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No Other Name?

Authenticity, Authority and Anointing in Christian Popular Music

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Abstract

This article investigates the role that celebrity plays in a Christian culture industry where authenticity and identity are always understood in relation to spiritual authority. In evangelical Christian (sub)culture, discourses of intention frame musical practice and arise from a historical Protestant emphasis on individual authority that is expressed in a highly-mediated consumer culture in which celebrity is a resource for identity and lifestyle. These discourses are reflexively activated through the evangelical concept of anointing, which fuses individual and institutional authority with spiritual authority. Exploring the ways in which this unfolds offers interesting ways for scholars of popular music to think about the relationship between popular music, celebrity and the culture industries in a variety of other contexts.

Keywords: authenticity; authority; celebrity; Christian popular music; culture industry

Introduction

No Other Name is this year's highly anticipated annual Hillsong Worship album release, with 11 original songs perfect for individual and congregational worship.

Featuring the songwriting, worship leadership, musicianship and vocals of those now well known as the Hillsong Worship team, including Reuben Morgan, Ben Fielding, Matt Crocker, Joel Houston, Nigel Hendroff, Autumn Hardman, Annie Garrett, Jad Gillies, David Ware and Taya Smith.

The album's standout songs include the title track, "No Other Name", which captures Hillsong Church's current season of building on the foundations of the past three decades and "pioneering again", whilst continuing to lift up the One it all began with, Jesus.

More than just songs, our prayer is that the album would give voice to individuals and churches across the earth, unifying them in a declaration of worship that is lifted to and for no other name but Jesus.

www.hillsong.com/worship (accessed 2 June 2014)

The above description by the Australian transnational megachurch Hillsong Church of its 2014 worship music album, *No Other Name*, uses its name and the names of its celebrity musicians as indexes of institutional and individual authority, a typical move in popular music and the culture industries in general (e.g. Marshall 1997; Thomson 2006). Unlike most popular music, though, because this is an album of *Christian* popular music, this authority is articulated to the spiritual authority of another: Jesus. Informed by celebrity studies (e.g. Dyer 1979; Marshall 1997; Turner 2014), media studies (e.g. Einstein 2008; Jenkins 1992; Jenkins et al. 2013), ethnomusicology (e.g. Ingalls 2011; Rommen 2007), Pentecostal studies (e.g. Albrecht 1999; Cox 1995), the marketing literature on branding (e.g. Holt 2004; Thomson 2006) and drawing from four years of ethnographic work as part of my PhD research¹ (Wagner 2014a), this article investigates the role that celebrity plays in a Christian culture industry where authenticity and identity are always understood in relation to spiritual authority. Specifically, it looks at how celebrity mediates the evangelical Christian concept of "anointing" in ways that (in)fuse the individuals and institutions associated with it with the evangelistic power of the Holy Spirit.

The first section of this article introduces Christian popular music (CPM). CPM is aesthetically similar to popular music, set apart primarily at the level of intention. However, within CPM, intention varies widely according to how participants position themselves and their actions in relation to the "sacred" and "secular". CPM is thus emblematic of the persistent question of how to live "in but not of the world" that shapes evangelical Christian (sub) culture. The second section of the article uses the iconic Christian musician and former Hillsong worship pastor Darlene Zschech as a case study. Zschech

1. During my four years of fieldwork (2009–2013) at Hillsong London, Hillsong's main European hub, I participated in worship services, attended small group meetings, volunteered on church teams and attended conferences. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with participants and staff. This research has been further supplemented by informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with people outside the church who hold a variety of spiritual beliefs and opinions about the church.

is strongly associated with Christian values and thus, as a celebrity sign, an evangelism opportunity. However, because media-savvy participants of the Christian culture industry are often suspicious of celebrity even as they consume it, Zschech must simultaneously acknowledge and deny her cultural authority by articulating it to the authority of God. The third section of the article suggests that this articulation is realized reflexively through the concept of anointing, which (in)fuses individual, institutional and spiritual authority. Exploring how this unfolds offers interesting angles from which scholars might approach the relationship of popular music, celebrity and the culture industries in a variety of other (niche) contexts.

Christian Popular Music and the Christian Culture Industry

Christian popular music (CPM) is an umbrella term that encompasses a dizzying array of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century commercial popular music, from folk to metal to rap and beyond (Ingalls et al. 2013; see also Beaujon 2006). Indeed, for any secular music style, there is likely a Christian counterpart, and there is usually no sonic or sartorial difference between them. For example, the Christian rap-metal group P.O.D. (Payment On Delivery) uses the same instruments, elicits the same sounds, and plays at the same tempos and in the same meters as most “secular” rap-metal acts. (The lyrics and topics of the songs usually differ, however, especially in relation to God or Jesus.) CPM musicians and fans usually also participate in the “parent” musical culture, dressing similarly, listening to the same bands and going to the same gigs as their “non-Christian” counterparts. This is to say that most CPM participants consume Christian music alongside other forms of (popular) music and (popular) culture as part of everyday life; being “Christian” is, for most, just one point of orientation (although an important one) among many in the overall cultural matrix in which they are embedded (Wagner forthcoming). Thus, CPM is differentiated from other popular musics not by aesthetics or cultural competency, but by the discourses, intentions and (self)-identifications of those who engage with it. Ingalls et al. (2013) therefore define CPM as:

characterized by Christian lyrics or themes, created by artists whose self-identification as Christian is central to their public persona, mediated by self-identified Christian companies (i.e., magazines, publishing firms, radio stations, and record labels that promote Christian values), and listened to and purchased by a primarily self-identified Christian audience. (n.p.)

While there is no musical style that is unique to CPM, it does claim its own genres that are differentiated by intention. For example, Christian worship music (CWM) is written to facilitate the worship of God and consumed with

the intention to do so. In contrast, Christian contemporary music (CCM) is written primarily to communicate a Christian message, but not to facilitate worship, and is generally consumed with this in mind. However, the commodified nature of the music means that in practice there is a great deal of slippage between genres (Ingalls et al. 2013). For example, both CWM and CCM circulate through digital media and live (often ticketed) performances (although CWM participants are adamant that these are not *performances* but rather *worship* events). Furthermore, both genres can be experienced in what would otherwise be considered a “concert” setting, in venues that range from small church spaces and coffee shops to stadiums and festival grounds. The same song could (for some, anyway) therefore be experienced as either CWM or CCM depending on what participants want to “do” with it.

CPM is intentionally produced and reflexively consumed as a resource for the construction and maintenance of an evangelical Christian identity and lifestyle. This is done in a Christian culture industry that is constituted through the production, circulation and consumption of billions of dollars of Christian goods and services every year (see, for example, Einstein 2008; Romanowski 2000). From Christian music and books to plumbers and legal services, the market is vast. It should be noted that analogous culture industries exist for every major religion as well as alternative spiritualities (see, for example, Gauthier and Martikainen 2013). CPM and the Christian culture industry should thus be understood within the framework of material religion (Arweck and Keenan 2006): as faith expressed and experienced in highly-mediatized consumer culture.

Throughout this article, I am using the term “evangelical” to describe the broad global form of Protestant Christianity that, while always drawing from and adapting to local cultural logics and practices, retains the central beliefs of salvation through Christ (often termed “born again”) and the authority of the Bible. Furthermore, I am using the term (sub)culture to point towards the fluid ways participants discursively and performatively negotiate their identities and values vis-à-vis the “sacred” and “secular” in popular culture (Niebuhr 2001 [1951]; Howard and Streck 1999).

For many evangelical Christians, the sacred/profane dichotomy is most clearly articulated in the biblical mandate to live “in, but not of, the world”, a paraphrasing of Jesus’ words to his followers in Jn 17:13–16.² Evangelicals

2. ¹³And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world (see also James 1:27 and Romans 2:12).

believe that Christians are called upon to engage with society in everyday life (especially for evangelism) but should also maintain a “biblical” standard that the rest of society may not follow. While this is embraced in theory, there is considerable disagreement as to how it should be applied in practice. According to H. Richard Niebuhr (2001 [1951]), Christians negotiate the tensions between “Christ and Culture” by adopting five strategies to relate the sacred to the secular. These strategies are differentiated by the degree to which the “sacred” and the “secular” are “mixed”. One extreme, which Niebuhr calls the “Christ against culture” view, separates the realms of the sacred and secular and calls for a withdrawal from the latter into the former. The other extreme, the “Christ of culture” view, sees Christian values as the “best” of human culture and thus the two cannot be separated. Niebuhr also posits three mediating positions, which he calls “Christ above culture”, “Christ and culture in paradox” and “Christ the transformer of culture”. Each position seeks, in different ways, to maintain a distinction between the realms of sacred and secular while still drawing from both.

In their book, *Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music* (1999), Jay Howard and John Streck apply Niebuhr’s typology to show how concepts of the sacred and secular shape CCM. Using rhetoric that articulates the Christ and Culture conundrum, Christian music artists, labels and fans adopt different and sometimes contradictory views about the nature and purpose of Christian music in order to justify their activities. For example, “crossover” artist Amy Grant’s songs are grounded in her faith but her lyrics are generally not explicitly Christian. For some, Grant is helping “covertly” spread Christian values by reaching the “unchurched”. For others, though, the lack of explicitly Christian lyrics is seen as a capitulation to the “secular” market. Arguments over artists like Grant reveal the differing views within evangelical Christian (sub)culture about how to engage with “secular” popular culture—particularly with its consumer elements.³ More importantly, though, they reveal the ways participants use music and celebrity musicians as value-laden discursive resources in their ongoing identity projects.

Darlene Zschech, Hillsong Church and the Positioning of Christian Celebrity

CPM, the Christian culture industry in which evangelical Christian (sub)culture is thoroughly intertwined and one organization that has had a major influence on the soundscape of all three over the past quarter-century is Australia’s transnational organization Hillsong Church. Songs from its two main

3. For other accounts, see Beaujon 2006; Joseph 2003; Thompson 2000.

groups, Hillsong Worship and Hillsong United, are sung every Sunday by millions of evangelical and non-evangelical Christians around the world. Hillsong's music is so influential, in fact, that those familiar with evangelical Christianity often use the term "Hillsong" as shorthand to describe a distinct style or genre of worship and worshipping (e.g. Price and Benns 2004; Wagner 2014a: 97; Moore forthcoming; Povedák forthcoming). This is important because evangelical Christians consider worship both an act and a lifestyle, and style is never neutral: it is symbolic, bound up with political and ideological connotations that extend far beyond the sounds (and arguably, lyrics) themselves (e.g. Hebdige 1979; Rommen 2007). Hillsong's influence is bolstered by strategic placemaking and media savvy. It currently claims around 30,000 members in 12 churches across Australia's Eastern seaboard and operates name-brand churches in international cities around the world such as London, Moscow, Paris, Capetown, New York and Los Angeles (Aghajanian 2013). Additionally, it counts 22 affiliated churches located across all six habituated continents as part of its "Hillsong Family".⁴ Finally, unaffiliated churches can join the "Hillsong Leadership Network", which for an annual fee of £500 entitles subscribers access to online leadership resources, discounts on Hillsong conferences and a complementary copy of Hillsong Worship's yearly album.⁵ Hillsong's placemaking activities extend to its well-developed Internet infrastructure, especially its social media brandscape (Wagner 2014b). For example, as of August 2014, the official Hillsong Worship YouTube channel counted almost 150,000 subscribers, while its Facebook page had over 3,600,000 likes and its Twitter account had over 260,000 followers.⁶ Hillsong's music is some of the best-selling Christian music in world. Sales of the annual album releases from its two main product streams, Hillsong Worship and Hillsong United, routinely top those of most secular artists. For example, Hillsong LIVE's⁷ 2012 release *Cornerstone* not only topped Christian music charts around the world, but also debuted at number two on the overall iTunes charts in the United States and at number 32 on the *Billboard 200*. Similarly, Hillsong United's 2013 release *Zion* debuted at number 12 on the US iTunes charts and number 5 on the *Billboard 200*. In thirty years, Hillsong has produced over 45 albums and garnered over 40 gold and platinum awards.

4. <http://www.hillsong.com/family> (accessed 11 August 2014).

5. <http://hillsong.com/network> (accessed 11 August 2014).

6. As impressive as these numbers are, Daniel Thornton's study of the views garnered by unofficial YouTube channels suggests that Hillsong's songs are more widely disseminated outside of the church's official channels. Thornton concludes that Hillsong's most effective mechanism of circulation is through its fans, not the church itself (Thornton 2014).

7. Hillsong LIVE was rebranded as Hillsong Worship in 2014.

One key to Hillsong's success is its deft use of celebrity to communicate. Celebrity is created through the repetition of mediated images and sounds that accrue value-laden associations for those who consume them (Dyer 1979; Lim 2005; Turner 2014). CPM and the Christian culture industry are partly constituted through celebrity: world-famous pastors, worship leaders and Christian bands circulate both physically and virtually in a transnational web of conferences, products and media (Coleman 2000; Ingalls 2011). Hillsong boasts a stable of international celebrity musicians⁸ who seek to communicate the church's values⁹ and whose mediated images are consumed by participants as resources for the maintenance of a "Christian" lifestyle.

Hillsong's most iconic musician is former lead worship pastor Darlene Zschech. Her 1993 song 'Shout to the Lord' is one of the staples of the new Christian music canon. Having sold over five million albums worldwide, she is one of the most successful Christian music performers ever (Connell 2005: 326; Evans 2006: 108) and by far the best-selling female Australian artist (Sams 2004: 38; see also McIntyre 2007: 177). Writing in 2006, Mark Evans described her as "the face and sound of HMA [Hillsong's publishing arm Hillsong Music Australia] and, in some people's estimation, of Australian congregational music generally" (Evans 2006: 107). In 2007, Zschech left Hillsong to lead her own church in New South Wales, and as seen from the album promotion that opened this article, other musicians have risen to take her place. Yet eight years on, Zschech's and Hillsong's images remain so intertwined that I have described them elsewhere as "co-branded" (Wagner 2014a: 79). "Darlene",¹⁰ then, as promoted during her twenty years with the church and since, is thus instructive as she illuminates the ways that celebrity mediates (sub)cultural and mainstream values and identities in popular culture.

Shaping the "Darlene" Image

For more than twenty years, Zschech and Hillsong have shaped an image of "Darlene" through her biography, which, while always evolving, has consistently emphasized the Christian values of humility and deference to God. Because of her celebrity, these values are often presented in relation to

8. Current examples include Reuben Morgan, Hillsong's lead worship pastor and author of several famous tunes such as 'Mighty to Save'; Joel Houston, the son of church founders Brian and Bobbie Houston and the leader of Hillsong United; as well as crossover pop stars such as Brook Fraser and Natasha Bedingfield and CCM artists such as Jason Ingram.

9. <http://hillsong.com/what-we-believe> (accessed 23 January 2015).

10. Evangelical leaders are almost always referred to by their first names. Here I am using "Darlene" in quotations to connote the mediated nature of her celebrity image rather than suggest a specific inauthenticity or artifice.

fame. Told in countless books, blogs and interviews,¹¹ Zschech is presented as a reluctant star who rose to, struggled with and ultimately accepted fame, empowered by those around her and (most importantly) God. A child star from the age of 10, she accepted Christ at the age of 15 and joined the Hillsong (then Hills Christian Life Centre) choir in the mid-1980s when the church was still a small Australian congregation (Evans 2006: 107–8). She had no designs on leadership, only becoming vocal director after two years of encouragement by Hillsong’s founder Brian Houston:

I loved to sing, especially in a back-up role—but God had another plan. After about two years of trying to convince me, one day as Pastor Brian [Houston] was leading the meeting, he just walked off and left it to me. It was just as well I didn’t have any more time [sic] to think about it because I was now doing it. (Zschech 1996: 81; in Evans 2006: 108)

When Hillsong’s first star songwriter, Geoff Bullock, suddenly resigned in 1996, Zschech was thrust into the spotlight, this time on the international stage:

Before the *Shout to the Lord* album ... we had been practising for weeks, getting everything ready. And four days before recording, through various situations, he [Bullock] decided to move on. Brian Houston said, “You have to lead this”, and I said, “I can’t, I really can’t”. But through Christ we can do all things. For the next 48 hours my friends got on the phone and said “You can do this, you can do this”. I just thank God we had no video cameras there that night, because all of us cried our way through that project. (Zschech, panel discussion, 15 July 1999; quoted in Evans 2006: 107)

Zschech’s story does not deny her rise to fame, but presents it as unsought and, to some degree, inevitable—the confluence of God-given talent and personal devotion. Following the success of *Shout to the Lord*, Zschech was appointed Hillsong’s lead worship pastor, a position she maintained from 1996 until 2007. During this time, her celebrity was an important driver of the church’s transformation from a local Australian congregation to a globally-focused transnational organization (see Riches and Wagner 2012). With five million albums sold and an iconic song in the emerging new canon of Christian worship, Zschech’s celebrity was (and I would argue still is) an evangelistic opportunity for Hillsong, something that Russell Fragar, a former worship pastor at the church, suggests it took full advantage of:

I think there was a concerted effort to make Darlene a star ... And the funny thing is, that anyone who knew Hillsong kind of regarded it as a team, but in America, it was just Darlene. And it probably is still like that, to some extent. (Quoted in Riches 2010: 161)

11. E.g. Zschech 2001; Evans 2006.

The “insider/outsider” (one might even say “emic/etic”) discourse in Fragar’s statement is interesting: Fragar suggests that in Australia Zschech was understood as part of a *team* of musicians who were part of an institution (Hillsong), while in America she was an *individual* artist with a backing band. There is an implication that this was a case of American “outsiders” mapping their own values onto Zschech and her music in ways that were not necessarily authentic to either her or the church. However, he also suggests that Hillsong recognized and responded to this, the implication being that Zschech’s celebrity was the language that the church felt an American audience would understand. Fragar’s comments were made in 2008, well before Hillsong’s expansion to New York City in 2011 and Los Angeles in 2014. Both offshoots are currently thriving,¹² and it is interesting to note that both are located in cities where celebrity enjoys special purchase.¹³ Fragar’s comments point to the ability of the celebrity sign to embody, and to some degree reconcile, different sets of values (Marshall 1997); the celebrity negotiates the tensions between “authentic” and “false” cultural values (*ibid.*), a quality that makes it eminently marketable.

The Authenticity Discourse in CPM

In CPM, authenticity discourses are always bound up with spiritual authority. Fragar’s statement above highlights some of the marketing challenges faced by stars such as Zschech and transnational organizations such as Hillsong. On the one hand, they must communicate a consistent image of “who” they are to a variety of audiences. This necessitates mediating their images in ways that allow those images, as vessels imbued with values, to be easily disseminated and recognized. Zschech and Hillsong have done this to great effect; in a secular context, the recognition that Zschech and Hillsong’s current worship pastors receive would qualify them as rock stars (Hartje-Döll 2013: 144). On the other hand, they are part of an evangelical Christian (sub)culture where the only star should be Jesus. Zschech and Hillsong are thus faced with the paradoxical challenge of promoting “non-celebrity” celebrities in a Chris-

12. In the past four years, Hillsong NYC has expanded to six Sunday services at its Manhattan location and one in Montclair, New Jersey (<http://hillsong.com/nyc> [accessed 23 January 2015]) to accommodate between 6,000 and 8,000 worshippers per week (Friedman 2014; CBS News 2014), while the Los Angeles location claims 2,500 weekly worshippers (CBS News 2014).

13. Hollywood, of course, has been central to the development of the “star system” (McDonald 2000). However, it is Hillsong NYC that has become the magnet for celebrities, hosting pop stars such as Justin Bieber and Venessa Hudgens to famous athletes such as the NBA’s Kevin Durant and the NFL’s Brandon Marshall (Friedman 2014; Schuster 2014).

tian culture industry where “the practical” and “practice” of fame may not be synergetic, but are always dialogic.

Zschech is “heard” in relation to, but also in the context of, a Christian culture industry that both relies on celebrity and is shaped by a Protestantism that has traditionally emphasized individual authority. A variety of historical factors have contributed to this outlook, including a post-Reformation reordering of society that placed greater emphasis on the individual and displaced notions of truth from religious institutions to scientific inquiry, the rise of post-modern subjectivity and the spread of popular (and populist) charismatic Christianity (Nekola 2009: 7–8). Expressions of Protestantism throughout history have also been shaped by the prevailing social and economic orders in which they were embedded. Thus, particularly in the United States, but also in the UK and elsewhere, evangelical Protestantism has been marked by a succession of increasingly mediated celebrity preachers for whom popular music, media and marketing have driven revivals and so-called “awakenings”. Well-known examples include George Whitefield and Charles Finney in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, who relied primarily on print media, vernacular songs and powerful speaking voices. The preacher/musician teams of Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey, and Billy Sunday and Homer Rodeheaver, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took advantage of radio and recording technologies, with Rodeheaver setting up the first record label devoted exclusively to gospel music. The advent of television further expanded evangelical channels, and thus the first wave of multi-media celebrities such as Sister Aimee McPherson in the 1930s and 1940s and Billy Graham in the mid- to late-twentieth century emerged. With the ascendancy of digital media, the current crop of branded preachers such as Joel Osteen and T. D. Jakes are full-fledged media conglomerates, reaching millions of faithful around the world through every communication technology available (see Wagner 2014a: 25–61; Nekola 2009).

Against this socio-historical background, it would be disingenuous for Zschech or Hillsong’s other worship leaders to deny that they are famous. They therefore articulate the values that inform their actions in relation to celebrity, but also (and importantly) always in relation to God. A typical example of this is seen in an interview with Darlene Zschech for AwesomeCityTV:

I think we’ve got to be really careful, because worship is marketable. God will take his hand off once you turn it into just a product or something to do with dollars. I’m not on the “Darlene trail” at all, but people can easily turn it over. So you’ve got to be real careful on why you’re doing it—your agenda. Making sure it’s for the right reasons. Not just for your opportunity to get your songs heard or whatever ... but more for that communion with God, to point people towards Christ. (AwesomeCityTV 2009)

By proactively acknowledging that they are famous, Zschech and Hillsong's current worship leaders attempt to "take control" of the conversation, an important identity management strategy (Cooke 2008: 88–125; cf. Holt 2004, especially 39–62 and 155–88). Identities are stories, so it is important that Zschech and the church are the storytellers.¹⁴ Yet stories need to be heard, and even with her hit song Zschech could not have become an integral part of Hillsong's image and marketing strategy if she did not also speak to its target audience(s).

Part of celebrity authority lies in audience members' self-identifications with the values they associate with the celebrity. As Richard Dyer notes:

Stardom is an image of the way stars live. For the most part, this generalized lifestyle is the assumed backdrop for the specific personality of the star and the details and events of her/his life ... It combines the spectacular with the everyday, the special with the ordinary, and is seen as an articulation of basic American/Western values. (Dyer 1979: 39, in Gorin and Dubied 2011: 604)

Zschech resonates with many of Hillsong's participants because they not only like her music but also identify with the values articulated in her story. She espouses uncontroversial mainstream evangelical Christian values such as modesty, humility and devotion, and is seen to live them as well.¹⁵ This is key to the ascription of authenticity, which is measured in part by the synergy between statements and actions (Gilmore and Pine 2007). Zschech's mediated image and the "real" Darlene are widely seen as one and the same, something that is itself consistently promoted. For example, Don Moen (formerly of the Christian music label Integrity Music, which distributed Hillsong's music until 2010) writes in the foreword of Zschech's book *Extravagant Worship*:

Darlene is a true leader who is passionate about worshiping the Father in spirit and in truth and is committed to raising up others all around the

14. The rise of the Internet means that organizations are subject to the vicissitudes of public opinion as never before. Hillsong enjoys a great deal of positive press from personal and industry bloggers, websites and on social media. It also has to deal with negative press. For example, several blogs and YouTube videos accuse Hillsong of "cultish" activity (see, for example, Stewart n.d.). The Australian press is often critical of the church (e.g. Pearlman 2005; Pollard 2010). A former Hillsong member has even written a book criticizing the church (Levin 2007). Responses to some of this criticism can be found at: <https://hillsong.com/media> (accessed 18 July 2014).

15. Although Dyer suggests that "we never know [stars] as real people, only as they are to be found in media texts" (Dyer and McDonald 1998: 2), I should note that Zschech's portrayal in the media (Christian and otherwise) coincides closely with accounts relayed to me by people who know her personally.

world to do the same. She is real, transparent, and vulnerable as a worship leader, *but more important, she is the same person when she is not in front of thousands.* (Zschech 2001: 11, my emphasis)

It is unsurprising that such a ringing endorsement would be found in the foreword to her own book, but I include it here to characterize the tenor of the “Darlene” mythology (Holt 2004) and to emphasize that Zschech’s celebrity authority is rooted in an authenticity discourse that could easily be transferred to the realm of secular popular culture. However, because of the evangelical Christian (sub)culture’s uneasy relationship with popular culture, “evangelical authenticity” presents unique challenges.

Worshipping the Worshiper: Anointing and the Danger of Authenticity

Zschech’s celebrity is consumed as reflexive discourse that incorporates individual, institutional and spiritual authority—a resource for the development and maintenance of a Christian lifestyle within the Christian culture industry. Part of Zschech’s appeal is that she presents an image of evangelical Christian femininity that is emulated by many of the church’s participants (Riches 2010: 162–3). She promotes, and apparently lives, a Christian lifestyle based on a set of broadly mainstream Christian values, remaining humble in the face of adulation. However, in the context of the Christian culture industry, Zschech’s own authenticity presents a paradox: by being authentic, she may contribute to her own idolization. In other words, her “Godly” lifestyle may lead participants to “worship the worshipper” (Teoh 2005) instead of worshipping God.

Like all culture industries, the Christian culture industry thrives on contradiction, relying on the reflexive participation of its participants to produce meaning. Since Luther, Protestantism has been informed by a suspicion of institutional authority, yet modern transnational churches such as Hillsong are, if nothing else, institutions.¹⁶ This is why many evangelical Christians question the intentions of celebrity pastors and worship leaders. Furthermore, as self-reflexive, media-savvy participants in a culture industry, they are equally (if not more) mistrustful of themselves and their own tendencies towards “celebrity worship” (Ward 2011: 9–33). They acknowledge that fame needs an audience, and thus the responsibility of remaining a disciple of Christ rather than of a celebrity ultimately lies with the worshipper. The following passage, taken from an article entitled “When Jesus Meets TMZ” in the online Christian magazine *Relevant*, is a typical expression of this:

16. And, furthermore, authority is almost always institutionalized (Weber 1964 [1947]: 56–77). For an insightful discussion of this in relation to celebrity, see Marshall 1997.

When Christians look to pastors for wisdom on how to better love God and love one another, they become better disciples of Jesus and better lights of hope in a dark world. [However], [w]hen Christians look to pastors to tell them how to dress, what to eat, what hobbies to have, what systematic theologies to prefer, how to vote and what personality to adopt, they become creepy, unthinking clones of broken people—and big red warning flags to a culture that has grown increasingly suspicious of authority figures. (Evans 2012)

This passage is interesting in light of the earlier discussion of the articulations between Zschech's individual authority, Hillsong's institutional authority, and the authority of God and Jesus. When does emulation or admiration become, in the context of the Christian culture industry, idolatry? I suggest that the evangelical Christian concept of "anointing" frames individual, institutional and spiritual authority as both complementary and necessary, thus activating the discourses that constitute intention and practice in CPM.

Reflexivity, Branding and Anointing: The (In)Fusion of Individual, Institutional and Spiritual Authority

The concept of anointing is central to the practice of experiential Christianity (Albrecht 1999), but also controversial in wider Christian circles (Evans 2006: 100–6). It is associated with the story of Pentecost,¹⁷ found in Acts 2:1–31, in which the Holy Spirit descends upon the apostles and other followers of Jesus, allowing each to speak in their own language, but also to understand each other. Although interpretations of the meaning of Pentecost vary among evangelical groups, almost all associate anointing with evangelistic power of the Holy Spirit. Someone or something¹⁸ that is anointed is imbued with the transformative power of the Holy Spirit (Cox 1995; Albrecht 1999)—simultaneously the Holy Spirit's tool of evangelism and able to wield the Holy Spirit's evangelistic power. I suggest that this duality (in)fuses individual and institutional authority with spiritual authority.

Celebrities are important resources for identity in consumer culture because they provide points of orientation. Engagement with a celebrity image involves, implicitly if not explicitly, a dialogue between the personal values of the participant and the values he or she associates with the celebrity. These values may be either congruent or discordant, and may change with context, but in every case they are articulated vis-à-vis the celebrity foil. Zschech's story resonates not only with mainstream Christian values vis-à-

17. Hillsong founder Brian Houston's father was a Pentecostal pastor.

18. A person, church or song can be understood as anointed.

vis fame, but also with Hillsong's stated values, as shown in this excerpt from church founder Brian Houston's vision statement:

I see a church whose leadership is unified in their commitment to the authenticity, credibility and quality of its heart. Leaders who dare to be themselves, yet live secure in the knowledge that "what they are part of is bigger than the part they play". (Houston 2014)

Houston's statement references several evangelical tropes, but for the present discussion it is most usefully understood in relation to anointing. Because of the controversial nature of the concept, Hillsong some years ago stopped referring to its music as "anointed" in public communications. However, the idea still pervades the church's culture. Several participants I interviewed during my fieldwork used the term to describe its music and/or musicians. For example, Neville, a 32-year-old lawyer from Malta, spoke to me about his experience of Hillsong at the Frenzy Christian music festival:

TW: What is it about Hillsong's music?

N: I believe Hillsong have an anointing on the worship that maybe [other Christian bands] haven't got yet or haven't developed ... Whatever they're doing, they definitely have God's blessing. So there's some music that's more anointed than others. There are other Christian music groups who have excellent musicians, but you don't have the same effect [of helping people connect with God]. And I believe that's because there's a God element in it. I don't know what Hillsong do before they come on stage. I don't know how they prepare, I don't know if they fast or pray, but they're doing something that God is touching, you know? (i/v, London, 22 August 2010)

For many of Hillsong's participants, anointing is key to the spiritual authority and evangelistic power of the music, which extends to the church's musicians and the participants as well. For example, as Geoff Bullock explained in an interview with Mark Evans:

In the end [the Hillsong] fundamental is that the church is anointed, therefore all those people who come to the church are anointed by association ... whatever success [those people] have is because of their association, not because of their own doing. (Bullock, interview with Mark Evans, 1998; in Evans 2006: 99)

The spiritual authority associated with anointing is key to the experience of the Hillsong brand, and the efficacy of its music. Since the church, its music and its musicians are all integrated parts of a sacred understanding, it follows that the musical talents of its songwriters are "God-given", as expressed by Hillsong's General Manager, George Aghajanian:

Our albums are more of a distillation of many, many songs that are submitted to us through our various songwriters, and those songs are really a reflection of those songwriters' relationship with the church but also more importantly with God. So these guys have their own journey, obviously, their own Christian journey, and their gifting—these guys have got gifting to write music, to lead worship, and so they're writing with the hope that they can get this song to connect people with Christ ... The songs really come back to the anointing that God puts on these guys. And out of that anointing, out of the leading of the Holy Spirit, the songs that they bring—which hopefully are fresh, they're new—[will] help people encounter Christ during a worship service. (i/v, London, 28 September 2011)

Zschech's authority is derived from her association with Hillsong, the church, and God, and so it is with all of Hillsong's songwriters and their songs. Their songs are understood as authentic expressions of their personal relationships with God and (because they are both songwriters and church members) are as such reflective of the church as a whole. The church, its values, its music and its musicians, are all integrated into the gestalt of the Hillsong brand, and Hillsong's participants "hear" this through its worship leaders and their songs. This is evident in an email exchange between Vicki, a long-time participant at Hillsong London, and myself:

It is the blend of music, scriptural truth and the lovely personality of the performers that makes the Spirit of Jesus alive, when I listen to those songs. Having such songs is a powerful and an all-consuming experience for each and every personality that listens to [them]. I can imagine many unbelievers get to have first hand encounter with our God, who I do not think has been worshiped on such a scale and with such resources on Earth so far ... This performance, the fact that this song is written and sung is a powerful testimony of the truthfulness of God. (Email to author, 13 July 2011)

Conclusion: No Other Name? Celebrity and Authority in the Christian Culture Industry

Over the course of more than twenty years, Darlene Zschech and Hillsong have cultivated an image that has been instrumental in realizing Hillsong's goal of international church growth.¹⁹ However, in taking advantage of the communicative powers of celebrity, they must engage with the vicissitudes of celebrity culture. This is challenging because, while Zschech and Hillsong can proactively shape their co-branded stories and express their values in discourse and action, they are ultimately performing for media-savvy participants who view celebrity with suspicion even while using it as a resource for their evangelical Christian identities and lifestyles.

19. <http://hillsong.com/vision> (accessed 9 August 2014).

Zschech is presented as an icon of Christian values, an anointed talent who gives all the glory to God. This speaks to many evangelical Christians, yet there is a fine line between emulation and idolization. In a (sub)culture where identity is reflexively understood in relation to both celebrity and God, Zschech's celebrity authority relies on an ascription of authenticity that hinges on each participant's understanding of "Christian" values. These values are themselves understood in a socio-historical Protestant frame that on the one hand eschews fame and is suspicious of institutional authority, but on the other is shaped by an emphasis on the individual and is practised in a culture that privileges celebrity. However, the evangelical concept of anointing allows for the management of this paradox because it (in)fuses individuals and institutions with spiritual authority. Zschech and Hillsong, its music, musicians and participants, are anointed through their associations with one another and with the Holy Spirit, which blurs the lines between institutional, individual and spiritual authority, "activating" the discourses that frame intention and practice.

This article has shown that the unique elements of a (sub)culture—in this case evangelical Christianity's history and theology—inform the way celebrity authority manifests in that (sub)culture. The title of Hillsong Worship's 2014 album suggests that there is "No other name" than Jesus, yet it is clear that in a (Christian) culture industry that depends on the marketing of celebrity this is both a truth and a paradox.

Like evangelical Christianity, the global culture industry is always already "glocal" in that it exists in reciprocal relation to and is idiosyncratically expressed in the local contexts it is embedded. Looking at the ways that celebrity is framed and realized in "niche" culture industries such as the Christian culture industry thus allows us to view the culture industry writ-large from unique perspectives. It is therefore hoped that scholars of popular music can draw insight from this article in the study of a broad range of world popular music (sub)cultures.

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