

## Welcome to Week 7

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- Start thinking about Paper 2
- Paper 2 is due Mar 11 (one week before the end of Unit 2).

### Serious Moonlight

- "Let's Dance" was a bigger hit than Bowie expected it would be
- British music videos dominated the air waves by 1983.
  - Brits had been making videos longer than Americans
  - American music companies excluded American artists because they could make more \$\$ off of British artists.

- the "Serious Moonlight" tour  
Started out in medium-sized venues but gradually starting moving into really big venues because the shows were dramatically **overselling**
- A total of about **2.5 million** people saw the tour

## White Light / White Heat

- Compare 3 versions of song
  - ① Velvet Underground (1968)
    - Early **punk** style
    - Distorted guitar, piano
    - Short, fast-paced, aggressive
    - Reaction to flower-power vibe of "Summer of Love"
    - **Minimalist** production
    - Generally thought to be about **drugs** (meth)

## ② Bowie (1973)

- More of a **classic rock** feel
- Probably meant to be about ziggy Stardust and "saving the world with rock"
- Maybe about drugs, too?
- Fairly **minimalist / stripped-down**

## ③ Bowie (1983)

- Made for **mainstream** audience
- Bowie assumes Rich GA guy personna
- Includes saxophone backing
- Overproduced, **flashy**, choreographed (nothing like the punk, minimalist vibe of velvet Underground or 1973 Bowie)
- This screams "**corporate rock**" (not rebellious)
- was Bowie being ironic?

## AIDS

- As Bowie began to be perceived as a "sell out", the AIDS epidemic was raging. It hit gay community hardest in early to mid '80s.
- AIDS first became publicized as a "gay disease" and furthered stigmatized American gay community (first called GRID, gay-related immune deficiency)
- Bowie came out as gay in 1972 (though he later said he actually wasn't gay). Gay community looked to Bowie as friend / ally
- Coming out benefitted Bowie financially in '70s.
- Bowie's music also communicated idea that it's OK to be who you are.
- In 1983, Bowie was silent about AIDS and associated gay stigmatization, but he said in interview that coming out as gay was biggest mistake he ever made

- Bowie said he never felt comfortable w/ ppl thinking he was gay
- People view Bowie's statements and silence about AIDS as concrete symbol of his "selling out" (i.e. he didn't want the gay stigma because it would hurt his business) and as unforgivable betrayal.

## Tonight

- By 1984, Bowie was one of the biggest rock stars on the planet.
- Bowie's next album "Tonight" was similar to his album "Pinups" in that it rode on the coat tails of the previous album's success but by itself it wasn't necessarily a hit.
- Hugh Padgham (who produced Phil Collins' songs) produced the record

- Bowie assumes new personna "Screaming Lord Byron" for video of "Blue Jean".
  - o Song was boring, but the video was hugely popular (so the song did well).
- Album sold really well.
  - o #2 (just behind "Let's Dance" in total immediate sales compared to rest of Bowie discography).
  - o The fact that "Tonight" sold better than Ziggy and Hunky Dory may indicate that market isn't always about quality

## David Bowie Superstar

- In 1985, Bowie records duet w/ Mick Jagger (they cover "Dancing in the Street" by Martha and the Vandellas)
- Also in 1985, Bowie stars in iconic movie "Labyrinth".

## Never Let Me Down

- Bowie recorded another album for Iggy Pop called "Blah-Blah-Blah" (1986)
- Bowie worried during this time that he lost his muse
- Bowie wrote songs and pre-planned all the material for next album "Never Let Me Down" (not improvised like Iggy Pop record)

- Ideas were based on pop music heard on the radio at the time.
- Album was universally regarded as a **total failure** by the critics but it sold well.
- Critics even started to question the quality of Bowie's earlier records.
- Bowie decides to do big tour to save his reputation.

## Glass Spider

- Bowie started planning "Glass Spider" tour in late 1986, starts in May 1987
- Along w/ other tours by big-name musicians, Bowie started trend of **overproduced concerts** that would later turn off audiences
- **Pepsi** sponsors tour, which contributes to **overblown budget**

- 3 million people saw tour, but it wasn't well-liked
- It brought in a lot of \$\$ but was regarded as total (possibly career-ending) disaster for Bowie.
- After tour, the crew unloaded the set in a field and lit the thing on fire!

## Indie Rock

- By 1988, Bowie was at artistic impasse
- He went back to artsy underground scene for revitalization
- He got into Sonic Youth and other distortion-heavy music
  - Wall of sound (can't hear strumming)
  - Personal lyrics

## The Tin Machine

- Bowie befriended Reeves Gabrels during Glass Spider tour.
- Bowie invites Reeves to arrange music for dance piece based on "Look Back in Anger."
  - It went well enough that Bowie invites Reeves to Switzerland to play in his new band called The Tin Machine.
  - Recorded music in the Bahamas
  - Played first live show there w/ this new band in front of 40-50 ppl. Bowie loved it.
- Bowie releases "greatest hits" CD w/ alternate versions of hits included.
- He announces that he'll tour the songs one last time.

## Sound + Vision

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- "Sound + vision" tour starts in September 1990.
- Shows are **choreographed**, but they weren't as garish as Glass Spider shows.
- Band hated playing songs, got really **bored** during shows (even Bowie).
- Sponsors played **commercials** between songs.
- Bowie **remixed** old songs for tour. In remix of "Fame", he added rap by popular rapper Queen Latifah.
- To some, remixes sounded **inauthentic**.

## The Tin Machine II

- Bowie records another record w/  
the Tin Machine.
- Tours smaller cities w/ smaller  
venues; Bowie sees different side of world
- Bowie really loves it.
- He enjoys hanging out, going to  
pawn shops, going to museums, etc.
- Tour ends in 1992.
- Bowie **marries** supermodel Iman  
and reconnects w/ son in Switzerland.
- Instead of making third album  
w/ band, Bowie decides he wants  
to make album celebrating marriage.