people to decide whether popular artefacts become a resource for producing meaning. By watching, buying, and talking about cultural content, and increasingly by producing their own. Sigwart's example also shows that it is possible to develop a star persona on social media platforms and to have a surprise hit. But it is by no means a matter of course that this success can also be transferred and continued in a transmedial way.

END NOTES

[1] My translation.

[2] George Michael and Prince had long legal battles with their record companies over their autonomy.

[3] Videos uploaded to TikTok were initially limited to 15 seconds, but the limit was quickly extended to 1 minute, then 3 minutes, and now 10 minutes.

[4] Here, I am referring to "Unterhaltung" ("entertainment") as a concept that is used to describe a process of communication (mostly in the mass media) in the field of popular culture. Entertainment in the sense used here has been theorised in particular by Hans-Otto Hügel. He

describes it as aesthetically ambiguous, oscillating between seriousness and non-seriousness (cf. Hügel 2007).

5 My translation of the German expression "Inszenierungsgesellschaft".

6 In cultural studies, the term "pleasure" stands for the enjoyment of popular culture, which always contains moments of meaning production, identity production and, potentials for resistance. "Pleasure" is not to be understood as an escapist moment, but as an active and productive process (cf. Fiske 1989).

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