



U2's (2009–2011) '360°' tour: A Source and Experience of Enchantment

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of enchantment in the context of U2's (2009–2011) '360°' tour. It contributes to leisure and sociology studies by offering a detailed insight into a rock music concert examining the sources and fans experiences of enchantment. Furthermore, the paper offers a number of new insights into the concept of enchantment in the context of a rock music event. Despite increasing academic interest in event experiences, so far, little attention is given to the notion of enchantment in events generally, or in relation to rock concerts specifically. This adds to existing music event research arguing that U2 concerts (in)tend to produce an intense atmosphere and create a modern form of enchantment that is experienced physically and emotionally. Notwithstanding the commercial motivations of the tour, these experiences enable fans to engage in a ritual of decommercialization (Cova, B., Kozinets, R., & Shankar, A. (Eds.). (2007). (Eds.) *Consumer Tribes*. Routledge.: 10). Enchantment provides a useful concept to understand how fans experience, create meaning from, and contribute to the creation of a spectacle. U2's concerts although highly regulated and choreographed provide an enchanting liminal space, which offer a sense of spontaneous communitas, collective joy and transcendent experiences, and increase fans' awareness of certain socio-political issues.

The paper draws on the findings of a wider project examining rock music events as contemporary spectacle. An ethnographic approach combined with detailed insider knowledge of U2, and their concerts helped to achieve an empathetic understanding of how individuals interpret and create meaning out of their experiences of U2's concerts.

Keywords Enchantment · Atmosphere · Escape · Emotion · U2

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1 Introduction

There was an atmosphere about it [...] that was kind of, you know, when you are in a crowd of people and you can just hear that buzz and there is something in the air [...] something is going to happen and you are going to witness something. I don't know whether it was the heat (it was really warm that day) but certainly the first Barcelona show, it was like a cauldron. And the atmosphere was really [...] really electric (The words of Don, a U2 fan describing the atmosphere at the band's first '360°' concert in Barcelona in 2009).

This research argues that music events such as U2 concerts produce an intense atmosphere and create a modern form of enchantment that is experienced physically and emotionally. Despite increasing academic interest in fandom and event experiences, so far, little attention is given to the notion of enchantment in the context of fan experiences of events generally, or in relation to music events specifically. Staged events are an established part of society and involve human interactions and, therefore, the study of events is not a new phenomenon (Andrews & Leopold, 2013). Numerous subject areas, such as tourism, hospitality and sport, have examined events (Getz, 2012; Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006; Roche, 2003). However, recent academic attention has focused on the management, rather than social scientific analyses, of events (Andrews & Leopold, 2013; Lamond & Platt, 2016; Merkel, 2014). Enchantment appears to provide a useful concept to better understand fans' experiences of events and how they create meaning from and contribute to the creation of a spectacle.

When 'U2 360°', the band's 17th world tour concluded, it was reported that nearly eight million people had attended the concerts (Billboard, 2011). The tour visited 100 cities in locations in Europe, North America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Mexico and South America, Moscow (Russia) and Istanbul (Turkey). U2's tours are a commercial venture between the band, promoter Live Nation, and the fans, plus the many suppliers that enable and support the tours. Despite the commercial motivations of the tour, U2's shows also provide a source and experience of enchantment, which enables fans to engage in a ritual of decommercialization (Cova et al., 2007: 10). For the fans, the '360°' show invoked a communal experience that transcended everyday encounters and created an experience of enchantment and a feeling of belonging to something bigger than themselves. However, fans' experiences of enchantment varied due to a number of factors including the location of the concert, the fans' response to U2's performances, their position within the stadium, distractions caused by the use of mobile phones and cameras, and the choreography of production of the show.

This research was inspired and enlightened by my extensive knowledge and experience of U2's music and concerts and academic interests in teaching and researching events. As a long-time fan of U2 since the 1980s, my insider knowledge of U2 and their concerts assisted in accessing, analysing and interpreting the research findings. Furthermore, my experiences of attending three of the four concerts examined in this research, (Dublin; Pittsburgh and Istanbul) aided in understanding the fans experiences by helping me to interpret the meanings fans attached to the concerts and their views and attitudes towards them. My experiences of U2's music and shows enabled

me to act as a 'visible narrator' (Hertz, 1997: xii). However, it was important to ensure that my insider knowledge was used 'selectively', without being constrained or ever guided by it (Hodkinson, 2005: 145) and to reject face value explanations and suspend 'background assumptions' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 231). This was achieved through critical reflexive commentary during the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, to address the different types of 'imagined subjectivities', which differentiate fans and academics, I adopted a fan-scholar identity during the data collection for this research (Hills, 2002: 3).

An ethnographic approach, interviewing concert attendees, combined with an element of autoethnography from my detailed insider knowledge helped to achieve an empathetic understanding of the fans' experiences of U2's shows. The paper draws on the findings of a wider project examining rock music events as contemporary spectacle including online research of selected U2-related websites, in-depth semi-structured interviews with fans and qualitative content analysis of concert documentary material including the tour's official photo book, the 360 Manifesto, a document outlining the producers' vision for the tour and an email interview with the show's producer. Firstly, this paper considers the concepts and theories that underpin the research, focusing on enchantment, atmosphere, collective effervescence, *communitas*, embodiment, escape and transcendence and liminality. Secondly, the sources of enchantment within U2's shows are examined. Thirdly, the fans experiences of enchantment are analysed. Finally, the factors that detract from experiences of enchantment are discussed.

2 Theoretical Considerations

Prior to investigating the sources and fans experiences of enchantment within U2's shows, it is important to uncover the theories that support this research and to consider how they collaborate to provide a framework for understanding enchantment in the context of U2's concerts. Firstly, it is important to contemplate existing theorisations of the concept of enchantment. Secondly, the notion of atmosphere is discussed in order to comprehend the fans comments concerning sources of enchantment. Thirdly, embodiment is explored to assist in understanding how fans experience enchantment physically and emotionally. Fourthly, Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence is examined to help comprehend the communal and spiritual aspects of U2's shows and how these contribute to enchantment. Next, Turner's notion of spontaneous *communitas* is considered to further understand the sense of belonging fans experience at U2's shows. Finally, theories of escape and transcendence, and Turner's concept of liminality are discussed so that the fans experiences of enchantment can be appreciated.

Enchantment is an 'inherently vague and complex' term (Saler, 2006: 692). Nonetheless, it has been used to describe sensations of delight conjured up by wonders and marvels of folklore and fairytale and experiences of 'enthrallment' induced by mysticism and magic (Saler, 2012: 9; Lovell and Griffin, 2022; Bennet, 2001: 171). A modern form of enchantment can be defined as 'one that enchants and disenchants simultaneously – one that delights but does not delude' (Saler, 2006: 702). Bennett

(2001: 5) refers to enchantment as a 'state of wonder'. Her definition captures the fans' comments about the sense of awe and wonder of U2's '360°' concerts. Fans used terms such as 'shock', 'awe' and 'wonder' and 'breathtaking' to describe their experiences of U2's shows. Furthermore, fans referred to being 'amazed' and 'gobsmacked' by the space-age theme of U2's shows, and how seeing the band in person was an 'awe-inspiring' experience. Despite this, understanding of the notion of enchantment, how it occurs and is experienced in the context of a rock music event is underdeveloped. To examine the concept of enchantment, it is necessary to consider the disenchantment thesis, most widely progressed by Max Weber. Although Weber (1917) does not offer a detailed definition of enchantment, he most notably proposed that as a consequence of the Protestant ethic, the idea system underpinning the spirit of capitalism, rationalization has led Western societies to become increasingly disenchanted, whereby magic has been replaced by rational calculation (Bennett, 2001; Ritzer, 2010; Saler, 2006; Schneider, 1993). He argued that 'the fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world' (Weber, 1917:155). Rationalization prioritizes precision and reliability over surprise (Bennett, 2001; Ritzer, 2010; Saler, 2006; Schneider, 1993). Despite the benefits of rationalization, such as increased efficiency, predictability and calculability, modern society has lost something of value that is enchantment (Ritzer, 2010: 74–81). Saler (2006: 692) acknowledges that 'modernity is characterised by disenchantment'. He argues that 'wonders and marvels have been demystified by science, spirituality supplanted by secularism, spontaneity has been replaced by bureaucratization' (692). Nonetheless, music events such as Australia's West Coast Blues and Roots Festival and, as argued here, U2's 360° concerts appear to offer popular and necessary experiences of enchantment that provide opportunities 'to connect with all that may be lost in the relentless process of bureaucratization of the real world' (Jennings, 2010: 82). Contrary to Weber's (1917) view of modern society as disenchanted, although U2's tours are a commercial venture, they also provide positive, engaging modern realms of enchantment that can enable fans to feel a sense of belonging and engage in rituals of decommercialization (Cova et al., 2007: 10).

The findings of this research suggest that U2, and in particular their lead singer Bono, create moments of collective joy and promote their specific brand of ethics, for example their pacifist stance and global humanitarianism ideals by combining music, visual displays and repetition in terms of the particular songs they perform. U2's music, and the collective singing and chanting cast an enchanting spell over the audience, which promote a form of spontaneous *communitas* and create a feeling of being part of something bigger than themselves. The purpose of this seems to be to lure fans to attend U2's concerts and enable the band to persuade them to support the various socio-political campaigns and organizations, such as Amnesty International that are promoted within the shows (Ritzer, 2010). This corroborates the work of Bennett (2001) who argues that the 'disenchantment tale' holds a marvellous space for enchantment, in which secular life can offer moments of joy, that in turn can promote ethics.

Atmospheres that are created through shared experiences are key to the construction of spaces of enchantment (Wigley, 2019: 7). Atmospheres are 'co-produced between the practices and dispositions of individuals or groups, and myriad other

elements from which and out of which they form and reform' (Edensor, 2015a: 2). They are 'produced by a host of constituents: the weather, sounds, the time of day, other people, architectural forms, incidents, representations, sensations and interactions, along with light and dark' (Edensor, 2015b: 33). These elements contribute to the intense atmospheres within U2's shows and provide a source of enchantment due to the powerful physical and emotional experiences they produce.

Furthermore, it is important to consider how spatial factors influence the formation and intensity of atmospheres (Edensor, 2015a). Examining the 'spatial relationship' between spectator and performer is beneficial for understanding the spatial dynamics within U2's shows (Kennedy, 2009: 133). It is also useful to contemplate how space is differentiated within an event setting. MacAloon (2005: 21) refers to 'insiders', those involved in the organization of the event and the spectators, who can be described as outsiders. Event spaces are frequently designed with different areas, which segregate the 'main institutional actors' from the public (MacAloon, 2005: 21). For example, backstage areas, restricted access VIP viewing areas and 'special entrances', stands and zones. Although MacAloon (2005) focuses on the Olympic Games, the differentiation of space is useful for understanding rock music events. In this case, the 'insiders' refer to the band and their entourage and relate to the backstage production areas. The fans can be considered as 'outsiders', who are generally not permitted in the backstage areas. However, spaces such as the VIP areas and the 'inner circle', or areas immediately surrounding the stage appear to influence the intensity of the atmosphere at U2's concerts due to the proximity of the audience to the performers and therefore fans within these areas can be considered insiders who co-produce and experience the intense atmospheres at U2's shows. This reinforces the notion that spatial arrangements can determine the intensity of the atmosphere within a stadium, which is also influenced by the distance between fans and their proximity to the pitch, or, in the context of this research, the stage (Edensor, 2015).

Duff's (2010) notion of 'thick' atmospheres is helpful for comprehending the fans' experiences of U2's shows.) 'Thick atmospheres' incorporate 'sensual, emotional and affective belonging that is embedded over time through repetitive practical embodied engagement' (Edensor (2015a: 1–2). Edensor (2015a) suggests that atmospheres blur the boundaries of emotion, affect and sensation. Furthermore, he argues that atmospheres are dynamic; they are in a state of continuous flow and flux. It is also useful to consider Dufrenne's (1973: 178) conception that atmosphere has 'a certain quality which words cannot translate but which communicates itself in arousing a feeling' which is useful for understanding fans emotional and physical responses to U2's shows.

The concept of embodiment also helps to comprehend how fans experienced enchantment at U2's shows. Embodiment concerns the emotional and physical sensations experienced through, and within, the 'biological body' and, the shared social and cultural meanings that are comprehended by the 'social body' (Fox, 2012: 54). Duffy et al. (2010: 17) argue that 'incorporating the embodied knowledge of bodily rhythms triggered by sounds is a crucial component to understanding the analysis of festival spaces as sites-of-belonging'. They refer to bodily rhythms as 'pulse, breathing, heartbeat, delivery of speech, gestures and movements (walking, running and so on)', and argue that these are a vital component of 'embodied geographical knowl-

edge' (Duffy et al.,, 2010: 17). Furthermore, Ehrenreich (2008: 24) suggests that 'to submit, bodily, to the music through dance is to be incorporated into the community in a way far deeper than shared myth or common custom can achieve'. These ideas help to understand how the fans embody the experience of enchantment through their bodily rhythms, which result from participating in collective ritual practices, such as applauding, singing and cheering in response to U2's shows.

Fans participated in U2's concerts through their 'internally felt bodily sensations', which Paterson (2009: 3) describes as 'haptic knowledges'. DeChaine's (2002: 83) notion that fans experience music physically as a 'bell-like resonance' within the body enables an understanding of the physical sensations, such as 'goosebumps' and 'spine-tingling' that fans described. Furthermore, fans embodied the experience of enchantment through their emotional responses to the universal beliefs and values, such as love and compassion that were promoted within U2's shows. The notion of a deep connection between music, memory, thoughts and feelings helps to understand how U2's shows inspire bodily movements and physical sensations and, therefore, explain how fans experienced enchantment (DeChaine, 2002).

It is also important to consider how communal and spiritual aspects of U2's shows contribute to an experience of enchantment. Durkheim's (1912) notion of 'collective effervescence' is particularly useful here. Durkheim (1912) suggested that religion is formed by instances of 'collective effervescence', which refers to the outcome of individuals within a social group uniting in order to perform religious rituals. This creates a form of 'collective excitement'. Durkheim (1912: 217–18) argues that 'the very act of congregating is an exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary height of exaltation'.

Durkheim's concept of 'collective effervescence' helps to explain the fans' ritual practices and emotional experiences. Ehrenrich (2008: 14) suggests that collective effervescence refers to 'moments of communal excitement'. Fans expressed communal excitement through their physical and emotional responses to U2's performances. These responses were communicated in the shared ritual practices, such as singing, clapping and cheering, which added to fans' sense of community. For example, Breda's (Istanbul) comment about singing songs together and shouting '*Yeah-Hoo*'.

Being part of the audience, and engaging in shared ritual activities such as clapping, singing and chanting, provided fans with an intense form of 'spontaneous communitas' (Turner, 1969: 360). These 'moment[s] in and out of time' contributed to the feeling of community, which was also promoted through the band's actions, music and messages (Turner, 1969: 360). Spontaneous communitas is most suitable for explaining the findings of this research due to Turner's (1969: 138) suggestion that the 'beats' and the 'hippies' used the symbols and 'liturgical actions' of rock music and technologies, such as 'flashing lights' to create a sense of community. Turner (1969: 138) argued that the hippies were trying to create a 'transformative experience', the essence of which was 'communal and shared'. He suggested that the form of communitas pursued by the hippies within their gatherings was more profound than the 'pleasurable and effortless comradeship' that can occur at any time between friends (Turner, 1969: 138). U2 concerts provided a temporary form of community, compared to the lifestyle associated with the 'hippie movement'. However, for the

fans, the '360°' show invoked a communal experience that transcended everyday encounters and created a feeling of belonging to something bigger than themselves.

Fans described aspects of U2's shows, such as the music and stage design as magical. These offered a form of escape and transcendence, which provided the basis of, and enhanced, the fans experience of enchantment. Bennett (2001: 5) refers to enchantment as being 'transfixed in wonder and transported by sense, to be both caught up and carried away'. However, Rojek (2013: 17) argues that the notion of escapism is inadequate to describe the feeling of being 'carried away or losing yourself' at events. He suggests that events 'provide people with a sense of a bigger reality', and so transcendence more accurately describes this experience. Experiences of transcendence can engage people 'ritual[s] of decommercialization' despite their participation in commercially driven staged events (Cova et al., 2007:10).

Turner's (1969) concept of liminality is particularly helpful for understanding the fans' experiences of transcendence. Turner (1984: 22) argued that 'public liminality' refers to a space in which 'daily reality' is suspended. Liminality concerns a 'betwixt and between' the everyday scene (Turner, 1984: 21). U2's shows provide a liminal space. Attending the '360°' show seemed to be a 'rite of passage', in which fans passed through stages of separation from their day to day routines, and rituals, such as work and domestic responsibilities; a transition to a state of spontaneous *communitas*, in which they enter a 'cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state', and finally, after the concert, incorporation, by reintegrating into society, having increased their status within the U2 community by gaining knowledge and experience of U2's shows, which enabled them to 'behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards', such as singing and chanting (Turner, 1969: 94–5).

The theories examined above collaborate to provide the theoretical framework for comprehending the sources and experiences of enchantment within U2's shows on five levels. Firstly, Bennett's (2001) notion of enchantment draws attention to the importance of sensory and magical elements of U2's shows. Secondly, Wigley (2019), Duff (2010), Edensor (2015a), Duffrene (1973), Kennedy (2009) and MacAloon's (2005) work on atmosphere and spatial dynamics helps to understand how enchantment is co-produced between the band and the fans by producing intense emotional and physical responses and is dependent on the spatial locations of and within U2's '360°' concerts. Thirdly, Duffy et al. (2010), Fox (2012), Paterson (2009) and DeChaine's, (2002) research on embodiment is useful for comprehending how fans experience enchantment physically and emotionally. Fourthly, Durkheim's (1912) notion of collective effervescence is particularly helpful for understanding the communal, spiritual and emotional aspects of U2's shows. Nevertheless, prior to examining the sources, experiences and variations of enchantment within U2's shows, first the research methodology and methods will be considered. Finally, Turner's (1969) notions of spontaneous community and liminality assist in understanding the sense of belonging and transcendence fans' experience at U2's shows.

3 Methodology

This research adopted a critical interpretivist approach, drawing on Weber's *verstehen*, to gain an insight into the phenomenon of a rock concert and to understand the fans experiences. The methodology blended elements of critical sociology, auto-ethnography and ethnography to comprehend fans experiences of U2's shows and netnography, which helped to reveal how fans described their experiences of the concerts some of the principles of which informed the choice of research methods. The researcher's insider knowledge of U2 and their concerts and his academic interests helped to guide the research process and assist in interpreting the research results. However, the researcher acknowledged the need to combine critical reflexivity with detailed insider knowledge to achieve an empathetic understanding in relation to the experiences of the consumers of U2's rock music events.

This research applied predominantly ethnographic principles and drew on netnography to examine online data, in the form of insights from U2-related online communities. Pure netnography is concerned with research that investigates online interactions (Kozinets, 2010). In contrast, pure ethnography focuses on face-to-face communications such as interviews. Kozinets (2010: 65) suggests that netnography is inadequate where the focus of research goes beyond an online community, as the data collected would be 'partial and incomplete'. To address this a blend of ethnography and netnography, was adopted, which added to insights gained through netnographic data by including face-to-face interviews.

This project focuses on U2 fans as a community, who share similar experiences of participating in the band's '360°' concerts. While drawing on a combination of ethnographic and netnographic principles, the project cannot be considered to follow these approaches in a pure sense but, instead, the research design, data collection, choice of methods and analysis was guided by elements of each. Sugden and Tomlinson (2002: 12) refer to a range of ethnographic approaches including 'classic', 'long term', 'depth-immersion studies' and more 'fleeting forms of ethnographic visiting'. They suggest that sufficient time is required to reveal the unknown and that more 'passive forms' of ethnography, where the researcher is guided and constrained by the research situation, do not allow the full picture to be revealed. However, this research offers ethnographic 'snapshots' of U2 fan experiences and their understanding of the U2 '360°' concerts, combined with interviews and critical analysis of selected concert-related documentary material to provide an in-depth and critical understanding. This approach enabled a range of experiences in different cultural contexts and practical settings to be examined, as well as an understanding of the production of the concerts.

4 Methods

This research is based on an in-depth multi-method case study, focusing on U2's '360°' world tour, which took place between 2009 and 2011. It investigates four concerts that took place in different cities and legs of the tour, including Dublin (2009), Istanbul and Moscow (2010) and Pittsburgh (2011). Rich qualitative data were col-

lected in three phases, which included online research of selected U2-related websites, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 26 fans conducted via Skype, a qualitative content analysis of documentary material including U2's official tour book 'From the Ground Up': U2 360° Tour', and the '360 Manifesto', which documented the producer's vision for the tour. Fans interviewed are referred to by pseudonyms and the locations of the concerts attended are indicated in brackets following their names. A limitation of this research concerned knowledge that is relative in that the meaning fans attach to their experiences of U2's shows is socially constructed based on their perceptions of reality in the context of the particular research settings [the geographical locations of the concerts examined]. Therefore, the meaning they attached to participation may not be representative of all of the fans that attended U2's 360° tour. This research focuses on the experiences of fans for whom U2 resonate, thus the knowledge produced by this research is context specific and therefore cannot be generalized. Nonetheless, this paper examines the sources of enchantment and seeks to understand how fans experience enchantment within U2's shows.

4.1 Sources of Enchantment

U2's concerts offered various sources of enchantment, deriving from the intense atmosphere, and the energy of the band and the fans. Other sources of enchantment included special moments such as hearing U2's songs for the first time, and elements of surprise and spontaneity within the band's performances.

Fans described the atmosphere at U2's concerts and referred to a range of contributory factors. These included spatial issues, such as the geographical location of the concert, the fans' position within the stadia, and their proximity to the performers, as well as the energy of the band and audience. Don's (Dublin) remarks highlighted at the introduction to this paper regarding the atmosphere being 'electric' draw attention to the increasing tension that he felt prior to the beginning of the concert. His reference to 'something in the air' at the Barcelona concert can be explained by drawing on Dufrenne's (1973: 178) notion that atmosphere 'communicates itself in arousing a feeling'.

Much of the online discussion concerned spatial issues, such as the fans' experiences of the shows from the GA (General Admission) area. One fan explained how they were '*on the pitch & it was fantastic*'. Another claimed that after viewing the show from the GA area, '*all I can say is WOW! There's no going back to seats for me*'. These comments suggest that the atmosphere in the GA area was more intense than in the seated areas.

Ron (Dublin, Pittsburgh) described the atmosphere within the GA area at the Pittsburgh concert: '*The atmosphere was incredible, you know*'. He compared his experience of the GA with being in the seated areas at U2's Dublin shows: '*Well, because with me I get so wrapped up in it and I am jumping up and down like a mad-man [...] you know I am just totally lost in It*'.

Arthur (Dublin, Moscow, Istanbul, Pittsburgh) referred to the atmosphere at the front of the GA area, and its effect on the fans who were seated at the Moscow concert:

I think just the main part was just having more people closer to the front row. And that then carries the atmosphere further back through the field [...] it is a very big venue stadium and to try and have more people engaged was a very good thing.

Ron's (Dublin, Pittsburgh) comments about 'jumping up and down like a mad-man' and being lost in it [the atmosphere] help to explain how fans contribute to a 'thick' atmosphere (Duff, 2010). Arthur's (Dublin, Moscow, Istanbul, Pittsburgh) point illustrates the dynamic atmosphere at U2's shows, and how this flowed from the stage/GA area to the rest of the stadium, which supports Edensor's (2015a) point about atmosphere's being in a state of continuous flow and flux.

Fans also referred to their proximity to the stage within the GA area, and how this contributed to the atmosphere of the shows. For example, a fan stated online; '*WHAT A GIG. I've never been so close to the front in a long history of concert going*'. Susan (Dublin) revealed why being close to the stage is important; '*the nearness to the stage makes you feel part of the show in some ways and gets you differently in contact with the feelings the music gives you*'.

Furthermore, fans explained how the unique stage design enabled them to get closer to the band and so experience a more intense atmosphere. For example, Arthur (Dublin, Moscow, Istanbul, Pittsburgh) observed how the band used scale to create atmosphere: '*...and I think you know [...] it is also about scale. They do have this thing about massive, massive events; trying to use the stadium in a sense [...] as part of the stage*'. Josie (Dublin) also commented on the impressive scale of the stage, and how its unique design enabled her to be close to the band. She explained: '*the 360° - especially the stage, the way their stage was, with the things [bridges], going over us was huge-huge-huge stage. But you feel quite close to them, because they are walking above you*'.

Fans at the front of the GA area were closer to the band and experienced a more intense atmosphere. Edensor (2015a) argues that spatial arrangements can determine the intensity of the atmosphere. Josie's (Dublin) comments about scale and design of the stage supports Edensor's (2015a) suggestion that the atmosphere within a stadium is influenced by the distance between fans and their proximity to the pitch, or, in the context of this research, the stage. The fans' position in the concert venue and personal connection to the city U2 were performing affected their experience of enchantment by influencing the intensity of the atmosphere, which contributed to a greater sense of enchantment compared to other fans who experienced the concerts from different areas of the stadia. Furthermore, the fans' remarks exemplify the notion of the fans as enchanted insiders (MacAloon, 2005). The 360° concept of U2's tour, enabled fans to get closer to the band, which contributed to the fans' excitement and led to a more intense atmosphere.

Fans also commented on the intense energy they experienced at U2's shows, which provided a source of enchantment. They referred to the energy within the crowd, as well as the energy of the band's performance. Reflecting on their experiences of the Dublin concerts online, a fan, explained that '*these shows were very special. The band was amazing. The sound was great. But the crowd was what made it all the more amazing*'. These comments suggest that enchantment is co-created by

the crowd's response to U2's music and performances. Furthermore, they emphasise the importance of the sense of *communitas* as both a source and key element of the experience of enchantment and help to understand U2 fans as a neo-tribe (Bennett, 1999; Maffessoli, 1996).

Many fans consent to Bono as their legitimate leader by responding to his instructions to jump, sing and cheer and by showing their support for organisations such as the 'One' campaign and the 'Red' foundation. For example, Sasha (Pittsburgh) remarked; *'I think Bono leads these things. Oh yeah, you do what he tells you to do'*. Breda (Istanbul) commented *[The] thing that I cannot easily explain is they got more than 30,000 people together and to sing and to dance at the show*.

The fans' comments regarding Bono's influence on their behaviour support Rojek's (2011: 97) suggestion that stars such as Bono can 'exert a magical effect on stage'. They also align with the idea of Bono acting as a secular 'shaman', and the members of U2 as 'disciples', who cast a spell over the audience, which enchants the fans in order to persuade them to support their socio-political campaigns and organizations.

Willie Williams, U2's Show Director expands on this point within the '360 Manifesto'. He compares 'rock and roll' shows to sporting events and acknowledges that:

sport has an advantage over rock and roll in that no-one knows how it's going to end, but what sport lacks is an MC, a shaman, a single person to focus and direct the energy of the crowd in a tangible way. There is no aural communication between performer and viewer.

Williams highlights an interesting point in that Bono can be described as a secular 'shaman', who directs the energy of the crowd, and produces the magic within U2's shows.

U2's shows seem to provide an opportunity for Bono and U2 to 'touch' the audience both spiritually and emotionally by performing their songs and promoting various socio-political issues and organizations such as Amnesty International. For example, Sally (Dublin, Istanbul) explained that the messages are a call to action; *'they [the band] are always like 'Hey come on', 'you can do things if you are active and you activate yourselves'. 'The time is now'. [...] When you come to a U2 concert you go to empower yourself, actually. It is an empowerment process, isn't it?'*. Furthermore, some fans explained how they actively supported socio-political initiatives, such as the 'One' campaign and 'Product Red'. They also acknowledged how they became more aware of socio-political issues because of attending the '360°' shows. For example, Rick (Pittsburgh) commented:

I did sign up to one campaign. I love the concept of the One campaign because they don't ask... they're not hounding you for money, they send you stuff and if you want to sign on to a petition or to send your congressmen a note, I do that [...] I respond to One campaign requests and I buy Red product whenever I can coz [...] I do believe in that, in what Red is doing in terms of buying HIV treatments.

The findings demonstrate that U2's '360°' shows provided more than commercial entertainment. They also offered fans' cultural and political resources to help them make sense of a range of social and political issues. For example, Sally's (Dublin, Istanbul) comments suggested that the political messages within the shows were a call to action, and a source of empowerment.

Finally, fans commented on special moments, and elements of surprise and spontaneity within the concerts, and explained how these caused enchantment. For example, some fans, contributing to the online forums, referred to a '*surprise night*', expressing their desire for unexpected performances within the shows. Neil (Dublin) acknowledged the elements of surprise within the shows: '*you know what to expect but you are also blown away by some surprises*'. Rick (Pittsburgh) also commented on the spontaneity of U2's performances:

I always saw the band in the moment, there was always some spontaneity [...] the interactions between Bono and Edge and Bono and Adam, those sort of spontaneous moments where you get the feeling that no one's gonna see that again, the special moments.

The fans' comments about special moments of spontaneity and surprise within the shows contradict Ritzer's (2010: 6) notion that 'in a rational society, consumers want to know what to expect in all settings and at all times. They neither want nor expect surprises'. The moments of surprise and spontaneity within U2's show seem to be a source of enchantment for the fans. This is supported by Bennett (2001: 10) who explains that enchantment is an 'uneasy combination of artifice and spontaneity' (Bennett, 2001: 10). Moreover, as Don (Dublin) and Ron (Dublin, Pittsburgh) observed, seeing the band perform their songs live provided a special moment that made the show memorable for them. However, the extent to which the band were able to produce surprise within the '360°' show seemed to be limited due to its epic scale. Consequently, the impromptu set changes appear to be a form of 'managed spontaneity' (Oakes & Warnaby, 2011: 412).

4.2 Experiencing Enchantment

Fans experienced enchantment in a number of ways. For example, certain aspects of the show including the theming, lighting and special effects excited them. U2's concerts also provided fans with opportunities for escape and transcendence, and provoked various emotional and physical responses, which prompted the experience of enchantment. U2's audiences were enchanted by the space-age theme of the show, which was mentioned in fans' discussions about the event online. Fans referred to the connection with a satellite link up with the International Space Station prior to the band's performance of the song 'Beautiful Day'. Furthermore, they identified specific visual elements, such as the '*Milky Way*' effect, which was created with the help of fans illuminating their mobile phones, which also supported the space-age theme. These comments help to understand the specific features of the space-age theme of U2's shows, which contributed to the fans' excitement. For example, Sally (Dublin, Istanbul) referred to the concert as '*the spaceship show*'. She remarked: *What I loved*

was the idea of the spaceship. Whenever you went to a city, you saw it from far away, and it was really something special [...] it is something sort of extra-terrestrial, you know.

Fans discussed the production of U2's concerts online. In particular, they focused on the shows' lighting, visual and special effects. One fan explained that the 'pyramid of light' at the end of 'Ultraviolet' was their 'favourite visual part of the entire show'. As well as lighting, fans also commented on the screen and how it extended and combined 'images and video footage to give an amazing effect'. This supports Edensor's (2012: 1106) notion that lighting forms a 'powerful element' that participates in the production of thick atmospheres. This is also an example of a 'theatricalization of space' that is invested with 'oneiric and phantasmogoric qualities' (1107).

In addition to the stage design, lighting, special effects and theming, fans referred to their experience of seeing the band in person, which also contributed to the excitement by creating a sense of awe and wonder. For example, Arthur (Dublin, Moscow, Istanbul, Pittsburgh) reflected on attending U2's concerts:

as a teenager and back in my first few U2 shows it would always just be 'awe'. I did [...] idolise, slightly deify U2 and Bono. And just to be in the presence of your hero was always a big awe-inspiring experience, you know'.

These comments help to understand how fans were enthralled and enchanted by U2's shows and illustrate Bennett's (2001:5) suggestion that enchantment is a 'state of wonder'. The allure of the stage and the visual aspects such as lighting can be described as the 'technology of enchantment', which casts 'a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form' (Gell, 1992: 44). However, U2's music is an important source of enchantment, which binds the show together and creates an experience of enchantment.

Fans referred to 'being in the moment' and 'losing themselves' during U2's shows, which describes their experiences of enchantment. Fans became immersed in the shows and were able to escape their daily routines. A fan indicated online that a U2 show is all about 'taking us out of reality' and explained how the music helps them to escape from the 'drudgery and fear' of their daily lives. Other fans commented on the power of U2's music to bring people together and transport them to another time and place. One referred to the show as a 'musical spaceship taking us away from this earth'. Another suggested that when performed live, the band's songs 'become more than they were ever meant to be, a third dimension that really only ever exists for that moment, the space between the songs, the band, and the audience'.

Fans also contemplated how the shows provided a semi-religious or spiritual experience. One online commentator also suggested that U2's shows made them feel 'purified and renewed'. Another person talked about U2's songs 'reaching to unite humanity'. Furthermore, Rojek (2013: 14) proposes that events attempt to create 'social transcendence'. He explains that they offer modern solutions to people's search for a 'sense of a bigger something in life'. This helps to explain the fans' comments about escaping from and transcending their daily routines.

Josie (Dublin) described how U2's shows provided her with a feeling of escape. She explained that whilst participating in the concert she was able to ignore feeling

tired after her long journey to the Dublin stadium: ‘*During the concert you are not remembering anything [...] You are just in the moment. But then by the end of the concert not only the adrenaline slows, so you can feel you are tired, you’re jet-lag [sic], you are hungry*’. Josie’s (Dublin) comments reinforce Rojek’s (2013: 17) contention that events offer opportunities for transcendence.

Similarly, Steve (Dublin) refers to being transported to another place:

When Bono sings y’know, “take me to that other place”, that’s exactly the thing that rock does, y’know, all the stuff around work and bills and kids and cats and all that kind of stuff. It kind of just kind of disappears because then you are in a moment where actually you can either lose yourself or find yourself, depending on how you view it.

U2’s shows provided fans with a form of escape and transcendence, which provided the basis of, and enhanced, their experience of enchantment. The fans’ comments on ‘being in the moment’ support Bennett’s (2001: 5) theory of enchantment as a state of being ‘caught up and carried away’. Moreover, Steve’s (Dublin) comment about being transported to another place, and being able to forget about domestic issues, reinforces the notion that U2’s concerts provided opportunities for escape. However, Rojek (2013: 17) argues that the notion of escapism is inadequate to describe the feeling of being ‘carried away or losing yourself’ at events. He suggests that events ‘provide people with a sense of a bigger reality’, and so transcendence more accurately describes this experience.

Alex (Moscow) attempted to explain how U2’s shows gave him a sense of transcendence:

There are points in those concerts where something happens in the music and it takes you out of yourself, you could call it, I suppose they’re ecstatic moments, which are sort of transcendent moments and it could be to do with the crowd. More often it’s to do with the music because of the elements of the music are sort of particularly uplifting in a live context.

Alex’s (Moscow) remarks align with the notion that U2’s music and performances induced a state of collective ecstasy, which supports the notion that U2’s shows provided a spiritual experience (Ross, 2013).

Similarly, Sarah (Dublin) explained how ‘*it [clapping and cheering] contributes to feeling part of something bigger than myself to me like the whole community of the audience and feeling, you know, that sort of togetherness and unity*’. Ron (Dublin, Pittsburgh) reflected on what prompted him to engage in ritual activities such as clapping and cheering: ‘*It is just a feeling, you just feel involved with it. It is part of feeling you belong there. It is part of who you are*’. He also acknowledged the shared experience of being lost in the music: ‘*it’s a communal thing: you are all lost in the music. It is just an amazing feeling*’. Furthermore, he explained: ‘*It is all around you. It’s just [...] It just takes you somewhere else and it is just amazing*’.

Equally, Alex (Moscow) highlights an important point relating to the powerful spiritual connection he experienced at U2’s ‘360°’ show. For him, the shows seemed

to create a sense of nostalgia for community, which he gained by attending the concerts. He explained:

I think part of it is the sense of community, I do think that's very powerful. I don't think there are many places in life these days where you get a big sense of community, a big sense of belonging, a big sense of camaraderie. I think football matches do it, the very tribal and, I think religious activities, you know, churches, temples, synagogues because they provide that but I think that for most people that doesn't really exist anymore. I think concerts like that do provide that kind of human need or desire to connect or join with other people.

Ron's (Dublin, Pittsburgh) and Alex's (Moscow) remarks are significant because they highlight that, for some fans, the collective excitement and joy and feeling of belonging that is achieved in attending U2's shows, constitutes a spiritual experience.

Furthermore, the fans' emotional and physical responses to the '360°' shows contributed to their experiences of enchantment. This was influenced by the set list and the inclusion of particular songs. Fans discussed the effects of U2 shows on their feelings and emotions, values and beliefs online. For example, one person observed that at a U2 concert, '*the music can send you through loads of emotions with many fans moved to tears by the sheer overwhelming passion*'.

Alex (Moscow) explained how U2's shows provoke emotional responses:

With U2, from the very start whatever they play, they grab you by the throat and they don't put you down for 22 or 23 songs [...] they're very good at lifting the tempo and dropping it down again. There is a path through it and it is an emotional path; it's the songs are ordered in such a way as to make you feel different things.

Fans clearly experienced various emotions, such as joy and sadness, at U2's '360°' shows. They also referred to the emotional effects of the concerts on the mind, body and spirit. For example, Alex (Moscow) reflected on the powerful emotional experience of attending the '360°' show:

I think you go there and you come away (pause) emotionally changed in some way, emotionally affected. The music goes in your ears and does what it does in your brain and it affects your being in some way.

Some fans also expressed their emotions physically, and others experienced bodily sensations such as tingling and shivers at U2's shows. For instance, some mentioned that '*Sunday Bloody Sunday*' provoked tears. Another explained how '*there are people crying their eyes out as this is the last show for them*'. These findings explain how fans experiences of enchantment were embodied. They support DeChaine's (2002: 81) argument that 'musical experience forces an encounter between mind and body, clearing a liminal space that is simultaneously charged with affect and fraught with tension'. Petra's (Moscow) comments regarding her emotional responses to the shows from her tiredness, relief and pleasure of hearing U2's music demonstrate

the tension between mind and body. Furthermore, DeChaine's (2002: 83) point of experiencing music physically as a 'bell-like resonance' helps to comprehend the 'goosebumps' and 'spine-tingling' that fans experienced, as well as the fans' references to feeling the music. Alex's (Moscow) description of the effect of U2's shows on mind, body and being reflects DeChaine's (2002) notion of the power of effect to meld body, sense and mind. However, despite the various sources and experiences of enchantment, the extent to which individuals were enchanted by U2's '360°' concerts varied due to the influence of a number of factors, which are explored below.

4.3 Variations and Distractions

Although U2's shows tend to provide a form of enchantment for many of the fans, this experience varied due to a number of issues. These included the location of the concerts, the fans' response to U2's performances, their position within the stadium, distractions caused by the use of mobile phones and cameras, and the choreography of the production. For example, Don (Dublin) reflected on the location, the audience and their contribution to the atmosphere and excitement at the Dublin concert:

Dublin was a lot more [...] casual and a lot more laid back. You had a lot of fans from overseas, which you don't really get at Irish U2 shows anymore because they are just so heavily populated with people who travel specifically for the Dublin show.

Fans who attended the Istanbul concert commented online that there were 'a lot of empty seats' and that 'the atmosphere did suffer where I was 'cos of the empty seats'. One fan expressed their disappointment at the low attendance of the Istanbul concert. They explained that 'I think that Turkey fail, only 40.000 and in that 40 it was at least 15 thousand foreigners, thats really really shame'.

Derek (Istanbul) commented on the relatively low attendance at the concert, and how this affected the atmosphere 'there was nobody behind the stage [...] so you got nobody behind and nobody in the upper tiers, all around the upper echelons of the stadium. So, I think that detracted from it [the atmosphere] as well'.

Moreover, some fans felt disconnected from both the band and audience due to their location in the stadia, which detracted from the experience of enchantment. For example, Arthur (Dublin, Moscow, Istanbul, Pittsburgh) commented 'I don't actually like it in the Red Zone because [...] people often wouldn't sing along or [...] people often wouldn't even applaud after a song, you know, they would be standing watching and have a few drinks.

In addition to online comments and criticisms of shows in terms of empty seats, fans also discussed the design of the venue and the concert space. For example, a number of fans commented on the Dublin shows and the fact of the design of the stadium:

Croke Park does not suit the 360 concept, as first Claw was not in the middle of the stadium, but at one end, and the area behind it was empty because it is an open terraced area which was not available for use [...] So, as you view the

pitch, all you see is empty grey concrete steps behind it - not a very beautiful backdrop.

This highlights an important issue in terms of the '360°' concept and the producers' intention for the audience to form part of the visual aspect of the show, which could not be achieved in some of the stadia, including Dublin and Istanbul, due to their design, which did not allow for these concerts to take place 'in the round'.

Petra (Moscow), who also attended the '360°' concert in Paris, felt disconnected from the show:

I was very frustrated because [...] I felt I wasn't part of the show...And from the seats [...] I don't really act the same way. Like I don't know, maybe I feel too far – disconnected. And people around me, when everybody is sitting around you, you are like you really don't want to spend the whole show standing and jumping.

These comments highlight the significance of the geographic context of U2's shows, in relation to its effect on the concert attendance and atmosphere. The location of U2's shows, and local scene appear to influence the nature of the U2's concerts in terms of fan engagement and atmosphere. This impacts on the fans' experiences of enchantment. The findings confirm Edensor's (2015a: 3) argument that fans who are disconnected from the performance, and from other fans, are 'less likely to contribute to the production of a thick atmosphere'. This is useful for comprehending the fans' remarks about the varying levels of engagement in U2's shows. Furthermore, the fans' comments support MacAloon's (2005) distinction between insiders and spectators. Petra's (Moscow) frustration about the distance between her and the band reinforce this point. However, extending MacAloon's (2005) ideas, fans who are disconnected from the concerts due to their location within the stadium, or distracted by other fans can be described as 'disenchanted outsiders'. The notion of disenchanted outsiders applies to casual fans who are less able to become enchanted due to observing the shows from seated areas and being less actively engaged in contributing to the atmosphere of the show. This also clearly affected Petra's experience of enchantment due to hindering her ability to join in the co-production of the atmosphere. In contrast, fans within the GA area can be referred to as 'enchanted insiders' as they are more actively engaged in co-creating the atmosphere in the event and experience of enchantment.

Reflecting on the stage management and spontaneity within the production of U2's concerts, Derek (Istanbul) argued that the band:

are at their best when it is just raw and them playing as a band. If you forget the technology – you know they have got the ability to wow and change a crowd and change a show with, you know, just a couple of moments on the stage. So, I just think it is being too stage-managed [which] sort of takes away from what they are good at.

Online commentators discussed the use of mobile phones and cameras at U2's shows and how this impacted on their experiences. One explained that the atmosphere of the Dublin concert was *'totally ruined by moronic fans with their stupid mobile phones held permanently aloft at the expense of punching the air and jumping up and down'*. Other fans commented how they *'missed half the experience'* due to picture-taking at the last couple of shows in Pittsburgh and Moncton. Although mobile technologies enabled fans to become 'collectively connected' to U2's shows (Bennett, 2012), they also appeared to detract from the atmosphere by preventing some fans from engaging in ritual practices, such as jumping up and down.

5 Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how the shows of U2's (2009–2011) '360°' tour provided fans with a contemporary realm of enchantment. Furthermore, the findings reveal several new insights into the concept of enchantment in the setting of a music event. Firstly, a modern form of enchantment in the context of a rock concert is a communal experience that is co-produced between the fans and the band. In U2's shows, lead singer Bono acts as a secular 'shaman' who directs the energy of the crowd and performances. Together with members of U2 as 'disciples', the band cast a spell over the audience, which enchants the fans in order to persuade them to support their socio-political campaigns and organizations, nonetheless, some fans are empowered by U2's shows and actively engage in the socio-political campaigns that the band support and promote, whereas others reject them. Secondly, although part of a capitalist system of production, spectacles such as U2's concerts, through their affective power, the meaning the event presents to audiences and their political content offer active, engaging and rebellious experiences of enchantment (Grossberg, 1984; Williams, 2021). Enchantment in this context is an experience of transcendence, that can lead to a state of spontaneous *communitas* and collective ecstasy and therefore offers an escape from day-to-day routine and a spiritual encounter for some fans. Thirdly, despite the commercial motivations and staging of U2's tours, participating in the shows enables fans to engage in a 'ritual of decommercialization' in providing fans a sense of belonging and being part of something bigger than themselves that is prompted by the music, performances, staging and collective excitement (Cova et al., 2007:10). Therefore, enchantment within U2's shows combines joyous moments, powerful, effervescent atmospheres with socio-political objectives.

This research contributes to leisure and sociological perspectives on rock music events by offering a detailed example of how a rock concert such as '360°' tour U2's can prompt emotional and physical responses amongst fans and lead to a feeling of *communitas* and belonging, which appear to be key characteristics of experiencing enchantment. This challenges the notion that rationalization has led Western societies to become increasingly disenchanting, whereby magic has been replaced by rational calculation (Bennett, 2001; Ritzer, 2010; Saler, 2006; Schneider, 1993). Despite Ritzer's, (2010: 74–81) contention that society has lost something of value that is enchantment, U2's concerts although highly regulated and choreographed commercial ventures provide enchanting liminal spaces, which offer transcendent,

spiritual experiences and can empower some fans and increase their awareness of certain socio-political issues (Williams, 2021). These the findings support Bennett's (2001) notion that enchantment can offer moments of joy, that in turn can promote ethics. Furthermore, they add to Jennings's (2010) proposition that musical spaces offer popular and necessary realms of re-enchantment by examining specific sources (production) and experiences (consumption) of enchantment.

Applying a theoretical framework utilizing the notions of enchantment, atmosphere, embodiment, communitas, liminality, escape and transcendence and collective effervescence, the findings have revealed that elements of the concert design and production, including the stage, lighting and special effects; the band, their music and performances, and in particular the crowd's responses to these elements influenced the intensity and co-production of 'thick' atmospheres, which contributed to the production of enchantment. Moreover, the findings have shown how the spatial dynamics and differentiated spaces within the concert venue, and the geographical locations of the shows influence the construction of liminal spaces of enchantment. Despite this, extending MacAloon's (2005) ideas relating to the differentiation of space, due to their different positions within the stadia, proximities to the band, and various distractions such as mobile phones fans can be described as both enchanted insiders and disenchanting outsiders. Therefore U2's shows offer a necessary and popular contemporary realm of enchantment, 'one that enchants and disenchants simultaneously'.

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