

Saffle, Michael, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, United States;
Yang, Hon Lun, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

Utopian Spectacles: Hong Kong Pop Concerts as Personal and Communal Fantasies

Borrowing Richard Dyer's notion that entertainment is itself a form of "escape" and "wish-fulfillment," inevitably a utopian experience and drawing upon notions of "melodrama" insofar as they suggest exaggeration and a combination of means to achieve a shared affective end, this paper examines the utopian nature of Hong Kong pop music concerts. It focuses on how these concerts drew upon similar venues for constructing alternative worlds of diversion and dream imagery. Through stage design, costume, lighting, and other non-musical acts, it investigates how singers themselves appeared as acrobats, magicians, and mines, took part in cabaret skits and fashion shows, and even did stand-up comedy acts, as well as songs and instrumental numbers, and how such acts created a form of utopia, an alternative form of 'dream come true' for both the singers concerned as well as for the concert attendants.