

shall be rendered visible. The first sub-chapter, which focusses on musical performances of the self and their relation to – and influence on – vernacular repertoires and communal participation, is followed by an in-depth examination of the modular conception and constitution of music-related channels and the strategies of self-optimisation, communication, and collaboration that go along with becoming a popular music communicator or entertainer on YouTube. The final sub-chapter engages with the interactive relations between “role-setters” and “role-followers” in collaborative musical formats – and with the multidirectional contagions and multisocial dynamics initiated by aspirational strategies of engaging the community in processes of musical co-creativity.

The recognisable and shared symbolic repertoires inscribed into the media architecture as well as into cultural content on the platform encourage producers to refer to and partake in communally mediated forms of everyday communication and aesthetic practices. Within the domain of permanent rationalisation that is YouTube, musical labourers are interpellated as subjected as well as free and responsible subjects. It is against this backdrop that the multifaceted and multidirectional modal relations between aspirational producers, communities, media artefacts, and channel contents shall be examined – with the aim of going beyond conceptualisations of one-directional influencer-audience relations as well as binary divides between producers and audiences, “active” and “passive” users, and amateurs and professionals.

5.1 Musical Performance of the Self in Aspirational Channel Concepts

As social recognition on YouTube is primarily generated through bodily self-display, the faces and bodies of content creators serve as central components in aspirational musical performances. While, in this context, the notion of a “platform vernacular” accounts for the communally and technologically mediated communicative tools and genres producers rely on, it can only serve as a conceptual vantage point regarding the concrete musical and performative means of self-representation and self-celebrification. Thus, the following exemplary analyses of musical performances Matt Mulholland and Felix Kjellberg (@PewDiePie) focus in detail on aspirational strategies of conceptualising musical performances of the self in relation to musical and discursive vernacular enunciations on the platform. Both YouTubers take up site-specific commu-

nicative artefacts, cues, objects, and topics that remediate vernacular creativity, thereby pointing to and reflecting on the “home-born” qualities, that is, the qualities that constitute and inform our YouTube-situated media experience. Mulholland’s content is focussed on showcasing his cultural capital as a singer and performer in one-man a cappella and live-looping performances, thereby making use of the meta-referential potentials and auto-mediacies of the technical apparatus in order to create differences to traditional stagings of musical ingenuity and virtuosity. Kjellberg’s musical content, on the other hand, serves as a vehicle for self-narration within a wider discursive frame shaped by his *communicative* affective labour and the ongoing produsage within his community. Both examples highlight the content creators’ need to perform their authenticity and ordinariness – both core features of self-celebrification on the platform. By focussing on aesthetic conventions within vernacular musical performances as well as on the interrelations between musical enunciation and (niche-mediated) vernacular discourse, my observations aim at shedding light on musical strategies of self-reference and self-narration – and their intrinsic dialectical relation to the commercial framework of YouTube and social media, mainstream media environments, and traditional forms of authorship.

Auto-Mediacy and Self-Reflective Aesthetics

Practices of sampling, remix, and parodic re-enactment have been widely romanticised as inherently subversive techniques of re-appropriation. There are good reasons for this: they tend to irritate traditional concepts of authorship, thereby potentially aiming at re-conceptualising or deconstructing notions of authenticity. On an almost rhetorical or narrative level, technical reproduction and referential performances can create off-centred media texts while rendering their non-linear structures perceptible and creating operational moments of difference. However, in addition to making use of these cultural techniques and their effects, aspirational musical performances of the self on YouTube provide a high dose of indexicality in their display and representation of authorial bodies. Here, in various ways, the apparatus of reproduction appears to be tactically embraced and performatively inscribed into an overall aesthetic of transparency in order to create a sense of “authentic inauthenticity” and (self-)affection. It seems that performing “the inscription of mediatization within the im-mediate,” as Phil Auslander put it, highlights the video’s own mediacy – and the contributors’ awareness of their mediated self-performance as both a self-driven *and* subjected form of media

(re-)composition. Such a self-reflexive aesthetic can be found on the YouTube channel of Matt Mulholland: Since his first upload in 2008, Mulholland has garnered more than 200.000 subscriptions with his often comedic takes on popular songs. At first, his channel primarily featured a cappella multitrack renditions of pop songs, at a time when the format emerged on the platform and, due to the low-threshold means of creation in terms of the easy access to affordable home recording equipment, quickly became a popular form of musical performance on YouTube. The one-person vocal ensembles formed by Mulholland are displayed in split-screen videos, each panel featuring him singing a different voice of his arrangements. Visually, his early renditions are characterised by an aesthetic randomness with regard to the overall set design (or the lack thereof). In his first YouTube video, a multitrack cover of Beyoncé's "If I were a Boy," Mulholland performs against a rather austere backdrop, consisting of a white wall, an empty shelf, and a doorframe. Interestingly, this "set" both signalises a certain realness in its apparent randomness and, at the same time, refers to the original video clip, in which Beyoncé can be seen singing in front of a white wall.⁷ Mulholland soon went beyond the unembellished aesthetic of his first uploads and began to stage his performance personas more carefully by incorporating moments of self-ironic overacting, dressing up in costumes, and including unambiguous references to iconic original videos. In his multitrack cover of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody,"⁸ for instance, Mulholland pays homage to the original music video by re-enacting the iconic opening shot of the song's a cappella intro. Like in the original video, the first thing to be seen are silhouettes which, when the light fades up, turn out to be four layered recordings of Mulholland, arranged in the same diamond shape as the four Queen members in the original shot. In analogy to the original opening sequence, the video features cross-fades from the a cappella formation into close-ups of Mulholland (instead of Freddie Mercury). When the instruments chime in, the video shifts to a split-screen intraface,

7 According to Kathrin Peters and Andrea Seier, random "bedroom aesthetics" in (self-)referential YouTube performances create a contrast to the referenced original videos and, in their (performed) lack of self-consciousness, make "the video's very mediacy the center of attention." See Kathrin Peters and Andrea Seier, "Homedance: Mediacy and Aesthetics of the Self on YouTube," in *The YouTube Reader*, eds. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009), 193.

8 @Matt Mulholland, "Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen | A Cappella Multitrack by Matt Mulholland," February 14, 2011, YouTube video, 5:52, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fllMflQskE>.

each screen showing Mulholland singing one vocal or instrumental part (piano, bass guitar, electric guitar, and drums) while playing “air versions” of the imitated instruments. While each of his performance personas are dressed differently, his guitar solo performance is particularly flashy: wearing a silk shirt, a gold chain, sunglasses, and a red bandana, Mulholland plays the air guitar to Brian May’s solo while being visually and musically accompanied by his alter egos (see Figure 26). During the song’s famous pseudo-operatic section with its choral call-and-response moments, three one-man vocal ensembles – dressed in differently coloured shirts – compete against each other (“Bismillah!” – “We will not let you go” – “Let me go!”) before the “band” takes the stage again for the ensuing hard rock part and the outro.

In his multitrack cover videos, Matt Mulholland aims at creating productive differences to the referenced cultural objects by way of re-enactment and remediation. The performative use of split-screens for homemade music performances represents an auto-medial technology of the self that emerged within the platform’s overall socio-medial dispositive. Furthermore, Mulholland’s hyper-expressive renditions are paradigmatic for the aspiring YouTuber’s need to contrast the performance of one’s own talents – in this case an impressive vocal range and variability – with meta-reference and self-irony. As fundamental modes of vernacular self-representation, the implicit meta-awareness of the performed self and its relation to the technical apparatus creates a distance to the performed persona and, at the same time, suggests a certain proximity to the YouTube community by evoking attributions of transparency and sincerity.⁹ In rendering the overall performance detectable as a façade, contributors pro-actively counteract any notions of arrogance that could arise within the YouTube community with regard to virtuosic and self-affective musical performances. However, in their oscillating motion between (phallic) presumption and ironic attitude, Mulholland’s videos exemplify how the indexical overdose of aspirational self-affective performance and the contributor’s necessity to subvert traditional concepts of authorship and virtuosity create a constant field of tension. Despite the meta-referential mode of self-representation, comparisons to traditional stagings of musical

9 Of course, these tactical signalisations are not exclusive to communication in social media. For example, Paddy Scannell described sincerity as “one defining characteristic of any person appearing in the public realm who lays claim to ordinariness. It is how you prove you are like the rest of us.” See Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 74.

ingenuity suggest themselves, as Mulholland still aims to prove himself as a creative and virtuosic musician.

Figure 26: Matt Mulholland playing an air guitar solo and accompanying himself. Still from Mulholland's a cappella multitrack cover of "Bohemian Rhapsody" (2011).



Besides his multitrack videos, other popular video formats on his channel add to this impression, as they bring attention to different facets of his virtuosic self-staging. For instance, in his live looping cover versions, Mulholland increases the experience of liveness by letting the disparity between “live situation” and “recording” collapse. In these videos, the loop pedal is tactically brought into the picture as the source of the overall sonic outcome. At the same time, Mulholland’s body itself appears as a centred authorial body: he records his own tracks in real time with multiple instruments and his voice, thereby accomplishing by himself what only a band would normally accomplish. Generally, in live looping performances, the human actor becomes a potent author beyond considerations of the potentially covered original tracks. By “revealing” the technical apparatus behind the musical outcome, the “real” person and its “real skill” are highlighted, as the sonic outcome and the musical structuring are transparently linked to the performer’s hands, feet, and mouth. The re-centralising and re-humanising aspects of live looping evoke strong attributions of originality and realness, which is complemented by the minimalist “living room aesthetic” of Mulholland’s sets.

On a macro level, these performances are integrated in the overall modular composition of his channel. While his live looping videos are (mostly) serious stagings of musical skill, other uploads aim at counteracting the notion of self-affection by way of pointedly profane, self-ironic, and anti-virtuosic musical performances. In his “Recorder by Candlelight” cover series, for instance, Mulholland performs tunes such as “My Heart Will Go On” or “Silent Night” on recorder, thereby posing and playing against the backdrop of idyllic natural sceneries, at “romantic” candlelight, or in his bathtub.¹⁰ The cacophonic recorder playing, the obvious playback in the videos, and his general overacting create a strong juxtaposition to the instrumental backing tracks and any connotations with the original songs. Unsurprisingly, his recorder cover of “My Heart Will Go On” became a viral video, garnering more than 20 million likes and leading to an actual YouTube trend of recording “terrible” recorder covers with humorous intent.¹¹ Thus, even the most anti-virtuosic musical performances are integral elements of YouTube-adaptive self-staging, which tactically navigates a wide range of conflicting (self-)attributions. Mulholland’s channel paradigmatically highlights how aspirational musical performances of the self on the platform are composed of juxtaposing moments of sincerity and absurdity, skilfulness and failure, self-affection and self-deprecation. In a way, the successful balancing of these moments, driven by the incentive to attain authenticating content showcasing the creator’s idiosyncratic musicality and, at the same time, to introduce or develop remix concepts with a high imitation-suggestibility, could be considered the “real,” superordinate virtuosic practice native to aspirational musical (co-)creation in social media.

10 @Matt Mulholland, “My Heart Will Go On – Recorder By Candlelight by Matt Mulholland,” November 28, 2009, YouTube video, 4:16, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2WH8mHJnhM>; @Matt Mulholland, “Silent Night – Recorder By Candlelight by Matt Mulholland,” December 8, 2011, YouTube video, 4:08, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Al_y-v7qcjg.

11 For example, a dilettantish recorder performance of the 20th Century Fox Fanfare garnered around 7 million views since its upload in 2013. See @20th Century Flute, “20th Century Fox Flute (ORIGINAL),” January 9, 2013, YouTube video, 0:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCPj4JPbKtA>. Moreover, since 2015, the channel @shittyflute regularly uploads cacophonic recorder covers. See @shittyflute, YouTube channel, joined January 24, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHMmLi8z1HbyhTEvfBgXpyg>.

Figure 27: Matt Mulholland playing recorder in his bathtub. Still from the video “*Silent Night – Recorder by Candlelight by Matt Mulholland*” (2011).



Musical Performance and Community-Adaptive Self-Narration

Musical performances on aspirational channels may serve as vehicles of enabling and reinforcing a sense of belonging to an in-group that is moderated and controlled by the affective labour of the content creator, who may even take on the role as a community’s “tribal chief.” Particularly on channels where non-musical self-narration plays a central role, these musical performances form a *complementary* part to the YouTuber’s overall communicative strategy of fostering a sense of inclusion and communal identity. The channel of Felix Kjellberg alias @PewDiePie shall serve as an example in this context: Since 2010, Swedish YouTuber Felix Kjellberg has uploaded Let’s Play videos to his channel. He quickly rose to Internet fame as one of the most influential Let’s Players on the platform. His recognisability and success on the platform is arguably linked to his performance of exaggerated emotions, which helped him establish his brand as YouTube’s “classroom clown.” While, in the beginning, Kjellberg’s channel was focussed on the display of emotional reactions to his own playing, he soon transferred his strategy of excessive emoting to other objects and areas of entertainment, such as his format “LWIA,” in which he reacts to memes from his community, or his “Pew News,” a mock newscast dealing with current social media-related topics. In awareness of his predominantly young male (and white) audience, Kjellberg utilises the word “bro” to address his fans,

jokingly referring to them as his “9-Year-Old Army.” Overall, his affective labour is shaped by the performative integration of masculine talking points which, as an “ideological product,” materialise in his rhetorical repertoire, the conceptual framing of his videos, and the contributions by his community in the form of comments and memes. Thereby, many of his uploads deliberately exploit the dilemma of ubiquitous irony in vernacular social media interaction, camouflaging transgressive and otherwise unacceptable utterances under the veil of irony in order to cater to online attention markets and take on the role of an “irreverently authentic” community leader. For instance, for a “prank” video in 2017, Kjellberg paid two Indian men on the platform Fiverr to hold up a sign with the text “Death to All Jews,” filming his own shocked reaction and expression of disbelief – including an apology – in the face of the unlikely realisation of his idea.¹² By provoking situations like this, Kjellberg attains the material to which he can react with the display of “authentic” emotions. The fact that this concrete video has been taken down and Kjellberg faced an initial economic backlash only reinforced his standing as an “authentic” content creator within his community, where his disruptions represent and enable articulations of supposedly “subaltern” white and male identity within the Internet vernacular. While his ironic – and often transgressive – performances in opposition to mainstream media narratives and corporate identity policies let him gain influence far beyond his original target group of video game fans on YouTube, Kjellberg keeps being conceived of as a “home-born” DIY YouTuber. By now, his channel has garnered more than 110 million subscriptions and even held the position for being the most-subscribed channel on the platform between 2013 and 2019. Moreover, Kjellberg has the highest yearly income of all YouTubers in terms of ad revenue, affiliate marketing, merchandise sales, video sponsorships, live streaming contracts, etc. His channel can be considered an alternative media empire based on the performative cultivation of affects satisfying the community’s desires for an online community driven by *laissez-faire* and anti-corporate ideals linked to Internet-based vernacular communication.

Early on, Kjellberg recognised the influence of musical performance as a remediating agent of community-oriented vernacular enunciation. He thereby often relies on the free labour of his community, who he encourages to remix and “songify” speech patterns taken from his vlogs and Let’s Play

12 A reupload of the episode can be found here: @Allnickstaken, “PewDiePie – Death to All Jews full episode (Reupload),” March 22, 2019, YouTube video, 13:18, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il-QpNTbm2E>.

videos – which provides new material for compilations and reaction videos on his channel.¹³ Moreover, he uploads music videos featuring the compositions of fellow music YouTubers such as Joel Berghult (@RoomieOfficial) or the Gregory Brothers (@schmoyoho), thematising his private life, musicalising inside jokes from his videos, or directly addressing and invoking a community spirit.¹⁴ However, his most impactful music video – and the most-viewed video on his channel with over 300 million views – is a diss track directed at the YouTube channel of the Indian music label T-Series, featuring a rap performance by Kjellberg.¹⁵ The video with the title “bitch lasagna” came out in October 2018, at a time when @T-Series – which features Bollywood soundtracks, movies, and Indian pop music – was about to overtake @PewDiePie as the most-subscribed channel on the platform. His music video served as a catalyser for a hyper-medialised rivalry between the two channels that lasted until April 28, 2019, when Kjellberg called an end to the competition with T-Series holding a considerable lead in subscriptions. The instrumental track of the song, which was produced by Dutch YouTuber @Party In Backyard, is carried by a trap beat and a harmonic ostinato (F#m – A – D – C#m – E) in the synth lead and synth bass. Lyrically, Kjellberg’s rapping includes the disparaging uptake of Indian stereotypes as a way of establishing a contrast between the external “threat” of T-Series and the @PewDiePie community. For instance, the term “bitch lasagna” and lines like “bobs or vegana, whichever will it be?” refer to viral Facebook messenger screenshots of sexually explicit messages written by Indian men, which have been uploaded to the subreddit /r/IndianPeopleFacebook and inspired countless meta-memetic remixes.¹⁶ Using vulgar language, Kjellberg goes on to highlight the worldwide reach and communal spirit of his “9-Year-Old Army” against the backdrop of India’s high population, which he identifies as the main audience of the content featured on T-Series’ YouTube channel: “You got a fifth of the population in your nation

13 See, for example, @PewDiePie, “The Pewdiepie Song(s),” July 21, 2017, YouTube video, 13:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1d7hrfc7wM_

14 See @PewDiePie, “His Name Is Pewdiepie – Extended Version (By Roomie),” May 11, 2014, YouTube video, 3:19, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmxCR4_abd4;@PewDiePie, “Jabba the Hutt \(PewDiePie Song\) by Schmoyoho,” September 14, 2013, YouTube video, 2:11, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxw3C5HJ2XU.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmxCR4_abd4;@PewDiePie,%20Jabba%20the%20Hutt%20(PewDiePie%20Song)%20by%20Schmoyoho,%20September%2014,%202013)

15 @PewDiePie, “bitch lasagna,” October 5, 2018, YouTube video, 2:14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Dh-RL_uN4.

16 See “Bobs and Vegana,” Know Your Meme, accessed 30 March 2023, <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/bobs-and-vegana>.

// But I got nine-year-olds of worlds so hold your defecation.” At times, the racist undertones in his lyrics are expressed more overtly, for example when Kjellberg refers to himself as a “blue-eyed white dragon while you’re just dark magician,” or when he ridicules the Hindi language (“Motu Patlu, what the fuck is that even supposed to mean? // Your language sounds like it came from a mumble rap community”). The anti-Indian theme of the lyrics establishes T-Series as an external alien entity and helps solidify an in-group identity. At the same time, it connects to an overall “David versus Goliath” narrative: On the one side, there is @PewDiePie and his community, representing the platform and its ideal of vernacular creativity and communality. The account of T-Series, on the other hand, serves as an external corporate threat to the ideal of “broadcasting yourself.”

Figure 28: Still from Felix Kjellberg’s music video for his diss track “bitch lasagna” (2018).



As soon as the diss track was released, a surge of communal produsage and activism ensued. Using the viral slogan, “Subscribe to PewDiePie,” prominent YouTubers announced their support for Kjellberg, organised pro-PewDiePie flashmobs, and bought billboards;¹⁷ hackers even attacked devices like printers and smart TVs as well as websites of newspapers and social media accounts

17 See @MrBeast, “I Bought Every Billboard In My City For This,” October 26, 2018, YouTube video, 15:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZNxvnQvoh4>.

of politicians in order to spread their message and encourage YouTube users to subscribe to @PewDiePie.¹⁸ In this subscription battle, the composition of “bitch lasagna” played a central role, spawning countless cover versions, remixes, and instrumental tutorials of the track – and inspiring conceptual performances in support of Kjellberg’s channel: Joe Jenkins, whose channel is based on public piano performances of viral songs (and the reactions of passers-by), created a live stream with the self-explanatory title “Playing B**** LASAGNA in a mall until someone asks me to stop in order to save PewDiePie.”¹⁹ @Davie504 even went as far as to travel to India in order to perform “bitch lasagna” on bass guitar in front of the T-Series headquarters.²⁰ The volume of contributions encouraged individual contributors to perform visibility labour by further imitating, reproducing, and re-interpreting the track, which, by 2019, had become the main signifier for a communally perceived battle for the “real” YouTube. Contributions by aspirational labourers aiming to achieve recognition and exposure through a shout-out in a @PewDiePie video – and Kjellberg’s own aspirations of gainfully harvesting the ongoing stream of contributions – focus on the performative invocation of a “YouTube we,” which serves as a mutually circulated emotional product. Kjellberg’s channel functions as a hub for the “market-based” actions of aspirational produsage based on the exchange value of the “subscribe to PewDiePie” tag and its musical signifier “bitch lasagna.” Thereby, his strategic directing of affective flows profits from the nervous attention economy within the systemic constraints of communicative capitalism, as his “ironic” integration of anti-Indian stereotypes exemplifies. In the face of criticism by mainstream media, Kjellberg’s appeal and brand as a “common man” only rose within and beyond his community, as he and his public campaign against T-Series came to epitomise the general anti-elitist attitude and edginess of certain white Internet vernaculars (particularly those influenced by North-American media

18 See Thomas Brewster, “A Hacker Forced 50,000 Printers To Spread PewDiePie Propaganda – And the Problem Is Much Bigger Than You Know,” *Forbes*, December 3, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/thomasbrewster/2018/12/03/a-hacker-forced-50000-printers-to-spread-pewdiepie-propaganda-and-the-problem-is-much-bigger-than-you-know/?sh=5f2fbb173819>.

19 @Joe Jenkins, “Playing B**** LASAGNA in a mall until someone asks me to stop in order to save PewDiePie,” December 7, 2018, YouTube live stream, 1:27:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DibSoXZGaEg>.

20 @Davie504, “I went to INDIA at T-Series HQ just to play this song...,” January 20, 2019, YouTube video, 2:12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KprZFp9Aokc>.

environments). His example goes to show that, in the current (post-)ironic cyberscape of vernacular communication, even an apparent compatibility with right-wing populist agitation can be discursively and economically gainful and, depending on the communal framework and self-understanding, enable effective self-narrations of vernacularity.

*Figure 29: Still from @Joe Jenkin's video "Playing B**** LASAGNA in a mall until someone asks me to stop in order to save PewDiePie" (2018), including chat messages from the live stream.*



Whereas on Mulholland's channel, the moment of self-reflection and self-positioning as an authentic actor is conveyed by his musical performances, which aim at letting the apparatus of technical reproduction and the charged relationship between performances of virtuosity and ordinariness appear in a meta-referential manner, Kjellberg's musical enunciations are embedded within a broader communicative strategy of self-narration and self-branding. In awareness of his role as a communal "tribal chief," which is based on the generation of proximity and authenticating reactions to his community's input, Kjellberg functionalises musical compositions on his channel as signifiers for communal belonging, thereby anticipating and encouraging the passing on of its affective charge in forms of creative relay. His channel relies on the fostering and harvesting of free and aspirational labour carried out by his community and fellow YouTube micro-celebrities. However different, both examples highlight the necessity for aspirational content creators to performatively evoke a vernacular in contrast to communally imagined institutionalised forms of self-representation and self-branding. In contrast to a

conventional status of mainstream celebrity that is based on spatial distance to the audience, temporal scarcity of appearances, and extraordinary performances, Mulholland and Kjellberg become objects of consumption-oriented demands by generating and capitalising on authenticating sensual stimuli. Thereby, the inner juxtapositions and paradoxes of self-entrepreneurial vernacular performance become evident on different levels: In Mulholland's musical performances, musical skilfulness and virtuosity is counterbalanced by audio-visual displays of randomness, transparency, profanity, or failure in order to evoke a "home-born" YouTube aesthetic. Kjellberg's pro-active strategy of "producing produsage," on the other hand, exemplifies how a channel can turn into a highly impactful, commercially oriented intermediary on the platform – which functions as an intermediary itself – and still enable the content creator's successful self-positioning as an ambassador and face of a communally shared fantasy of heterarchical participation.²¹ Both cases highlight the impact of musical performance as a remediating agent for vernacular creativity and self-representation in the context of aspirational channel concepts. Adaptive to technological settings, guided by narrative strategies of self-celebrification, and situated within the overall collaborative environment

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- 21 It seems that anti-corporatist ideals function as the ultimate demarcation for vernacular enunciations on the platform, enabling dialectical vernacular enunciations: Felix Kjellberg, for instance, could perform his white "subaltern" identity and DIY ethos as a "private" uploader in contrast to the corporate "threat" of T-Series. Moreover, corporate uptake of media artefacts and practices associated with Internet culture are often met with resistance, as the track "Ocean to Ocean" by Pitbull ft. Rhea exemplifies: The song, which is part of the official soundtrack to the 2018 superhero movie *Aqua Man* (Warner Bros. Pictures), can be described as a remix of Toto's "Africa" with some added rap lines. This low-effort attempt at capitalising on Internet and meme culture was not well received, as the like-dislike ratio for the YouTube video suggests. The reason for the rejection of the song on the platform has arguably to do with the position of the uploader, as corporate territorialisations of vernacular Internet phenomena – and thus: of co-creative practices which evoke ideals of non-hierarchical content creation and self-expression – necessarily represent an unconcealable breach with fantasies of abundance and equivalent participation at the base of vernacular content creation on YouTube and other platforms. See @WaterTower Music, "Aqua-man Official Soundtrack | Ocean To Ocean – Pitbull feat. Rhea | WaterTower," December 14, 2018, YouTube video, 2:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhfnTsoRZLs>. Before YouTube removed the public dislike count on videos in November 2021, the video had like-dislike ratio of approximately 55.000 to 139.000 (November 2, 2021). See *ibid.*, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20211102180707/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhfnTsoRZLs>.