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# Fabricating Space: Postmodern Popular Music Performance Venues on Cruise Ships

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*Spaces for popular performance have traditionally been a part of a naturally developed geography whether urban or natural. However, not all geographies occur naturally; some are fabricated and themed to reference certain semiotic and musical concepts with a particular purpose in mind. Tourism industry operators, in particular those that consist within a constructed geography such as theme parks, Las Vegas and cruise ships, often make use of such fabrications. This article considers performance spaces aboard the mobile geographies of cruise ships in the light of the four categories proposed by Kronenburg: adopted, adapted, dedicated and mobile spaces and examines popular music performance rooms aboard cruise ships. Examples of the four categories aboard cruise ships exist, but another category, described as a fabricated space exists with semiotic and performance features quite different from Kronenburg's categories. Typically, such spaces are designed to replicate the experience of idealised versions of a particular type of venue such as a jazz club or a ballroom. Fabricated spaces are typically part of a constructed geography, and are themed to integrate into an experience. Consumers in these spaces understand that they are not actually authentically the actual venues they seem, but are negotiatedly authentic: part of a game that such industries invite guests to play. This research considers four shipboard venues that fall under Kronenburg's existing four categories, and then contrasts them with two venues that are considered to be themed and 'fabricated.' The differences are contextualised and a definition of the fabricated venue offered. David Cashman is an adjunct Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Southern Cross University and the author of several articles on music and tourism. He is currently involved in a project recording parlour music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries concerning steamships.*

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Keywords: cruise, popular music, tourism, live music, venue

### *Introduction*

Postmodern tourism, the tourism associated with the constructed and controlled experiences of Disneyland, Las Vegas and the cruise industry, invariably co-opt musical performance as an integral part the tourism encounter. Disneyland schedules a uniformed marching band on its main street, multiple hotels in Las Vegas have themed ‘Rat Pack’ shows, and cruise ships represent ‘islandness’ and ‘exoticism’ by the inclusion of Caribbean-themed bands even when the ship is nowhere near the Caribbean. The spaces in which these performances occur replicate venues constructed in urban spaces; but they are also quite different in implementation and design because of the nature of the manner in which they are themed. A cruise ship is a constructed mobile geography that forms the main focus of the guests’ vacation,<sup>1</sup> which may be analysed as a hyperreal paradigm<sup>2</sup> catering to the postmodern tourist.<sup>3</sup> It is a container for an ‘experience,’<sup>4</sup> a business model common in postmodern tourism by which money is exchanged for time spent within an often-fabricated entertainment or process that has a limited time span. On cruise ships, themed venues invoke and manipulate semiotic meaning, fabricating a venue that never existed except in the hyperreality of the cruise ship.

British architecture scholar Robert Kronenburg recently published a comprehensive study of popular music performance spaces.<sup>5</sup> In it, he divides popular music performance spaces into four categories:

- Adopted spaces: spaces used for something else that are temporarily co-opted for popular music performance;
- Adapted spaces: spaces that have previously been used for something else, but which have been physically adapted for musical use;
- Created spaces: spaces that are constructed specifically for musical performance;
- Mobile spaces: spaces that are temporarily erected for musical performance.

As comprehensive and persuasive as Kronenburg’s categories are, they rely on the performance venue integrating with an urban or rural geography. In the constructed geographies of postmodern tourism (and also occasionally in the urban environment), a fifth category of musical performances exists that falls outside Kronenburg’s categorisation: the fabricated space. This performance space is a facsimile of either a specific venue or a general type of venue. It comprises a hyperreal construct, a construction that is patently false, yet enjoyed and interacted with by participants as a sort of ‘game.’

Postmodern culture is heavily dependant on facsimile and hyperreality. Eco argues that it is not the reality that society desires, but the ‘ultimate fake.’<sup>6</sup> The concept of performativity and theatricality has regularly been used as a metaphor in

contextualising the tourism industry,<sup>7</sup> (Weaver<sup>8</sup> has considered this model within the cruise industry.) While Kronenburg's categories are relevant for the traditionally situated and 'naturally' occurring performance venues situated in urban geographies, they do not take into account this desire for verisimilitude and performance within venues. This article considers how postmodern popular music performance spaces encapsulate performance, from a musical and experiential perspective. Taken together, these practical questions contribute to the understanding of how the service and/or tourism industries physically construct and theme their commodified musical performances as part of an 'experience' rather than simply as a performance.

Kronenburg's study is not the first attempt to consider popular music performance venues. Minor *et al.*<sup>9</sup> considers a commodified popular music performance from the audience's perspective. They argued that six factors are of importance to an audience. Listed in decreasing order of importance, they are: musician appearance, stage, musical ability, audience interaction, facilities and sound. Of these, musician appearance and musical ability is outside the realm of the performance space, but the other aspects are worth consideration. The stage category consisted of four items: stage decoration, stage lighting, background decoration and background lighting, inferring that the appearance of the stage in particular is of importance to audiences. Minor *et al.*'s 'facilities' category comprises temperature, seating and parking facilities: of which only the first two related directly to cruise ship spaces. Finally, the sound is important in terms of the acoustics of the space and the amplification equipment installed. Kronenburg,<sup>10</sup> investigating performance spaces from an architectural standpoint in a series of case studies, finds several regular occurrences in performance spaces. He considers existence of a bar, acoustics, physical form, access and effective onsite management. This article considers elements from the two, discussing physical form (including décor and stage area), audience interaction, sound/acoustics, bar management and implementation, access, and facilities (including temperature/seating). As the research is proposing a space based on theming, this is also discussed. These categories contextualise the function of these popular music performance venues from both the audience perspective and within the greater space of the cruise ship.

The purpose and type of cruise ship venues are usually repeated from ship to ship as the result of commercial homogeneity and competition between the lines as well as near-duopolisation of the industry by Carnival Corporation and Royal Caribbean International. Most ships have a main theatre, a secondary theatre, a disco, several piano bars and several themed performance spaces. As an industry that has existed for more than fifty years,<sup>11</sup> cruise tourism has been through several stages of development and many performance spaces do indeed match the categorisation proposed by Kronenburg; however others do not. This research considers four shipboard venues (as exemplars of the hundreds of cruise ship music performance spaces) that fall under Kronenburg's existing four categories, and then contrasts them with two venues that are considered to be themed and 'fabricated.' The venues

selected for consideration are typical of their kind and are ones with which the author is familiar, or similar to such. The differences are contextualised and a definition of the fabricated venue offered.

I spent four years working as a musician on several large cruise ships of varying lines as fieldwork for research in the area including the Cunard's *Queen Elizabeth 2* and *Queen Mary 2*, Crystal's *Harmony*, the *Regent Navigator* and *Mariner*, Princess's *Golden Princess* and several others. Notes from the period, available deck plans, photos and my own knowledge of the performance spaces and geography of the ship form the data for this study.

### *Performance Venues as Spaces of Engagement*

The spaces of musical performance, typically existing in an urban built environment, are specific types of architecture built to enclose a performance interaction between performers and audience. Particularly in the case of popular music, these spaces encourage financial transactions, where money is exchanged for the receipt of a commodified 'experience.' Because they form capsules for experiences, music venues are rarely merely plain rooms, but consider acoustics, décor, technology, performer sightlines and audience interaction. Designers of these spaces construct them to construct and transmit semiotic messages to potential and actual audience members.

Cruise ships, too, are capsules for experiences. In many ways, cruise ships form cocoons<sup>12</sup> in that they protect their guests: physically by being safe and controlled physical environments sheltering patrons from the environments through which they travel, and culturally by presenting a sanitised and unspecifically 'western' cultural environment in contrast to where the ship may actually be located. For many guests, such cocooning is taken to such an extreme that the cruise ship, rather than the ports visited, becomes the actual destination.<sup>13</sup> Musical venues on cruise ships, often the largest public spaces, form a focus for, and act as an exemplar of, the wider cruise ship experience. Thus popular music venues must encapsulate the audience in such a way that the tourist 'gaze',<sup>14</sup> is directed, and performative relationships are controlled.<sup>15</sup>

The physical form of the building, which encapsulates the performance, comprises visual signs about the performance. Tourism has long considered the primacy of sight within tourism,<sup>16</sup> a consideration that has not received as much attention within popular music studies,<sup>17</sup> except for the consideration of gesture within live musical performance.<sup>18</sup> This is, perhaps, somewhat unusual considering that fans go to 'see' a performance rather than to 'hear' one. A general performance space can afford to be slightly confused in its theming, a situation that is near unavoidable in an adapted space. Such eclecticism may, in extreme cases, become a feature of the space. However, in the themed environment that is presented to cruise

ship passengers, the visual information presented in the design and décor of a performance venue need to be uniform and considered as they form an important aspect of the tourism experience of a ship.

The interactivity between audience and performer is a key consideration to cruise lines. In a recent interview, Brian Gilliland, the senior music specialist for Princess Cruises noted:

Our goal with everything that we're doing is to bring in bands that satisfy a pretty common desire amongst the majority of our passengers, that they bring something compelling to the bandstand, [...] it's a combination of the quality of the music they play, their sound, personality on the stage, their look is important, let's face it, you know, that's just part and parcel to being on stage in front of an audience, [...] Whatever we do, we try to vet it as being impactful.<sup>19</sup>

Audience interaction requires the consideration of musicians, but performance spaces need to be designed to enable this as well. For example, early theatres on steamships, such as that on the *SS Normandie* (1935) were spectacular, but also long and narrow with large distances between the audience and the performers compared to modern cruise ship theatres. Rooms for performance on modern cruise ships must be designed with this consideration in mind. High stages and physical distance between the audience and performers are appropriate for some venues, such as the main theatre which involves a more traditional theatrical experience, but in venues which encourage Gilliland's 'impactful' interactivity, spaces must be designed to encourage audience interaction.

Many onboard venues are not designed to achieve acoustic perfection due to the requirements of limited space and maximising guest seating. Ceilings are low (to permit more decks on the ship) and usually parallel-sided due to the design of the ship. They are often constructed on five or six sides of hard surfaces, which create standing audio waves, high noise levels and poor acoustics. When rooms are higher-ceilinged (such as in the main theatre) the numbers of guests that must be accommodated—1,380 in the Opal Theatre of *Oasis of the Seas* and 1,400 in the Encore Theatre of the smaller *Carnival Dream*—surmount the requirements of good acoustics. Instead, these venues rely on modern audio equipment, which is typically highly sophisticated on cruise ships. More so than on land, such installations must be carefully planned to consider the buoyancy of the ship<sup>20</sup> and the lack of technical support and spares while at sea.<sup>21</sup> Such systems overcome the lack of good acoustic design aboard ships.

Alcohol consumption, according to David Stanley, vice president for onboard revenue, is a close second to gaming in the generation of onboard revenue.<sup>22</sup> Kronenburg correctly notes the relationship between bar sales and performance, it "provides important income to support ticket sales."<sup>23</sup> This is logical enough, but this

research found that in the intensely commercial environment of a cruise ship, the mere existence of a bar is a given; what is more pertinent is how the bar is managed and drinks are served. In most venues, drinks are marketed by wandering waiters who take orders and tout drinks. Typically drinks may be ordered and consumed at any time, but within some venues, where formal theatrical performances occur, drinks are not served during the performance. Bar management is somewhat single-minded in their approach to maximising the profitability of their particular venue, and that of the overall ship.

Both Kronenburg and Minor *et al.* discuss the accessibility of a venue (though Minor *et al.* call it ‘parking’). Accessibility in cruise ship terms is about location compared to mass guest movement. Historically, steamships had a ‘Promenade deck’ high in the ship with wide, open passageways from where first- and second-class steamship passengers could stroll and watch the ocean. Modern cruise lines have adapted this name as the main area of passenger congregation in the evenings. On older vessels (such as Carnival’s *Fantasy*-class ships from the 1990s) the placement continues to be high in the ship, but more recent vessels place it lower as this also places the lifeboats, typically arrayed along the Promenade, closer to the water, a significant consideration in an emergency. In the important (for revenue) evenings at sea, the Promenade deck becomes the main attraction for guests and the location of the high-revenue venues. If a venue is not located on the Promenade deck, it needs to have another attraction to draw guests, such as being high in the ship affording a view of the ocean, being near the pools and water attractions, or being the location for dance.

### ***Kronenburg’s Categories on Cruise Ships***

Cruise ships, of necessity, need to offer a broader range of music than land-based venues. An urban performance venue can afford to specialise knowing it will attract an audience from the city’s population. A cruise ship, carrying perhaps 2,300 guests, cannot afford to be niche. Cruise tourists need to find some form of entertainment that encourages them to stay out in the evening and consume the all-important onboard revenue streams of alcohol and gambling services. Thus even small cruise ships offer several types of entertainment and will have multiple venues. Musical entertainment can include genres as diverse as jazz, musical theatre, rock (particularly classic rock originating between the 1960s and 1980s), representations of Caribbean and Latin music, and (occasionally) classical music and the music and dance of the ‘exotic’ ports visited.

In many cases, performance spaces on cruise ships are classified within Kronenburg’s categories. This is not unusual as many venues replicate the purposes and intent of land-based venues. The main theatre of a ship, for example, resembles and recreates a theatre on land. This section discusses Kronenburg’s proposed categories of popular music venues, and briefly discusses examples found onboard cruise ships.

### ***I. Adopted Spaces: The Lido Deck on the MV Regent Navigator***

Adopted spaces, Kronenburg notes, are the most common performance space. What, he asks, “can be easier than just turning up in a city street or a local bar, taking out a guitar and starting to play.”<sup>24</sup> While most performance spaces on cruise ships are made permanent by the installation of a stage area, amplification equipment and electrical outlets, spaces that are customarily used for other purposes are sometimes pushed into service as performance spaces. Such spaces can be categorised as ‘adopted’ spaces.

While the uppermost deck (known as the ‘lido deck’ in North America) often houses a permanent stage alongside the pools, jacuzzis and deck chairs where Caribbean- and South American-themed music is performed, smaller vessels often lack the space for a stage. Such is the case on the MV *Regent Navigator*, a small, high-end cruise ship belonging to luxury brand Regent Seven Seas Cruises. The open area of the small lido accommodates the pool, the Pool Grill and two jacuzzis with no room for a stage. During my tenure on this ship in 2007, regular lunchtime performances by a four-piece band were, however, scheduled here on sea days. Portable musical equipment was set up on the starboard (right-hand) side of the lido and musicians performed accessible jazz for an hour while guests sunbathed, swam or ate and drank. The stage area was designated only by the presence of the instruments and seating was unaltered. Generally, performers were ignored and the music formed a pleasant background to other activities.

This space has some points in common with comparative land-based venues. In many respects it could be said to be similar to a hotel beer garden or other outdoor venue that is temporarily co-opted for the purposes of entertainment. The physical form of this space is entirely open to the elements (which causes acoustic problems) and is most effective on a fine day when all guests are aboard the ship. Performances are rarely scheduled when a cruise ship is in port (and passengers are off the ship), although scheduled performances are rarely cancelled in inclement weather to prevent passenger complaints. The stage area is sheltered against the vagaries of the weather, but is not permanent (nor particularly well delineated) and is, like other space on the deck, used for sunbathing, relaxation and consumption when no performance is scheduled.

However, in two ways, this venue differs from comparative land-based venues. In land-based venues, entertainment often acts as an inducement to attend; however in this space audience interaction is not especially desired. Musical performance is secondary to the other activities undertaken here and forms a background ambiance rather than being the focus of attention. In this respect, this space has more in common with a pianist in a hotel lobby. Secondly, unlike comparative venues on other cruise ships there is no specific bar selling drinks, though these are available from

strolling waiters. On the extreme luxury ships of Regent, Crystal and Silver Sea Cruises, alcoholic beverages are typically included in the expensive ticket price; thus Regent, unlike ‘contemporary’ sector lines such as Carnival and Royal Caribbean, has no reason to push the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

## *II. Adapted Spaces: The Grand Lounge on the RMS Queen Elizabeth 2*

Cunard’s RMS *Queen Elizabeth 2* (1967) went through several structural changes before being retired in 2008. The original plans of the *QE2* had a large public room, called the Double Down Room, located amidships between boat and upper decks. This room, the first-class lounge and ballroom, featured a large circular bandstand at the fore end of the room and a large aft circular staircase that permitted movement between the two decks. However, as fewer passengers crossed the Atlantic onboard the *QE2*, the ship transitioned into a cruising role. In the 1987 refit, the circular staircase was removed and a double staircase was added around the bandstand. In the major 1994 refit, the dance floor was removed and the room was renamed the Grand Lounge, remodelled as a modern cruise ship theatre (see Figure 1).

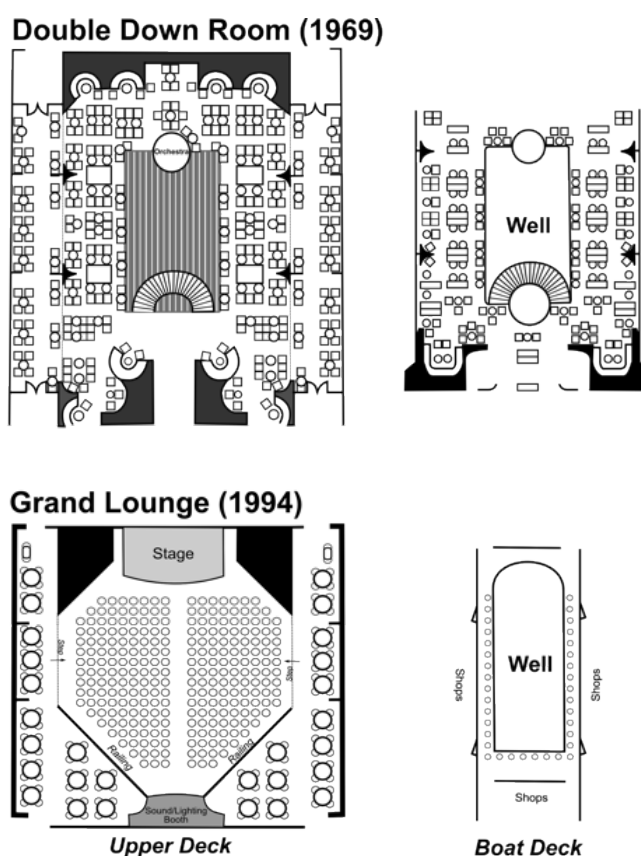


Figure 1. Layout of Double Down Room vs. Grand Lounge on the RMS Queen Elizabeth 2  
(Created by the author from the original deck plans)



The Grand Lounge falls into Kronenburg's category of an adapted space, as it comprises a dedicated performance space physically and culturally adapted from a pre-existing purpose. He notes "the scale of adaptation can vary dramatically from the virtual construction of a new building within a building" to a "minimal reordering of the original space so that its pre-existing character remains."<sup>25</sup> This significant rebuild altered the character and architecture of the space, which brought its own difficulties. Because the room was altered rather than purpose-built, the physical space (long rather than wide) could not be altered, resulting in less audience-performer interactivity. In contrast to the large balcony sections on modern cruise ships, the 'balcony' section of the Grand Lounge (shared with the onboard shops which were closed for evening performances) was no more than a single row of movable chairs (though these chairs were highly prized as, if the act was of low standard, the guest could leave unobtrusively). Further, the space formed a major passageway from the forward section to the aft and could not be closed off for rehearsal and sound checks. While the (somewhat dated) sound installation was adequate to the room, the space was not designed as a theatre and acoustics were notoriously bad. However the space was successful in other ways. As a long-lived and popular cruise ship with a great deal of heritage, the *QE2* generated a high degree of brand loyalty.<sup>26</sup> Despite initial discontent among passengers, the revised venue maintained its purpose as a place of entertainment. Kronenburg admits that "the establishment of a new venue in the same location as an old one might also help provide a ready-made audience accustomed to visiting the site for that purpose,"<sup>27</sup> and this seems to have been the case here.

Because of her popularity among British tourists, the *QE2* could suffer from atypical cruise design and still comprise an effective working cruise ship. The Grand Lounge, like any adapted space, suffered from the necessary adaptations and compromises in its new role, but it remained a viable and working main theatre and the focus of an evening's onboard entertainment.

### ***III. Dedicated Spaces: The Galaxy Lounge on the MV Crystal Symphony***

The medium-size high-end cruise ship, *MV Crystal Symphony*, owned by Crystal Cruises, was launched in 1995. As opposed to the modified *QE2*, *Symphony* was purpose-built as a modern cruise ship with the design and equipment to provide interactive and technologically driven performances. The main theatre, the Galaxy Lounge, is used for production shows and guest entertainers and is a dedicated space (see Figure 2). (Kronenburg notes that "only building new has potential to solve the design brief perfectly."<sup>28</sup>) The circular thrust stage permits a more interactive performance as the distances between the audience and performer are reduced and the audience wraps around more than 180 degrees of the stage. Instead of being in rows like a traditional theatre, guests are seated around small tables, giving them somewhere to rest their drinks. The decor in dark reds and gold create an ambiance of opulence and luxury. The low ceiling limits natural acoustics, but speakers scattered throughout the ceiling prove perfectly adequate to the task and the lack of parallel

surfaces prevent standing audio waves. The room is located at the forward end of Tiffany deck, on which many of the attractions reside. However, because Crystal includes beverages in its ticket price, it does not need to attract guests to lounges, and exiting guests move, not into a lounge or atrium, but past the casino.

While Kronenburg observes that, on land, adapted spaces are more common,<sup>29</sup> on cruise ships the reverse is true. Because a cruise ship is an entirely constructed geography, they have the luxury of building the entire space to their own requirements. Regular dry docks every few years permit them to tweak spaces and modernise decor. Moreover, as the encapsulated space of a cruise ship is the container for a themed touristic experience,<sup>30</sup> constructed spaces permit further refinement and subencapsulation of a performance experience within the wider spaces and encapsulation of the cruise ship experience itself.



*Figure 2. The Galaxy Lounge on the MV Crystal Symphony  
(Image copyright Evan Eggers, used by permission)*

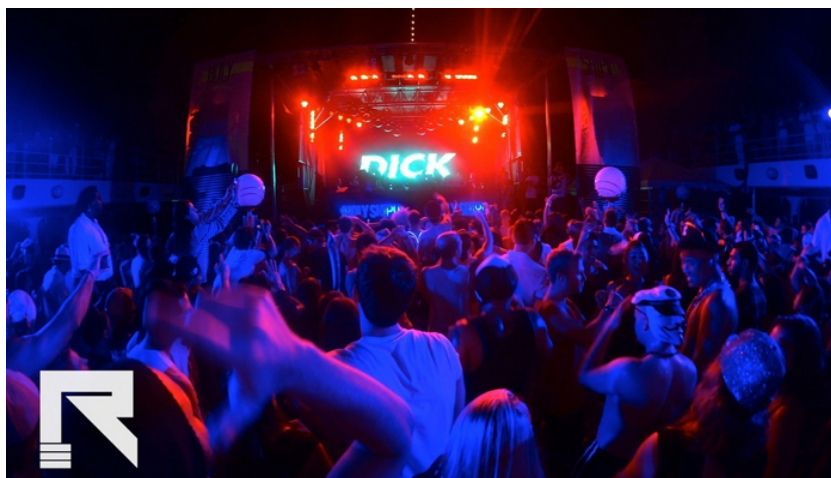
### ***III. Mobile Spaces: Lido Deck during a Chartered Festival***

In a way, a cruise ship can be considered the ultimate mobile performance space as performances occur while the venue is moving from place to place. If, however, the ship is considered a geography unto itself, relatively few truly mobile performances occur. A mobile performance necessitates the adaptation of a general space, such as an

open field, to a performance role, and much of the ship is already dedicated to entertainment.

However the onboard music festival, a little-regarded yet increasingly regular phenomenon, adapts significant portions of the cruise ship to new purposes as mobile performance spaces. This is a cruise themed around a particular genre or performer of music rather than the usual general cruise theming. Cruise ships are attractive to festival organisers with dining, accommodation and technological and logistical infrastructure already in place. From small “jazz cruises” in the 1980s,<sup>31</sup> onboard festivals developed into large events catering to varying genres, notably the alternative music-themed Rock Boat, first organised in 2001 by the members of Florida-based alternative rock band Sister Hazel (now incorporated as Sixthman). A ticket to the fourteenth Rock Boat cruise between February 22 and 26, 2014 costs between USD400 (in a four-berth shared cabin) to USD3,500 (in the owner’s suite) aboard the NCL *Norwegian Pearl*, a ship with a capacity of 2,394 guests. If previous festivals are guides, the event should sell out, and create a substantial profit.<sup>32</sup> Other cruise festivals organised by Sixthman feature such diverse genres as 1970s southern rock, alternative rock, singer-songwriters, country music, up-and-coming bands and the third Kiss cruise.

What cruise ships lack, however, is the open-air venue of the land-based festival. For this reason, many of these festivals transform the lido deck to an open-air stage, becoming the focal point of the cruise rather than, as is usual in regular cruising mode, the main theatre. As can be seen in Figure 3, the EDM-themed “Holy Ship!!!” erects a temporary stage and a mosh pit (by covering the pool). Large lighting and sound systems are rigged, and events take place well into the night. Alcohol is plentiful with these cruises consuming up to three times as much alcohol as an already-alcohol-soaked ‘typical’ cruise.<sup>33</sup> As with many outdoor festivals, the weather cannot be guaranteed, but by scheduling these events in the Caribbean summer, outside the Atlantic hurricane season between June and November, the probability of good weather is increased.



*Figure 3. The Lido Deck during Holy Ship 2013 (Image Copyright Rey Gutierrez, used by permission)*

### *Fabricated Spaces*

Fabricated spaces are a category related to, but essentially outside the model proposed by Kronenburg. Such spaces share some characteristics with constructed spaces in that they are built particularly to enclose a performance space; however they are also themed, semiotically referencing certain qualities that the cruise line has decided to portray. Theming is a characteristic of postmodern and hyperreal tourism<sup>34</sup> including cruise ships<sup>35</sup> and thus the theming of fabricated venues, in this case, is incorporated into the wider theming of the ship. These venues may emulate certain general concepts (such as the nationalism of the America Piano Bar aboard the *Carnival Paradise* or the British-themed Golden Lion Pub aboard Cunard vessels) or, as discussed below, a jazz club and a ballroom. Despite the theming, these venues are patently not the places they represent, but are constructions, falsified venues with a façade of verisimilitude.

Such venues share some characteristics of dedicated spaces in that they are constructed for the purposes of popular music performance, but differ in purpose. As Kronenburg notes, flexibility is built into the core of the dedicated space;<sup>36</sup> however the fabricated space is static and uncompromising in its focus. As venues for musical performance, the two venues considered below may only be used for their themed purpose. To put a string quartet into the themed blues club on *Norwegian Epic*, or a rock band into the Queen's Room is to perform counter to the semiotics of structure and décor and is confusing for guests.

#### *I. Fat Cats Jazz and Blues Club on MV Norwegian Epic*

The MV *Norwegian Epic* (2010) is a large cruise ship operated by Norwegian Cruise Line. Among its many venues is a space called Fat Cat's Jazz and Blues Club. Fat Cats fabricates and replicates an 'authentic' jazz club by the physical structure of the club, by signs for 'authentic' jazz performance and by the performers who play here. The venue is approached through a facade of brick columns and walls atop a concrete floor, such as one might find in a gritty urban jazz club, but which is incongruous and somewhat shocking in a luxurious and consistently carpeted cruise ship. The walls of the entrance are plastered with recreations of historical posters advertising performances by jazz musicians such as Cab Calloway, Dizzy Gillespie and Ella Fitzgerald. They are posted over each other in a purposefully semi-random fashion and some of them are torn as if attempts have been made to remove them. Once inside, the room is ill lit with red walls covered with pictures of jazz and blues artists. The regular featured performer is "Slam" Allen's band, a New York-based guitarist and vocalist, leading a four-piece blues band that also features drums, bass and Hammond organ.

In many ways, this is a traditional cruise ship performance space. It has a small stage featuring highly sophisticated acoustic and lighting systems. However, the stage

is low and tables are relatively close, permitting interaction between performers and guests. A bar service operates during performances. It is located in a high-traffic area toward the aft of the Deck 6 (which also contains many other entertainments) ensuring a constant flow of guests past the venue.

As a jazz performance venue, such a club never existed; instead Fat Cats Jazz and Blues Club is an idealised version of urban jazz clubs around the world. The use of torn and overlaid posters advertising significant performers and prominently displayed at the front of the venue as if they performed there contributes to the display of a fabricated ‘authenticity.’ Neither brick nor concrete is a building material for cruise ships. In point of fact, this is an entirely fabricated venue, but presented as better than reality. There is no cover charge in this space. A range of jazz and blues royalty have (apparently) performed there, as demonstrated by the photos around the room and the posters on the outside façade (some so recently that the posters are yet to be removed). More than a real jazz club, Fat Cats forms an idealised jazz club, dimly lit and built of gritty urban building materials of brick and concrete.



*Fig. 4: The entrance to Fat Cats Jazz and Blues Club on the MV Norwegian Epic  
(Image copyright Sue L. Chan, used by permission)*

## II. *The Queen's Room on RMS Queen Mary 2*

The Queen's Room, a ballroom dance space on the large ocean liner RMS *Queen Mary 2* (2004), is quite different. The Queen's Room is located at the stern of the ship on Deck 3 some distance from the other entertainment. Consequently, this venue serves as a destination in itself rather than as a 'drop in' space. Once it is entered, the traditionally low cruise-ship ceilings open up a large beautiful double-height room the width of the ship with a large traditional band shell with a tuxedoed seven-piece swing band and singer playing traditional dance music. There is a large dance floor where couples dance foxtrots, rhumbas, and quicksteps, purportedly as would have occurred on cruise ships of yesteryear. The band—called the Queen's Room Orchestra—is comprised of a cut-down big band using four horns and a singer that plays traditional jazz-based dance arrangements of popular songs from the 1930s and 1940s. Unlike a traditional band and despite the inclusion of the band shell, the Queen's Room Orchestra is amplified through speakers scattered around the entire ballroom. A typical evening will proceed in four sets performing music of formal ballroom dance. Thus a foxtrot will be followed by a rumba, then a standard waltz and a *cha-cha-cha*. Once or twice a set, the singer will ascend the stage and perform a single song. Interaction between guests in such rooms is unique and strong as the guests form the focus of the non-participants' attention and the band plays a supporting role; however the interaction between the band and the dancers is very strong. A band that does not perform well may be the source of direct or indirect complaints. The line between audience and performer is somewhat hazy, as many guests may become performers for a while then reassume their seats. Because of this, bar service is continuous.

For all its plausibility, this ballroom is as much a fabrication as Fat Cats Jazz and Blues Club. The first purpose-build ballroom was on the Hamburg-America Line's SS *Imperator*<sup>37</sup> built in 1912 and these became a standard feature on many subsequent cruise ships. At a time when steamships were vying with each other for the most luxurious appointments, these rooms were often compared to the ballrooms of large hotels. As the twentieth-century wore on, ballroom dancing became fixed in maritime practice and in popular imagination assisted by depictions in popular culture such as in the movie *An Affair to Remember* (1957) or the television series *The Love Boat* (1977-1987). Long after hotel ballrooms had ceased to house ballroom dancing, becoming, instead, wedding venues and conference centres, steamships and later cruise ships continued to provide orchestras and venues for dancing. These later ballrooms, rather than signifying land-based dancing, came to signify the interwar and post-war 'golden age' of shipping.

The Queen's Room functionally and semiotically references past ballrooms on ships, but it is a facade of such venues rather than the real thing. Ballroom dancing has been declining on cruise ships for many years to the point where small jazz bands and the onboard showband fill the niche of dance band on the majority of ships.

Cunard Line is now the only line that consistently schedules ballroom dancing, and attracts a dedicated niche market for that reason. The large band dresses formally, often in tuxedo suits and plays dance music on instruments consistent with the era. The room is opulent and lavishly decorated with a chandelier and a parquetted dance floor, semiotically referencing the opulence and décor of former ships. Further, the large dance floor makes the room difficult to adapt to other purposes.



*Fig. 5: The Queen's Room on the RMS Queen Mary 2  
(Image Copyright David Pepper, used by permission)*

### ***Theorisation***

The geography associated with postmodern tourism is fundamentally different from urban geographies, the topic of Kronenburg's and Minor *et al.*'s studies. Land-based venues exist to provide a space of interaction between popular music performers and audiences and fit neatly into Kronenburg's categories. This is not to say that the proposed fabricated venues cannot exist in this environment. Within an urban environment, a single venture, such as a 'Hard Rock Cafe' or a 'Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville Restaurant,' can be themed and provide an 'experience.' However, postmodern tourism landscapes such as cruise ships or theme parks, are physically larger, culturally more constructed and may reference a single overarching theme or multiple interconnected themes.

Fabricated spaces share some aspects of Kronenburg's categories. Like dedicated spaces, they are constructed to encapsulate a musical experience. However, the theming of shipboard dedicated spaces is an extension of the ship-wide theming, whereas that in the fabricated space is self-contained. Further, the theming of these spaces is specific and musical. Fat Cats is a haven for jazz and blues in a cruise experience that contains many different musical styles. The large dance floor, bandstand and band shell in the Queen's Room clearly identifies the music that is therein performed. In contrast, Kronenburg's dedicated spaces are designed to be flexible enough to allow adaptation to other genres and purposes.<sup>38</sup> Because of the genre-specific physical and semiotic design of these rooms, unlike Kronenburg's dedicated spaces, they are difficult to adapt to either different genres or different purposes.

These fabricated venues are containers for an experience and thus theming.<sup>39</sup> Theming, in this sense, involves the manipulation of signs to create a fabricated reality different from the actual reality. These can include (but are not limited to) visual signs (such as the façade of Fat Cats, the decor, the physical appearance of the instruments that are used, the costume that is worn by performers), musical signs (such as the music performed) or textual signs (such as the "jazz" name of Fat Cats Jazz and Blues Club, or the invocation of royalty as an indicator of status in the Queen's Room). By manipulation of signs, the process of semiosis is subverted and a venue created that does not exist (in the sense of Kronenburg's thesis), but which is fabricated, created out of cultural smoke and mirrors.

Fabricated venues are manipulated to appear on the surface to be authentic—in the words of Umberto Eco, to be the "ultimate fake."<sup>40</sup> The façade of Fat Cats is real concrete and brick. The stage of the Queen's Room has a real band shell, a beautiful dance floor, and a real band performing dance music. However it is clear that these venues are, actually, inauthentic. Fat Cats is not in an urban environment and the same performers—not the ones on the posters—appear nightly. The Queen's Room is not aboard a luxury liner in the 1930s, but a highly sophisticated and technologically advanced vessel of the early twenty-first century. Even the band shell has a light show projected onto it, a technology not available at this level of sophistication in the 1930s. Postmodern tourists engage with such fabricated spaces in a 'game'; as Eco describes it "the boundaries between game and illusion are blurred, the art museum is contaminated by the freak show, and falsehood is enjoyed in a situation of 'fullness', of *horror vacui*."<sup>41</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Kronenburg's categories are absolutely correct and useful for many popular music venues that typically occur in an urban cityscape. However, when the purpose and design of a popular music performance space is fabricated either within an urban or a fabricated geography, new rules and models apply. The semiotic signals



incorporated into the actual structure of the venue are themed and more strongly reinforced than in Kronenburg's venues. The range of music performed is narrowed, and the flexibility of the space reduced. While these venues bear a surface similarity to Kronenburg's dedicated space, the primacy of the overt theming, the architectural design and the limitation of structural flexibility and genre construct new models and methods for encapsulating a popular musical performance.

However, the fabricated landscapes of postmodern tourism are not limited to these constructed spaces. As a fabricated performance venue can exist within an urban environment, so too the general performance spaces of the urban environment can impinge upon the constructed geographies of postmodern tourism. Kronenburg's typology is thus still relevant and significant in these geographies. The nature and design of hyperreal and themed performance venues, whether touristic or not, or cruise- or land-bound, is fertile ground for further research.

Given that "the cultural sanction of the postmodern tourist is that of a 'playful search for enjoyment' or an 'aesthetic enjoyment of surfaces',"<sup>42</sup> the postmodern cruise ship musical experiences and the venues in which they exist are themed to appear playfully 'authentic.' Although audiences understand that the cruise ship musical experiences are fabricated, they engage with them anyway, negotiating authenticity (as Knudsen and Waade<sup>43</sup> put it) rather than outright accepting or rejecting it.

With the increase of interest in hyperreal tourism—as demonstrated by the numbers of visitors to hyperreal 'destinations' such as cruise ships<sup>44</sup> and Disneyland<sup>45</sup>—fabricated performance spaces are increasing in number. An understanding of their function and method of implementation is, therefore, significant and of interest. An increase of knowledge and consideration of these venues will result in better implementation and efficiency, a greater 'experience' of the music and ultimately better integration within the music and tourism industries.

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<sup>4</sup> Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnis-Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Campus Vlg., 1992); B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011).

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