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"Lookin' for a sound that's gonna drown out the world":
Resolving musical emotional ambiguity in U2's Pop*Vision*

U2*CONFERENCE
POP VISION
BELFAST*2018

THE U2 CONFERENCE

University of Strathclyde Science

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What is information science?

Strathclyde iSchool Reseach Group
About us

Our research group investigates arising socio-techno phenomena and evolving information systems and behaviours. In pursuit of a literate and informed society, much of our work is societal in nature. We investigate human information need and use, and we're informing future interactive information system design.

Holistic in perspective, our work is theoretically underpinned by internationally recognised expertise in:

- interactive information retrieval
- information behaviour
- information law and ethics
- information engagement

We bridge theory and practice, working collaboratively with a number of partners including:

- the National Health Service Scotland
- Glasgow City Libraries
- Barnardo's Scotland

Types of information; ways of finding

- Information scientists tend to think of "information" as a textual document residing in a database that meets a user's "need" or "query"
- Information comes in many forms
  - bodily; embodiment (Yates, 2015; Olsson, 2016)
  - photos, videos, music (Rasmussen Neal, 2012)
  - "matter and energy" (Bates, 2006)
  - "being aware, being conscious and sentient in our social context and physical environment" (Bates, 2003)
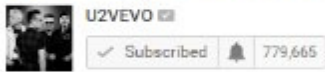
How do you search for music online?

- Name of the artist? (U2, obviously!)
- Name of the song? (Mofo)
- Name of the album? (Pop)
- What if you want to look for something that puts you in a good mood? Puts you in touch with God? Acknowledges your sorrows? (Mofo? Wake Up Dead Man? Please? All of these? None of these?)

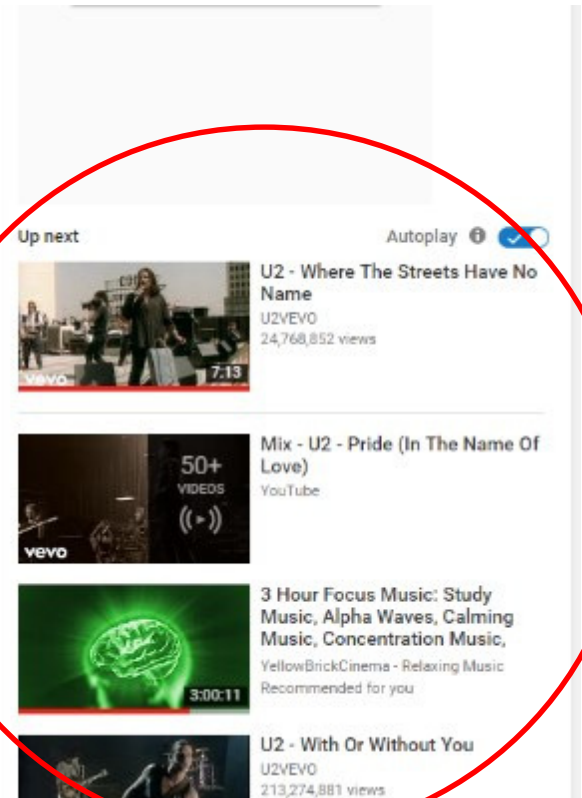# YouTube suggestions – based on similarity, past user history…?

Some of my prior research:
Emotions in social media/non-text information

- Happy pictures? Songs? (Beautiful Day?)
- Difficult to agree on emotion in music
  – we respond to music individually
  – some musical facets are somewhat consistent:
    - slow songs in a minor key sounding "sad"
    - death metal sounding "angry"
    - The descending tetrachord as lament in Baroque

How do you feel when you see this picture? How do you think *she* was feeling?

"The most passionate cover I've seen": Emotional information in fan-created U2 music videos (Rasmussen Pennington, 2016)

Source:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/dd/Bono_U2_360_Tour_2011.jpg/220px-Bono_U2_360_Tour_2011.jpg

What might this producer have been trying to convey?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQCsvIrgcn4

U2 - Song for Someone

Dimas Fletcher

Subscribe 833

2,191 views

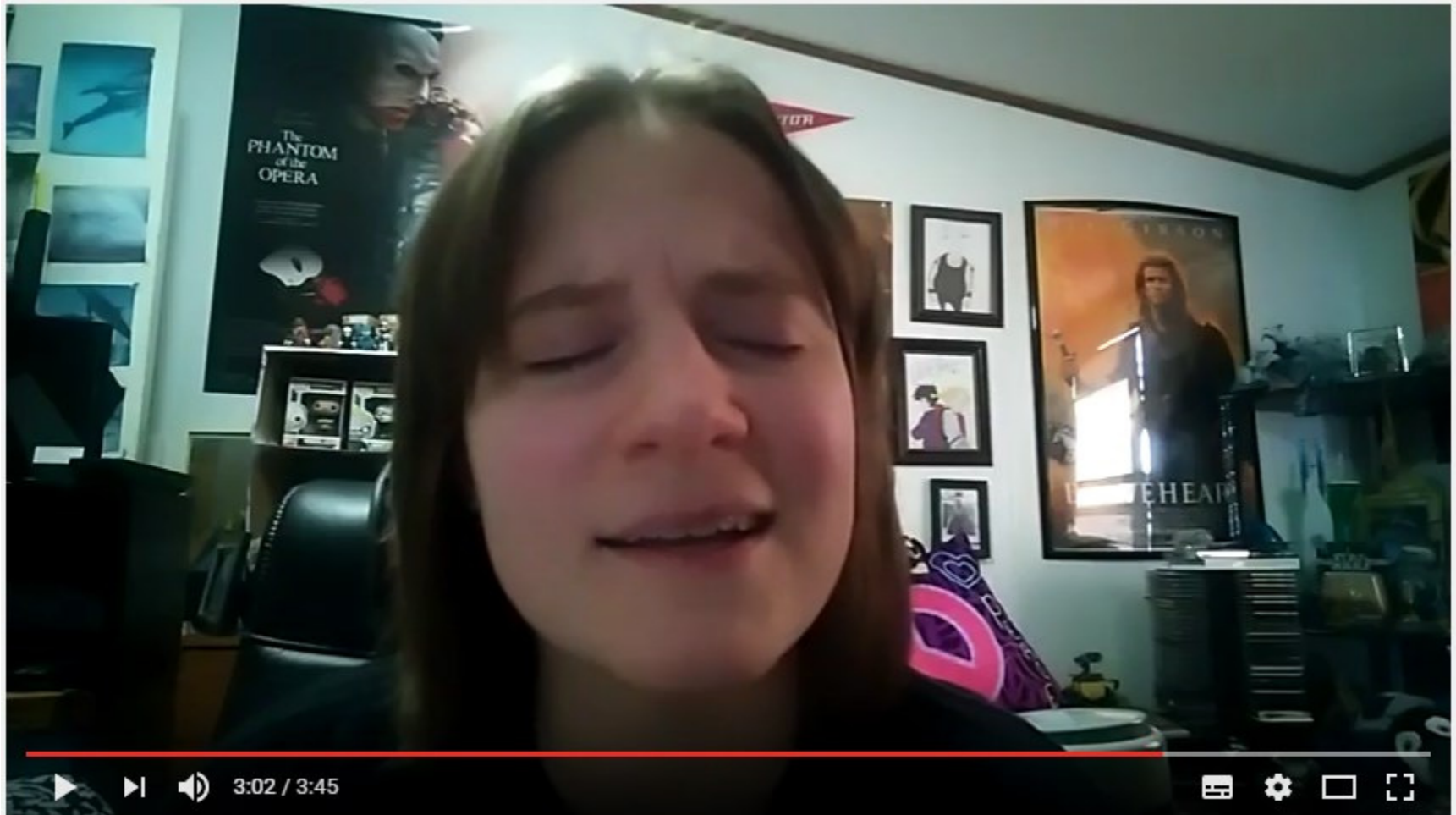Add to   Share   More   16   1

Methods and sample

- Discourse analysis, applied to intertextuality
- Analysed the emotional information conveyed in 150 YouTube fan-created videos of "Song for Someone" by:
  - The producers (people who made the videos)
  - The consumers (people who watched the videos)
- Through the videos themselves, producers' descriptions, consumers' comments and likes/dislikes on the videos

Theoretical framework

- "Basic emotions" from fields such as cognition, psychology, music therapy (Ekman, 1992)

- Emotional Information Retrieval (EmIR)

- Domains of fandom and aca-fandom (Stein & Busse, 2009; Bennett, 2014)

- Online participatory culture, such as writing fan fiction or making cover versions of videos for loved songs (Jenkins, 2013)

- U2 academic studies (U2conference.com)

- Intertextuality as a practice in online participatory culture among fans (Vernallis, 2013)

Cover versions:
Emotions through facial expression

Cover versions: Surroundings

Cover versions: Surroundings

Cover versions: Surroundings; fun with family; humour

Cover versions: Surroundings

#SongForSomeone

Cover version: Personal experience; the producer's wedding and kid photos

Original version: photographs of friends having fun
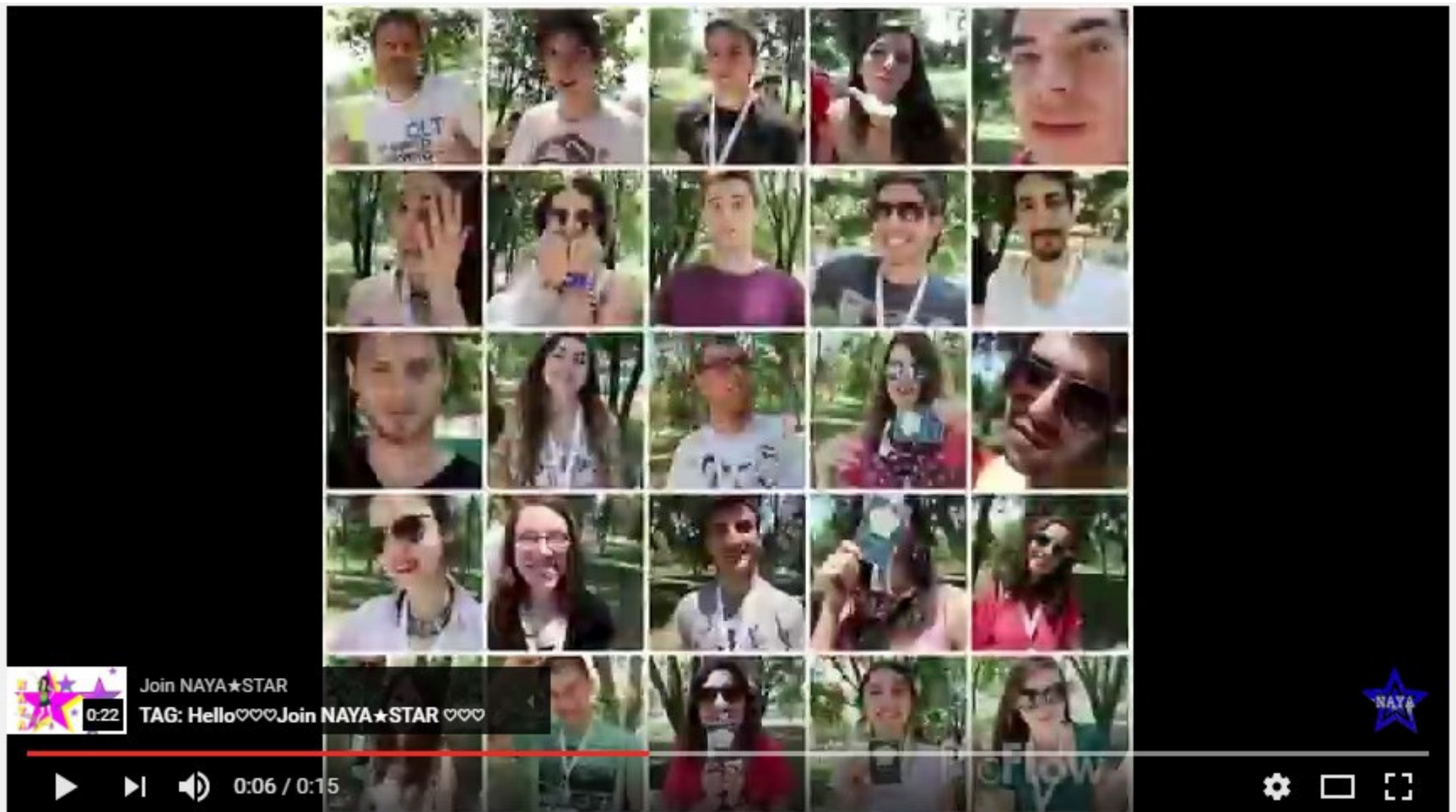
Original version:
Video out a plane window
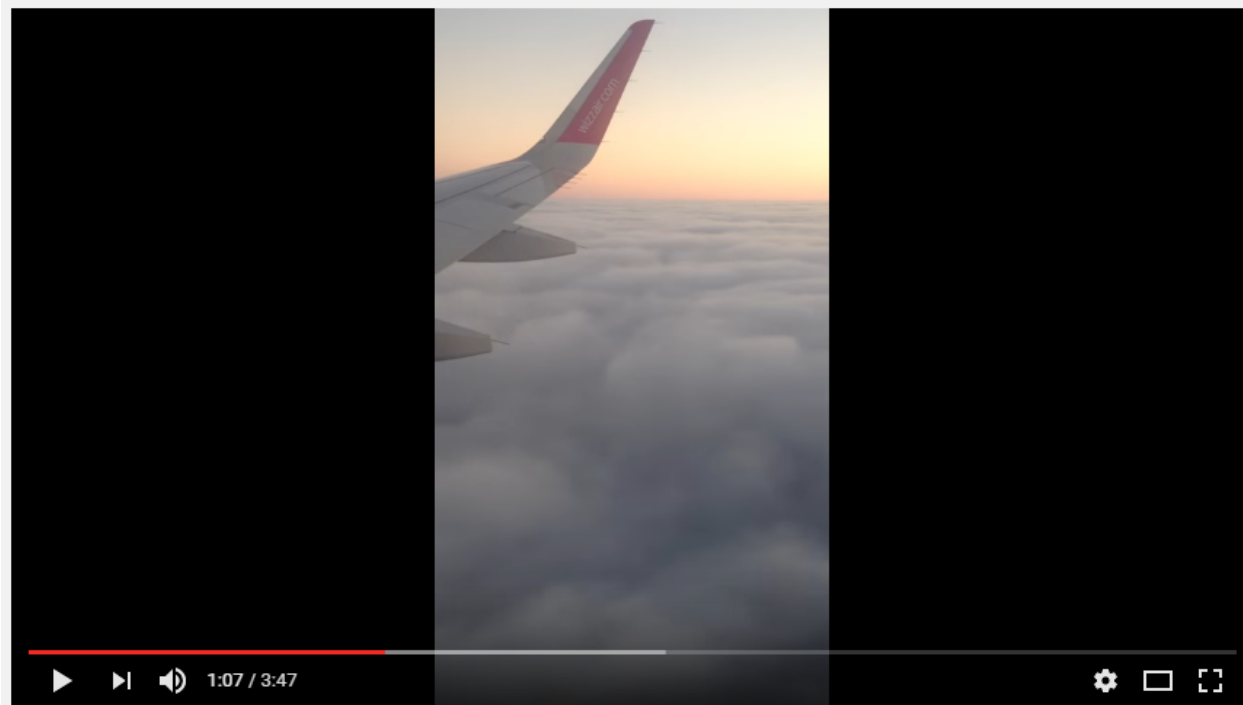
Tutorials: Guitar

Song for someone Cover U2 Acoustic guitar tutorial chords

Tutorials: Karaoke Piano
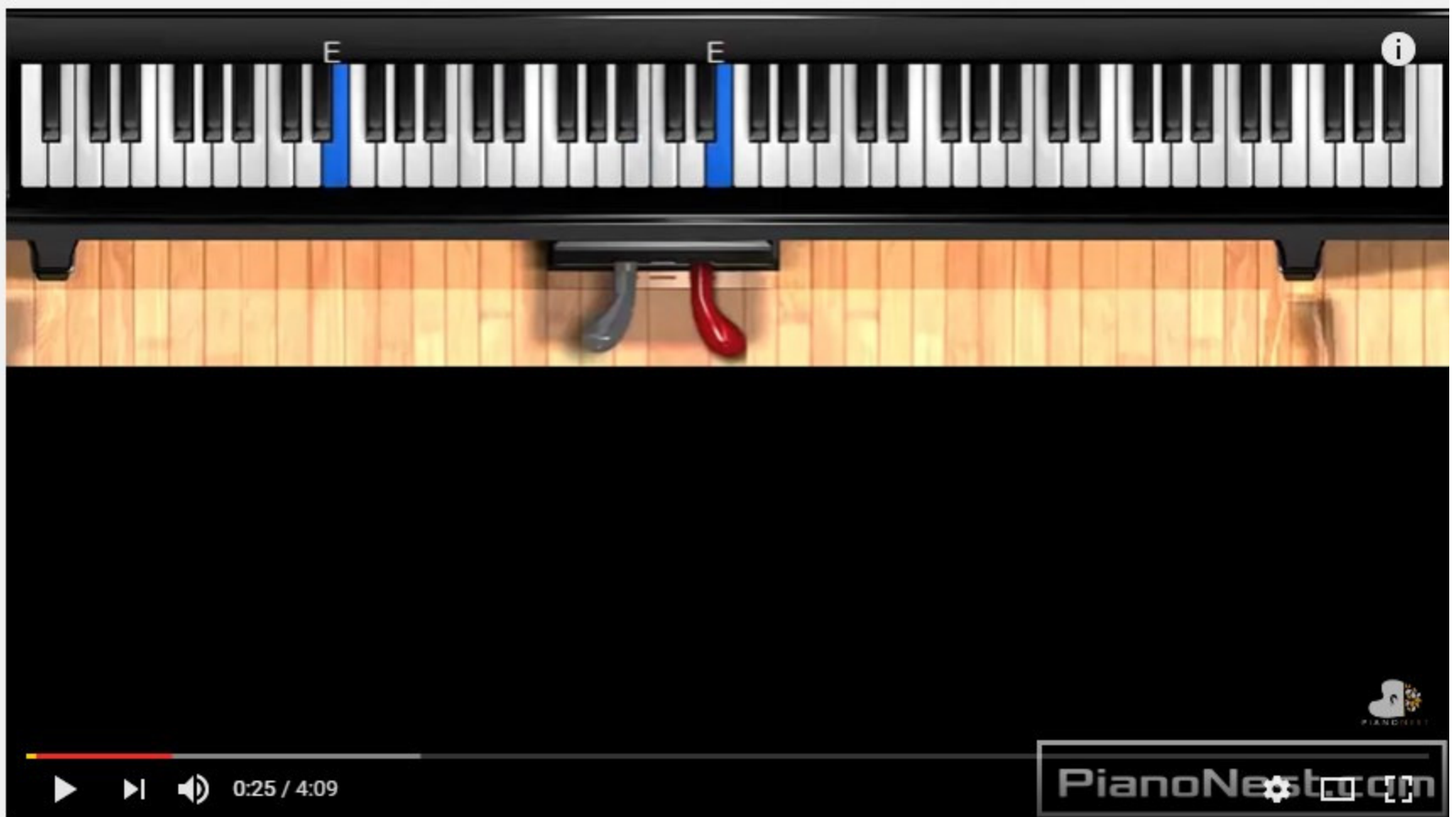
U2 - Song for Someone - Piano Karaoke / Sing Along

Intertextuality: *Achtung Baby* poster

Intertextuality in cover version: "Song for Someone" lyrics and title on wall; "Stuck in a Moment" music

Song for Someone cover

Intertextuality: *Rattle and Hum*; looking like Bono and The Edge

"Song for Someone" - Rattle and Hum U2 Tribute (Acoustic Sessions)

Current study: Resolving emotional musical ambiguity

U2 (disambiguation)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For the Wikipedia U2 criterion for speedy deletion, see Wikipedia:Criteria for speedy deletion#U2.

U2 is an Irish rock band.

U2 or **U-2** may also refer to:

Aviation [edit]

- Lockheed U-2, a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft
- 1960 U-2 incident, an international incident involving a U.S. Lockheed U-2 over the Soviet Union
- EasyJet's IATA airline code
- Polikarpov U-2, a Soviet biplane
- Wills Wing U2, an American hang glider design
- Udet U 2, a German light aircraft

Computing [edit]

- Rocket U2, UniVerse and UniData database systems
- U.2 (formerly known as SFF-8639), a connector used by some NVM Express storage devices
- *Ultima II: The Revenge of the Enchantress*, a 1982 video game
- *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, a 2009 video game for the PlayStation 3

The U2 90's trilogy: *Achtung Baby/ZOO TV*, *Zooropa*, and *Pop/PopMart*

"Given all the recent electro-pop shit like Lady GaGa, its funny how commercial music used to scoff at U2 when Pop came out. Now U2 fans have all the right to brag about how U2 was apparently ahead of their time... They made 3 great electro-rock albums 10 years before the 2009-2010 electropop explosion. Now THAT'S foresight!"

- A consumer's YouTube comment on *PopMart: Live from Mexico City (Pop Muzik/Mofo)*

Research question

What results when we attempt to holistically disambiguate the musical emotional ambiguity in 1990s U2?

Multimodal analysis

- Examines the interactions of multiple modes of communication and representation

- Modes are used as resources for understanding the social semiotics (meaning-making)

- Focus on the sign-makers and their socially- and contextually-situated use of modes

- Does *not* take language as starting point

- Examples of modes: images, music, videos, sounds, gestures, gazes, posture, written and spoken words

Modes analysed

- Musical facets, lyrics, videos, and live concert films from *Achtung Baby, ZOO TV, Zooropa, Pop,* and *PopMart*

- Academic works on U2 and related topics from theology, musicology, philosophy, history

- 1990s political events

- Band interviews

- Paraphernalia

- Online fandom discussions

So much data, or multimodal transcription!
16 seconds from the start of *PopMart: Live in Mexico City (PopMuzik; Mofo)*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c7U-9gyPsw

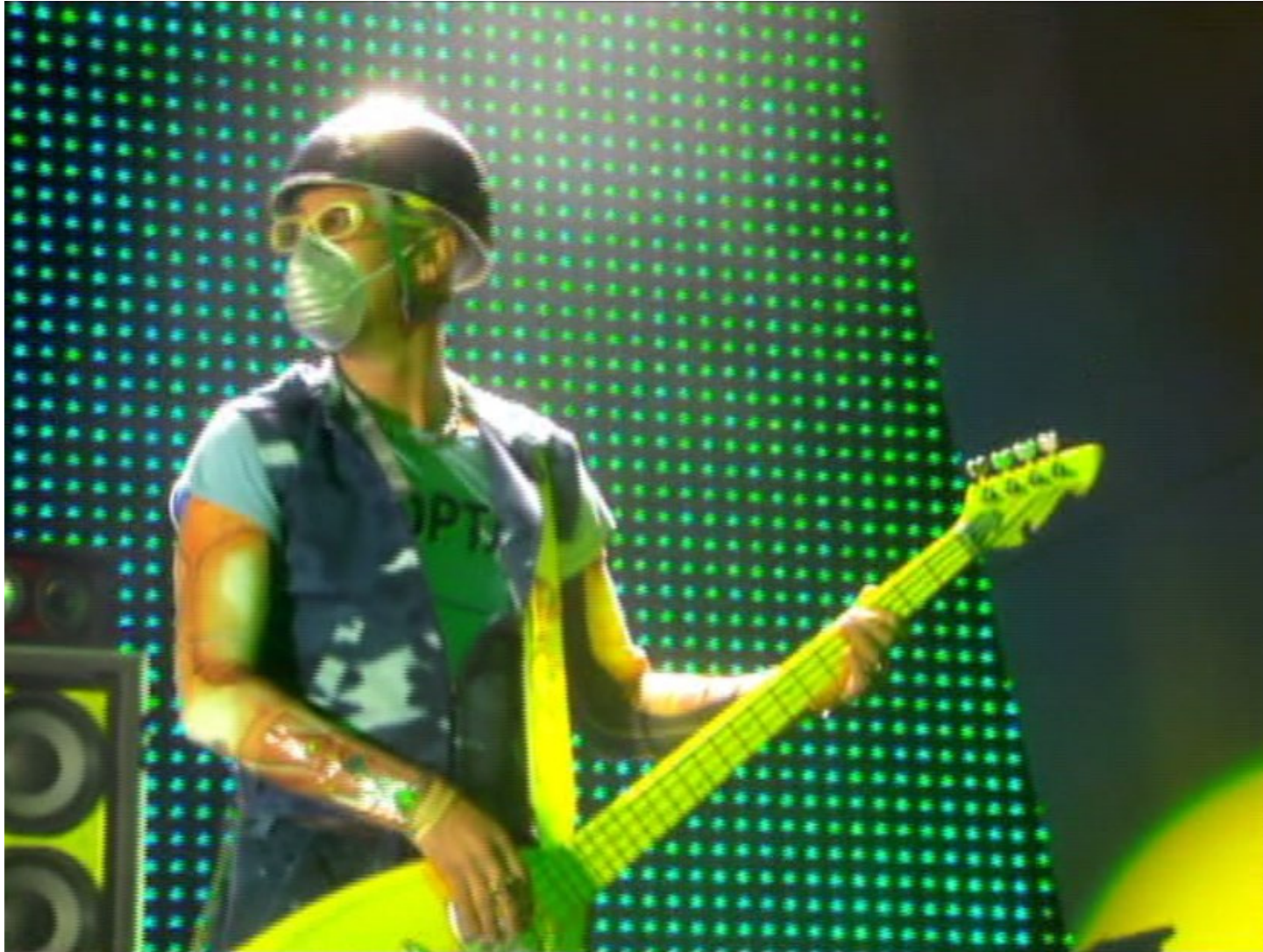# 6:10-6:14: "Lookin' for to fill that God-shaped hole"
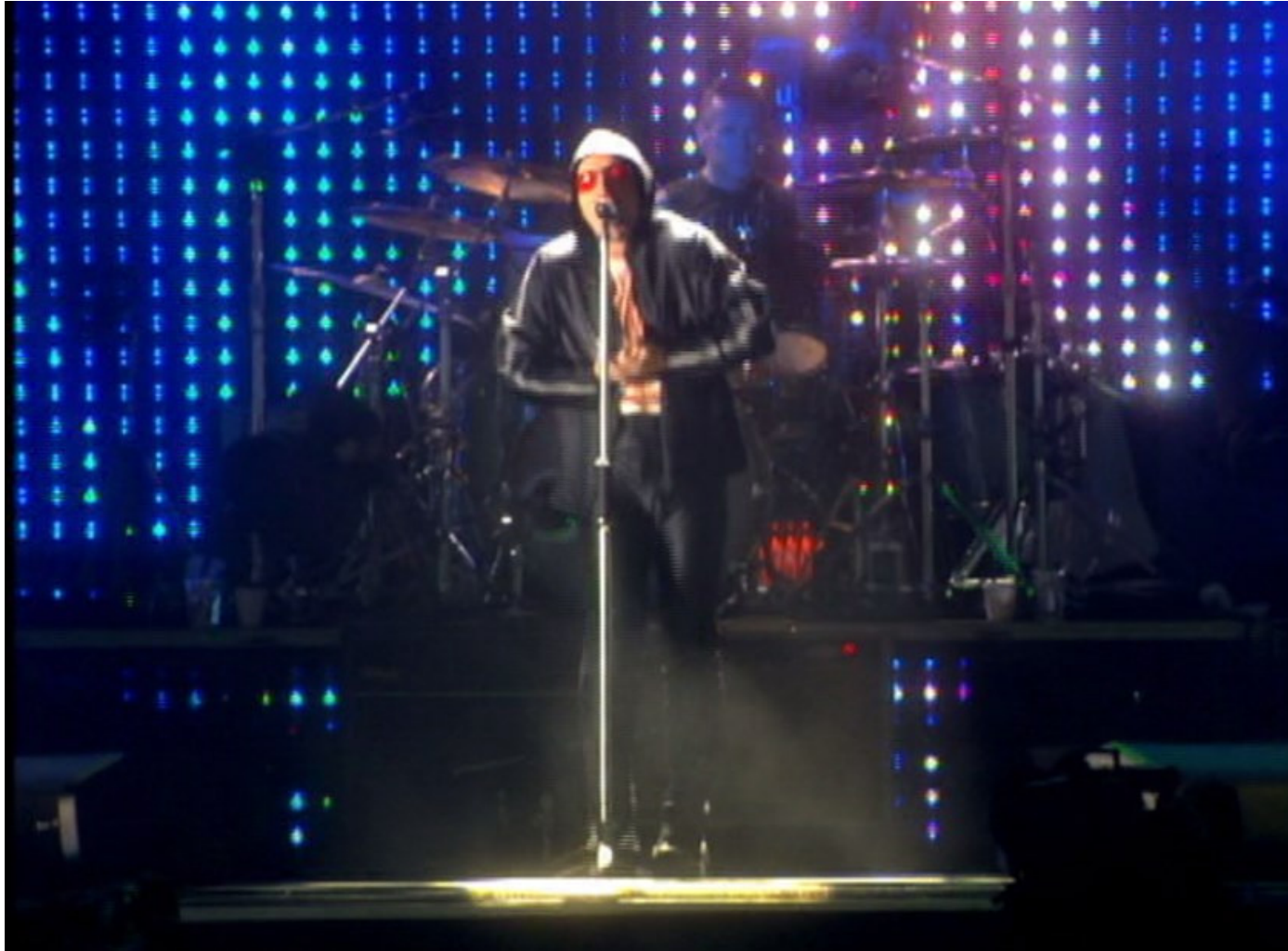
6:14: lingering transition to behind Larry and facing the audience

6:15-6:17: transition complete

6:18: close-up of Adam

6:19-6:26: back to Bono - "Mother… mother suckin' rock and roll"

6:55-7:04: "lookin' for the baby Jesus under the trash" (Bono spins around and gazes/gestures at screen as he speaks these lyrics)

YouTube consumer comments

- "Baddest mofos I've ever seen. Pop was awesome... underrated for sure."

- "This is one of the worst songs ever written and the whole tour was awful."

- "360 entrance just doesn't compared to the other two I found it very boring for a U2 show."

- "I wholeheartedly disagree about it being one of their worst. I found this 15x ballsier than ZooTV, and over 5 tours I've seen live, the opening 5 minutes of PopMart might have been the most exciting."

Intentional musical emotional ambiguity - Pop*Bingo:* information is disambiguated through uncomfortable dichotomies - "Chance is a kind of religion…"

authentic/inauthentic	faith/faithless
	faith/faithless Wake Up Dead Man: "Rise up and help us; rescue us because of your unfailing love." (Psalm 44:26) "and though I can't say why I know I've got to believe"

Transformation through transcendence (U2 Trans-)

meaning/meaningless	excitement/lament
Ecclesiastes "under the trash" "if there's an order in all of this disorder" EVERYTHING YOU KNOW IS WRONG	Bono: *Pop* is about God's death (a lament) "I'm ready for what's next" tech/screens/aesthetics – stimulation "and I have no reasons, no reasons to get back"

Thank you!

"Don't You Wonder Sometimes?" Sound & PopVision
Panel Session 1A
Chair: Angela Pancella
Independent Scholar, Norwood, Ohio, USA

Pop's Music Videos
Dr. Jonathan Hodgers
Popular Music Lecturer
Trinity College
Dublin, Ireland

"And What You Leave Behind You Don't Miss Anyway": U2's Pop and the
Pop Art Aesthetic
Dr. Kimberly Mack
Assistant Professor of African American Literature
Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio, USA

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AND MUCH, MUCH MORE
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