

Is the gaping mouth of a pop star not a liminal zone or – to borrow a term from Deleuze and Guattari - a 'holey space' through which the digital violently haemorrhages into the physical?

Don't believe me?

Turn on your radio, tune into that mutant signal usually referred to as pop music and listen to the organic and inorganic ferociously penetrate one another in a delirious aural orgy. Yet what arises out from this heated act of sonic procreation is neither purely human or electronic but a bastardized amalgamation of the two, materialising within our ear drums as a tentacular posthuman cyborg. And perhaps what most strongly signifies this strange yet seductively mutant presence is the digitized, auto-tuned voice.

Autotune is a digital processor that remasters and amplifies the human voice beyond its natural range by compressing pitch, tone and timbre into a series of rubber planes and vinyl surfaces that can be electronically stretched and multiplied. However, autotune can only achieve this malleability by taxidermizing the human voice, in the way autotune guts vocalisation of its naturalistic and humanistic intestinalis. By evacuating such qualities the sonic epidermis of 'voice' is free to be endlessly moulded and inflated into an array of outlandish reconfigurations which transgress the limitations of the human. However, the paradox of pop music is how it still endeavours to appear loosely recognisable and human to its audience in spite of its dramatic experimentations in posthumanism. This disjunction is why the vocals in pop music often generates a ghostly and uncanny effect in the listener, as they attempt to appear to us as human when they are so obviously 'other' – like a cyborg dressed in unfitting human drag.

One only has to listen to ex-sixteen and pregnant star Farrah Abraham's debut album/ outsider art masterpiece *My Teenage Dream Ended* to fully understand this unearthly blurring and reforming of contradictory identities which autotune enables. In other words, what Abraham's album most effectively demonstrates is the way autotune can digitally untether one from their biological constraints, thusly allowing one to explore an array of virtual possibilities which defy their physical selves. However, we must not forget how the commercial imperatives which fuel the pop music industry continually repackage and disseminate these experimental voyages back to us as something hyper-normal: radio friendly tunes about self-expression, love and friendship to be eternally played in the background of shopping malls and retailers, thusly normalising these cyborgian entities under the guise of sappy humanism, mindless consumerism and dance beats. Perhaps what pop music is selling is not music at all but our inevitable posthuman future?

Given that pop music is where this intense symbiosis of physical and virtual territories occur - engendered via the genre's fixation on autotune - might we not posit 'pop' as a speculative future or a hyperstitional terrain inhabited by an assortment of posthuman potentials? Potentials in the sense that these beguiling man-machine figures which dwell within pop music might actually be an aural fragment of our future selves: templexic, terminator like beings who have been jettisoned back into the present in order to bring about the techno singularity which awaits us in the future. If capitalism is time converging upon (as opposed to diverging from) singularity, in effect drawing humanity seductively towards an unavoidable future event which will usher in a radically new world, then electronic pop music might be like the harpy's swan song of doom as we crash destructively into the future. Contemporary pop music is not about lost futures and a permanently stalled present – as the critic Mark Fisher would like us to believe. Instead, it is the alien echoes of the future resonating out into the present, beckoning us to step into the gaping mouth of our future selves.