

IS ZIGGY STARDUST CAMP?:
DAVID BOWIE AS A CASE
STUDY IN MUSIC
AND CAMP

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To Jaxon

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ABSTRACT

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David Bowie's performance style and image during his "Stardust Years" (1972-1973) are widely considered as exemplifying a Camp aesthetic. With few exceptions (Buckley, 1993), all consider his image, the persona Ziggy Stardust, as being Camp and specific discussions of his music as Camp are lacking. Indeed, most sources lump Bowie's music and image together when referring to him as Camp but only use the visual aspects to draw examples of Camp. Nevertheless, Freya Jarman-Ivens' "Notes on

Musical Camp” (2009) is a recent source that attempts to locate the camp aesthetic “in the music” as well as in the performance style and image. Applying Jarman-Ivens’

methodology to David Bowie's "Let's Spend the Night Together" (1973), I will locate Camp in this musical performance, highlighting specific traits, as described by Jarman-Ivens, which elicit a reading of the Camp aesthetic. Using two of Bowie's songs "Ziggy Stardust" and "John, I'm Only Dancing," I will also attempt to separate the visual aspects from a musical performance, in order to search for Camp strictly in the music. The significance of my thesis is to validate Jarman-Ivens' study and her methodology on locating a Camp aesthetic in a musical performance.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: BOWIE, MUSIC, AND CAMP

Introduction

During David Bowie's "Stardust Years" (1972-1973), he recorded and released three albums: *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972), *Aladdin Sane* (1973) and *Pin-Ups* (1973).¹ Many writers refer to the images Bowie created during this period, specifically the Ziggy Stardust persona, as reflecting a Camp sensibility.

Aside from one example, David Buckley's "Still Pop's Faker?" (1993), there is no mention of Bowie's *music* of this period as Camp.² Indeed, research on Camp generally focuses on the visual aspects, and only recently with Freya Jarman-Ivens' "Notes on Musical Camp" (2009) has an actual methodology on locating Camp within music been discussed. My study will focus on the following questions: To what extent do the musical elements in the Ziggy Stardust era reflect Camp? Does the music support the Camp image created by the persona? More broadly, can Camp be located in a musical performance, and to what extent can we separate the music from the visual aspects?

Discussing the implied performance of an audio recording, Theodore Gracyk, in his book *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (1996), writes that, "A recording creates a

¹ The album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* will be abbreviated as *Ziggy Stardust*. When discussing the persona of Ziggy Stardust, the name will not be italicized.

² David Buckley, "Still Pop's Faker?" *The Bowie Companion*, ed. Elizabeth Thompson and David Gutman (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1996).

‘virtual’ space and time in which a performance is represented as taking place.”³ What Gracyk is suggesting is that the audio recording has an indirect sense of a performance. What you are hearing is a performance without the visual aspect readily available to you. Popular music—distributed through such mediums as audio recordings, live concert performances, and music videos—combines the visual and aural aspects into an arguably inseparable entity.

Ziggy Stardust is significant in many ways. It was Bowie’s first commercially successful album since his 1969 album *David Bowie*. *Ziggy Stardust* would reach the number five spot on the United Kingdom’s chart for 174 weeks and was seventy-fifth in the United States.⁴ Secondly, while some consider *Ziggy Stardust* the first glam rock album, all agree that it is the definitive for the genre.⁵ A survey of widely used history of rock textbooks reveals a consensus that Bowie was the first to solidify the glam rock style into the mainstream.⁶ Joe Stuessy and Scott Lipscomb’s *Rock and Roll: Its History and Stylistic Development* characterizes him as “the unquestioned leader of this early alternative trend.”⁷ Bowie’s main objective with this dive into glam rock, according to

³ Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 53.

⁴ David Buckley, *David Bowie: the Complete Guide to his Music* (New York, NY: Omnibus Press, 2004), 19.

⁵ Several sources consider T. Rex’s *Electric Warrior* (1971) to be the first glam rock album. Philip Auslander, in his chapter “King of the Highway, Queen of the Hop: Marc Bolan and the Evolution of Glam Style” states that “Bolan bridged the gap between psychedelic rock and glam rock but was a transitional figure who neither let go completely of the values inherent in the former style nor pushed the latter style to its limits. Bolan undertook the transition intentionally and knowingly.” Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 71. James E. Perone suggests that “*The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* may not be the first glam-rock album, a title [that is] sometimes given to T. Rex’s *Electric Warrior* (1971).” James E. Perone, *The Words and Music of David Bowie* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 32.

⁶ Katherine Charlton, *Rock Music Styles*, 5th edition (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006); John Covach *What’s That Sound? An Introduction to Rock and its History* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006); Larry Starr and Christopher Watermen *American Popular Music* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005); and, Joe Stuessy and Scott Lipscomb, *Rock and Roll: It’s History and Stylistic Development* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2006).

⁷ Stuessy and Lipscomb, 432.

Bowie himself, was “to broaden rock’s vocabulary.”⁸ By adding such visual aspects to rock music as Japanese Kabuki and western theatre, Bowie aimed to create a genre of music that is inseparable from the visual.

Regarding the 1970s rock and roll fashion trends, Bowie states that “rock seemed to have wandered into some kind of denim hell. Street life was long hair, beards, leftover beads from the Sixties and, God forbid, flares were still evident.”⁹ He consequently began to use fashion that was more effeminate and ambiguous. Makeup, earrings, tight-fitted and sexually revealing clothing, orange dyed hair, platform heels and boots became his statement against rock’s “denim hell,” and in crafting his most celebrated and glamorous persona, he created, Ziggy Stardust, an androgynous alien rock-messiah.¹⁰ Ziggy Stardust was Bowie’s first attempt at creating a character to coincide with the music, a method he would apply for different stages of his musical career. His albums *Diamond Dogs* (1974) and *Station to Station* (1976) bore two distinct but weaker personas, Halloween Jack and the Thin White Duke. Both personas did not have quite the impact as did the Ziggy Stardust persona.¹¹

⁸ Nicholas Pegg, *The Complete David Bowie* (London, UK: Reynolds and Hears Ltd, 2009), 291.

⁹ David Bowie, *Moonage Daydream: The Life and Times of Ziggy Stardust* (New York: Universe, 2005), 11.

¹⁰ My description of Bowie’s Ziggy persona as an androgynous alien rock-messiah comes from various sources, including, James E. Perone in his *The Words and Music of David Bowie*, who describes Bowie as “an androgynous glam and metal figure” (26); Jean Rock, in his article in the *Daily Express* “Waiting for Bowie—and Finding a Genius Who Insists He’s Really a Clown,” describing the persona as “To rock, a messiah. To his fans, a god” (133); and, Nicholas Pegg, in his *The Complete David Bowie*, referring to Bowie’s Ziggy persona as “a visionary poet who, with a little extraterrestrial assistance becomes a rock star” (290).

¹¹ Known best for his Ziggy Stardust persona, Bowie’s other creations after Ziggy Stardust provided chart-topping albums such as *Diamond Dogs* which reached number five on the US Chart while *Station to Station* reached number three on the US Chart; nevertheless, the personas were not as influential as the Ziggy persona.

Bowie's subsequent albums in the US fared better, starting with *Aladdin Sane* reaching seventeen, and all successive albums held spots within the top 50. Recorded in 1972 but released in 1973, *Aladdin Sane* centered on the Ziggy Stardust persona, this time with an American twist. Although a glam rock album, *Aladdin Sane* does not follow the typical conventions of pop-oriented music for the masses. Perone describes the album as, "somewhat more scattered than Bowie's previous album with regard to structure."¹² The music tends to be on the harder side of the rock spectrum, with mostly darker lyrics focusing more on insanity, as opposed to his earlier work. The title of the album is a play on words: "A lad insane." In each song on the album, we begin to feel the insanity suggested by the album's title. Robert Matthew-Walker, in *David Bowie: Theatre of Music* (1985), describes the album as "[a] chaotic expression...when the Aladdin Sane album is criticized, as it can be, for its more than occasional rough edges, it should be remembered that those crudities are brought into play to express precisely those things."¹³ The album's ten songs each contain sections of free improvisation, as well as greater vocal improvisation by Bowie as well as female and male backup singers.

Bowie has described the Aladdin Sane persona as "Ziggy goes to America."¹⁴ In keeping with this theme, the music and lyrics are associated with different American cities, with half of the songs on the album referring to cities in the United States. He goes on to explain his view of America: "Here was this alternative world that I'd been talking about...it had all the violence, and all the strangeness and bizarreness, and it was really happening. It was real life and it wasn't just in my songs. Suddenly my songs didn't seem

¹² James E. Perone, *The Words and Music of David Bowie* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 33.

¹³ Robert Matthew-Walker, *David Bowie: Theatre of Music*, (Toronto, Canada: The Kensal Press, 1985), 89.

¹⁴ David Bowie quoted in Pegg, 300.

so out of place.”¹⁵ Bowie clarifies, “*Aladdin Sane* was my idea of rock and roll America.”¹⁶ Matthew-Walker suggests that American influences such as the 1960s racial riots, black Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, the Vietnam War, and Watergate “combined to deliver a collective culture-shock which ran through every stratum of American society. One must not look to Bowie’s music to resolve American problems. Rather one must take America as the starting-point, as a peg on which Bowie has hung his ideas.”¹⁷

Bowie began recording his next album, *Pin-Ups*, in France during July 1973, a few days after Ziggy’s famous public retirement at the Hammersmith Odeon.¹⁸ Containing various covers of Bowie’s favorite songs from 1964 through 1967, from such artists as Pink Floyd, The Who, and the Yardbirds, *Pin-Ups* is the last album under Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust period.¹⁹ Bowie and Spiders from Mars guitarist, Mick Ronson, reworked the songs to reflect a more glam rock feel. Bowie explains, “We just took down the basic chord structures and worked from there.”²⁰ Although Bowie retired Ziggy Stardust, most consider the persona continuing with this album based on Bowie’s image and music being very similar to that of the previous two Ziggy albums. *Pin-ups* was not well received by Bowie fans, many who were not too keen on a purely cover album.²¹

¹⁵ Pegg, 291.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Matthew-Walker, 90.

¹⁸ For further information on Ziggy’s retirement at the Hammersmith Odeon, see Chapter 3.

¹⁹ Nicholas Pegg, James E. Perone, Robert Matthew-Walker, and David Buckley consider the *Pin-Ups* album still under the Ziggy Stardust persona, which I agree with based on Bowie continuing to employ the same visual aspects and same basic sound of the previous two albums.

²⁰ Bowie quoted in Pegg, 303.

²¹ Perone, 39.

Bowie's Ziggy Stardust persona is widely considered to exemplify a Camp aesthetic. Critics who claim Bowie's Ziggy Stardust persona as eliciting Camp, focus on the how Ziggy looked and what Ziggy did during a performance. I believe that the sound of Ziggy should be considered among the traits reflecting Camp. In this project I will ask, to what extent do the musical elements in the Ziggy Stardust era reflect Camp? Does the music support the Camp image created by the persona? In addition, more broadly, can Camp be located "in the music?" In saying, "in the music," I am working with the assumption that music is a performative genre that contains both visual aspects as well as aural aspects, an art for the eyes as well as for the ears.

Camp

The earliest mention of a Camp aesthetic is in Christopher Isherwood's novel *The World in the Evening* (1954).²² One major contribution by Isherwood is his distinction between high Camp and low Camp, which appears in Gillian Rodger's study of Camp and Annie Lennox, discussed below.²³ Low Camp, as described by Isherwood, is "a swishy little boy with peroxide hair, dressed in a picture hat and a feather boa, pretending to be Marlene Dietrich?"²⁴ High Camp is the more serious attempt at Camping. Again, Isherwood: "High Camp is the whole emotional basis of the Ballet, for example, and of course of Baroque art. You see, true High Camp always has an underlying seriousness. You can't camp about something you don't take seriously. You're not making fun of it; you're making fun out of it. You're expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of

²² Christopher Isherwood, "The World in the Evening," reprinted in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

²³ Gillian Rodger "Drag, Camp, and Gender Subversion in the Music Videos of Annie Lennox" *Popular Music* 23, no. 1 (2004): 17-29.

²⁴ Isherwood, 51.

fun and artifice and elegance.”²⁵ Isherwood provides other examples of High Camp such as the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and El Greco. Although not always referred to in Isherwood, the terms high and low Camp appear in subsequent writings on the subject.

Susan Sontag’s “Notes on Camp” (1964), first published in the *Partisan Review*, is the seminal work on early Camp.²⁶ Explained through fifty-eight “jottings,”²⁷ she defines Camp as an aesthetic, a sensibility that delights in the unnatural, the artificial, and the exaggerated. Camp is also androgyny, where gender roles are blurred to produce femininity in something masculine and vice-versa. Indeed, with regard to living life as theater, Sontag describes Camp behavior “as a state of continual incandescence—a person being one, very intense thing. This attitude toward character is a key element of the theatricalization of experience embodied in the Camp sensibility.”²⁸ In addition to being located in people and their behavior, Camp can also be manifested in such objects as popular songs, movies, clothes, and furniture. For Sontag, the purest form of Camp is unintentional. Pure Camp persons are serious in their objective to be creative, and do not intend to create a Camp. Those who fully intend on creating an outrageous work or fashioning his or her image as something shocking in order to provide a Camp reading, are an example of impure Camp. This directly reflects what Isherwood references as high Camp and low Camp, though Sontag refers to Isherwood’s work as “a lazy two-page

²⁵ Isherwood, 51.

²⁶ Susan Sontag “Notes on Camp,” in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

²⁷ Sontag believes describing Camp in an essay form would not be appropriate for Camp. She states, “The form of jottings, rather than an essay (with its claim to a linear, consecutive argument), seemed more appropriate for getting down something of this particular fugitive sensibility. It’s embarrassing to be solemn and treatise-like about Camp. One runs the risk of having, oneself, produced a very inferior piece of Camp” (54).

²⁸ Sontag, 61.

sketch,”²⁹ she does not reference his contribution to her term, pure Camp. David Bowie’s creation of the Ziggy Stardust persona was an intentional attempt to jolt the norms of popular music and culture in the early 1970s. Consequently, if Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust is indeed Camp, the persona would be considered impure by Sontag’s standards, and low Camp by Isherwood’s.

Sontag only marginally describes references to music. Citing operas of Mozart, Vincenzo Bellini, Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*, early 1930s Warner Brothers musical numbers, and Samuel Barber’s *Vanessa* as examples of musical Camp, she provides no explanation of how or why these examples reflect a Camp aesthetic. At the beginning of her “jottings,” she describes Camp as having an attraction to certain arts, with leanings towards the visual arts. Her statement, “Concert music, though, because it is contentless, is rarely Camp. It offers no opportunity, say, for a contrast between silly or extravagant content and rich form,”³⁰ is an attitude still held in most Camp scholarship.

Other notable sources on Camp (non-music specific) relevant to this study include several essays in Fabio Cleto’s reader *Camp: Queer Aesthetics for the Performing Subject* (1999),³¹ Esther Newton’s essay “Role Models” (1972),³² Jack Babuscio’s essay “The Cinema of Camp (aka Camp and the Gay Sensibility)” (1977),³³ Mark Booth’s “*Campe-Toi! On the Origins and Definitions of Camp*” (1983),³⁴ Philip Core’s *Camp:*

²⁹ Sontag, 53.

³⁰ Sontag, 55.

³¹ Fabio Cleto, ed. *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

³² Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972).

³³ Jack Babuscio “The Cinema of Camp (aka Camp and the Gay Sensibility),” in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

³⁴ Mark Booth, “*Campe-Toi! On the Origins and Definitions of Camp*,” in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

The Lie That Tells the Truth (1984),³⁵ and Andrew Ross's article "Uses of Camp" (1988).³⁶ All attempt to articulate an effective definition of Camp, in order to further their specific course of study. Arguably, all succeed at providing a working definition of Camp. Although varied, each definition provides a different view of the Camp aesthetic. Newton attempts to add more concrete examples to Isherwood's low Camp and high Camp, as she identifies Camp in the drag queen and the actress. Her work on describing three strategies of theatricality is beneficial to this study on David Bowie's use of theatricality.³⁷ Babuscio argues for the inseparable relationship between gay sensibility and Camp, stating, "Camp is, essentially, one of that sensibility's highest forms of expression."³⁸ Expanding Sontag's Camp terms irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and humour in relation to films, Babuscio provides greater clarity to these concepts through an examination of the terms in relevance to his topic of Camp cinema.

Booth's essay "Campe-Toi! On the Origins and Definitions of Camp," leads the others in a working definition of Camp. He criticizes the confusion caused by the broad definitions provided by Isherwood and Sontag, suggesting the following definition, "To be Camp is to present oneself as being committed to the marginal with a commitment greater than the marginal merits." In further discussing the marginal, he states:

The primary type of the marginal in society is the traditionally feminine, which Camp parodies in an exhibition of stylized effeminacy. In the extent of its commitment, such parody informs the camp person's whole personality, throwing an ironical light not only on the abstract concept of the sexual stereotype, but also

³⁵ Philip Core, "Camp: The Lie That Tells the Truth," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

³⁶ Andrew Ross, "Uses of Camp" in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

³⁷ Newton identifies Camp theatricality as working in three distinct ways: focusing on the style, the dramatic form, and living life as a role.

³⁸ Babuscio, 117.

on the parodist him of herself...Other types of the marginal are the trivial, the trashy, the kitsch and the not-terribly-good.³⁹

As a working, strict definition, Booth arguably offers the least confusing of all previous definitions. Booth targets two closely related occurrences, kitsch and Dandyism and their relation to the Camp aesthetic. Discussing the confusion between kitsch and Camp, Booth argues that Camp lacks good intentions of kitsch, and kitsch is truly an extension of Camp humour. As for Dandyism, Booth includes Thomas Carlyle's definition, "A Dandy is a Clothes-wearing Man...whose trade, office, and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes. Every faculty of his soul, spirit, purse, and person is heroically consecrated to this one object, the wearing of clothes wisely and well: so that as others dress to live, he lives to dress,"⁴⁰ suggesting an almost synonymous relationship between Camp and Dandyism.

Music and Camp

Sources that address Camp in general outnumber the sources for music and Camp. I have found only four articles and one book that address this relationship: Thomas Geyrhalter's "Effeminacy, Camp, and Sexual Subversion in Rock: The Cure and Suede" (1996),⁴¹ Kay Dickinson's "'Believe'? Vocoders, Digitalised Female Identity and Camp" (2001),⁴² Gillian Rodger's "Drag, Camp, and Gender Subversion in the Music Videos of Annie Lennox" (2004),⁴³ Steven Cohan's *Incongruous Entertainment* (2005),⁴⁴ and the most

³⁹ Booth, 69-70.

⁴⁰ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1831).

⁴¹ Thomas Geyrhalter "Effeminacy, Camp, and Sexual Subversion in Rock: The Cure and Suede" *Popular Music* 15, no. 2 (1996): 217-224.

⁴² Kay Dickinson "'Believe'? Vocoders, Digitalised Female Identity and Camp" *Popular Music* 20, no. 3 (2001): 333-347.

⁴³ Gillian Rodger "Drag, Camp, and Gender Subversion in the Music Videos of Annie Lennox" *Popular Music* 23, no. 1 (2004): 17-29.

⁴⁴ Steven Cohan, *Incongruous Entertainment: Camp, Cultural Value, and the MGM Musical*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

recent Freya Jarman-Ivens' "Notes on Musical Camp" (2009).⁴⁵ Common among all is their focus on the visual aspects (music videos, live performances, and album cover art) of the musical performance. In addition, they all appear to be working with the same basic definition of Camp: a sensibility of style and taste that uses exaggeration, artifice, parody, androgyny, and excess to challenge the norms of gender roles, and popular culture in general. All authors agree that Camp is an aspect of queerness in popular culture.

Differences between what distinguishes these articles lie within their central focus. Geyrhalter's analysis centers on the performance of effeminacy in order to illustrate how The Cure and Suede deconstruct heterosexual masculinity in their music videos, live performances, and general image. Using the vocoder as a mediator by female artists, specifically Cher's song "Believe," Dickinson demonstrates the vocoder as a Camp strategy. Rodger focuses her article on the music of Annie Lennox as a case study of the visual performance of gender. A somewhat more extensive approach in much of Cohan's book provides several examples on how the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer musicals are Camp. Finally, Jarman-Ivens focuses on a direct music and Camp relationship through the performances of different artists to show how the performance style of a particular musical example makes it Camp.

Jarman-Ivens' article "Notes on Musical Camp" is arguably the most significant for this study, in an actual music and Camp connection. Citing Sontag's "Notes on Camp," she highlights the absence of any previous work that illustrates how music can be

⁴⁵ Freya Jarman-Ivens, "Notes on Musical Camp," *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology*, ed. Derek B. Scott (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 189-203.

Camp. Jarman-Ivens cites Geyrhalter, Rodger, Dickinson, and Cohan; but states that these authors focus on the visual aspects and only marginally on the music. Locating Camp within “musical objects,”⁴⁶ Jarman-Ivens’ central focus is to taxonomize musical gestures as Camp, or having Camp qualities. She facilitates her argument to address, specifically, how these works mediate a Camp aesthetic. Using such terms as “musical gestures,”⁴⁷ “extramusical,” and “paramusical factors”⁴⁸ her study leans less towards the musical work and more towards the same visual focus of music and Camp as have been addressed by other writers already cited above.

Focusing on Sontag’s “Notes” as a major part of her study on Camp, Jarman-Ivens discusses Sontag’s terms—style, aesthetics, and value—in relation to music. Citing Sontag’s description of style as a “victory of ‘style’ over ‘content,’”⁴⁹ her understanding of style is in terms of extravagance, excessiveness, and theatricality—a term which is frequently found in sources about David Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust period. Beginning with the issue of using the terms ‘style’ and ‘content’ in music, she begins a brief discussion of “absolute music.”⁵⁰ Jarman-Ivens summarizes her take on the issue of style and content in music stating, “Once we accept that music is meaning-making despite its non-representationality, we can certainly trace the presence in musical texts of ‘extravagance’,

⁴⁶ Her description of “musical objects” includes “numbers from musicals and films (‘Big Spender’ or ‘Don’t Rain On My Parade’), lounge tunes (‘Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps’ or ‘Mambo Italiano’), torch songs (‘You Don’t Have To Say You Love Me’) or classic disco hits (‘Tragedy’ or ‘I am What I Am’).” She does not mention why or to what extent those specific examples of “musical objects” act as examples in a music and Camp association.

⁴⁷ Jarman-Ivens’ definition “combinations of instruments, turns of melodic phrase, intervals, chord progressions and more.”

⁴⁸ Jarman-Ivens’ describes paramusical factors as being alongside music or concurrent with music, referencing Philip Tagg’s “Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music.”

⁴⁹ Sontag, 62.

⁵⁰ She states, “What, then, is the nature of the musical object, which would have style on the one hand and content on the other? Is the content of music not only manifested through its style? Or can we, for instance, propose melody and harmony as content, and arrangement or orchestration as style?” She continues to reiterate her view that certain “musical gestures” help bring out meaning in music (191).

and ‘theatricality’ and so on.”⁵¹ Again, she uses extravagance and theatricality to describe what Campy music might contain. As for value, she cites Sontag’s use of the terms extravagant and gaudy in Camp, as having a negative connotation. A discussion on the similarities of Camp and the gendered discourses concerning music scholarship begins to further the argument on the negative value associated with Camp. She claims a disinterest in the lower status popular music artists and genres in music scholarship, when she declares that “Those musics and musical textual features that I will come to identify as related to Camp broadly parallel those that are considered ‘unworthy’ in academic and popular discourse.”⁵² This statement seems relevant to my study on Bowie, as many have marginalized his work. Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman, in the introduction to *The Bowie Companion* (1993), write: “Musicologists have also been hesitant about an artist whose music, though melodically and texturally adventurous, lacks the consistent tone and polish which makes The Beatles such a tempting target for formal exegesis.”⁵³ They provide an arguably valid argument, as we tend to find a great deal of music scholarship written on the more mainstream artists such as Elvis, The Beatles, and Bob Dylan.

Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23 (1875) is her first example of Camp in music. Her methodology consists of comparing two performances of this concerto, one by Vladimir Horowitz and the other by Liberace, “as a way of exploring the relationship between text and performance, the position of Camp in relation to popular culture and the importance of detachment in the enactment of Camp.”⁵⁴

Jarman-Ivens begins by associating Tchaikovsky’s concerto as Camp because of its use

⁵¹ Jarman-Ivens, 192.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman, *The Bowie Companion*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1996), xxv.

⁵⁴ Jarman-Ivens, 195.

on the soundtrack to the film *The Great Lie* (1941). She continues with another arguably weak statement that this type of movie—considered a “concerto film”—is a melodrama, and all melodramas elicit a Camp reading. Before beginning to analyze the concerto, she has already used other factors to hypothesize that the concerto in itself is Camp. Later she claims that Tchaikovsky’s concerto is kitsch, and it is in the performance that we find the Camp aspect.⁵⁵

Jarman-Ivens argues that Liberace’s performance is more Camp than Horowitz’s. Briefly abandoning the visual side of the performance—eschewing what she considers to be the obvious choice in the case of Liberace’s image—she locates “musical moments” as evoking the Camp aesthetic. The first example is located in the opening chords of the concerto. Her evidence of Camp is in Liberace’s attack on the chords, as he does not hold the chords for their full rhythmic value. She provides measures 8-11 of the piano concerto, as a reference point. Another performance trait that elicits Camp, found in the opening statement of the theme, is Liberace’s performance of drawn out sixteenth notes in measure 27, invoking “the true sense of the word ‘pathetic’, whereas Horowitz punctuates them very properly and carefully.”⁵⁶ Regarding tempo, Jarman-Ivens locates Camp in Liberace’s exaggeration of the *accelerando* beginning in measure 32 of the concerto. His interpretation, described by Jarman-Ivens, is a crude interpretation compared to Horowitz’s gradual *accelerando*. All previous examples provided by Jarman-Ivens evidence her opening statement of Liberace’s performance as eliciting a Camp interpretation. All of Jarman-Ivens’ examples in Liberace’s performance are

⁵⁵ Earlier in her article, she discusses how kitsch and Camp are one in the same, but the difference is Camp knows it is awful, and kitsch does not. She states, “Thus, certain images or objects that seem Camp now may well have been taken as kitsch on their first outings in the world” (194).

⁵⁶ Jarman-Ivens, 196.

concerned with tension and release, more specifically anticipation, of the music. The exaggerated manipulation of tension and release is a strategy of Camp. According to Jarman-Ivens:

It is equally my contention that the production of anticipation is a physical response to the sound. Moreover, I want to propose that the exaggerated production of anticipation, as brought about by Liberace, might intensify that sense of physicality to the music, and this is a place where Camp is surely invited in.⁵⁷

Focusing on the strategy of tension and release, Jarman-Ivens also identifies Camp in Liza Minnelli's performance of "Auf wiedersehen mein Herr" from *Cabaret*. In the instrumental introduction, she locates examples of tension in the alternation between tonic and dominant chords in a minor key, out of tune instruments, and the unresolved dominant chord in the moments before the vocal line enters. Jarman-Ivens' concludes arguing that in both Minnelli's and Liberace's Camp performances "is a sense of exaggeration, flamboyance, and playfulness, achieved in part through an overworked system of tension and release."⁵⁸ Her essay provides several examples of how one can use tension and release to elicit a Camp reading of a musical performance. In my study on Bowie's Ziggy Stardust period, I will attempt to locate these traits in the musical performances of selected songs that elicit a Camp reading.

David Bowie and Camp

References to David Bowie and Camp, center on his Ziggy Stardust period (1972-1973). Notable Bowie biographer Nicholas Pegg, in his book *The Complete David Bowie* (2009) writes that:

⁵⁷ Jarman-Ivens, 199.

⁵⁸ Jarman-Ivens, 202.

He was doing something far more fundamental: he was embracing the spirit of Camp according to its truest definition, which is not about sex but about the elevation of the aesthetic above the purely practical. Just so, David's relentless habit of editing his personality, appearance, vocabulary and frames of reference to present a succession of 'new' Bowies, each fashioned for effect and exclusivity, follows the manifesto of Camp established by Oscar Wilde and Susan Sontag. Camp invested Bowie/Ziggy with a useful air of ironic detachment, placing the received image of the star on a pedestal aloof from the mundane reality of studio sessions, tour buses, and the wife and baby at home.⁵⁹

Pegg refers to Wilde as premiering the Camp aesthetic. Sontag dedicates her notes to Wilde as well as referring to him as "a transitional figure...It was Wilde who formulated an important element of the Camp sensibility – the equivalence of all objects—when he announced his intention of 'living up' to his blue-and white china, or declared that a doorknob could be as admirable as a painting."⁶⁰ To Sontag, dandyism has evolved into Camp.

Bowie—in discussion of the Suzi Quatro, Sweet, Wizzard, Mud, and Gary

Glitter's abuse of Glam rock—comments:

It actually became a sense of embarrassment, iconically. I mean, in my feather boas and dresses, I certainly didn't wanna be associated with the lines of Gary Glitter, who was obviously a *charlatan*...we were very aware of it at the time and we were very miffed that people who had obviously never seen *Metropolis* and had never heard of Christopher Isherwood were actually becoming glam rockers.⁶¹

The mention of Isherwood is quite significant. He does not directly refer to the term Camp, but indirectly he does mention Isherwood. Not only does Bowie inadvertently connect the Camp aesthetic to Glam rock, he attaches Camp to his image.

⁵⁹ Pegg, 297.

⁶⁰ Sontag, 63.

⁶¹ Bowie quoted in Pegg, 467.

The *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*⁶² references Bowie's performances in the 1970s as examples of Camp. In their discussion of The Scissor Sisters' intentional use of the Camp aesthetic, Purvis and Longstaff state that "popular Camp [is] seen in the performances of Elton John and David Bowie in the 1970s."⁶³ Providing a less detailed account, the authors do not offer any explanation on how or why one would see Bowie as Camp, and the reader is left to interpret what might constitute a camp reading. Prominent writers in Camp scholarship, Cleto, Ross, Core, and Babuscio also cite Bowie as being Camp. Yet again, we find the same vagueness in these essays, similar to the reference of Bowie in the *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*.

Jarman-Ivans, in her aforementioned article, "Notes on Music Camp," argues that what is considered Camp now may not have been considered by everyone as Camp at the time. This argument has a valid point in relation to Bowie; did his audience and critics in the 1970s view Bowie as Camp? Three articles published in 1972 refer to Bowie as "King of Camp Rock": Michael Watts' "Oh You Pretty Thing," published in *Melody Maker*; Henry Edwards' "The Rise of Ziggy Stardust: Bowie's Version of Camp Rock," published in *After Dark*; and, Ray Coleman's "A Star is Born," published in *Melody Maker*.⁶⁴ Discussing Bowie's ever-changing image, Watts' writes that, "David's present image is to come on like a swishy queen, a gorgeously effeminate boy. He's as camp as a

⁶² Tony Purvis and Gareth Longstaff "Camp" in *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*, ed. Jodi O'Brien (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009).

⁶³ Purvis and Longstaff, 104.

⁶⁴ Michael Watts "Oh You Pretty Thing" *Melody Maker*, January 22, 1972. Henry Edwards "The Rise of Ziggy Stardust: Bowie's Version of Camp Rock" *After Dark*, 1972. Ray Coleman, "A Star is Born" reprinted in *The Bowie Companion*, ed. Elizabeth Thompson and David Gutman (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1996), 79.

row of tents, with his limp hand and trolling vocabulary.”⁶⁵ After Bowie’s 1972 performance at London’s Royal Festival Hall, Coleman writes:

‘Starman,’ ‘Five Years,’ ‘Andy Warhol,’ a straight solo on ‘Amsterdam’ and a superb encore, ‘Suffragette City,’ were the high-spots of a show which saw Bowie dressed in two outfits, obviously reveling in stardom, strutting from mike to mike, slaying us all with a deadly mixture of fragility and desperate intensity, the undisputed king of Camp rock.⁶⁶

Edwards, in agreement with Coleman, declares that, “The King of Camp Rock has put on quite a show. Here is an authentic songwriting and singing talent. Here is an act that has been carefully staged and then polished to perfection.”⁶⁷ He later comments that, “As with all glossy novelties, it seems to have almost no substance.”⁶⁸ Both Edwards and Coleman argue that Bowie is Camp, and in fact, the King of Camp Rock, but neither address how or why they have come to this conclusion. Certainly, they imply if not outright state that it is Bowie’s “show” and “outfits” that suggest a Camp reading.

One source that slightly approaches actual examples of how Bowie reflects the Camp sensibility is David Buckley’s “Still Pop’s Faker?” (1993), published in *The Bowie Companion*, emerging as the most useful writing on Bowie and Camp.⁶⁹ Although not the main thrust of his article, Buckley does attempt to connect Bowie’s early 1970s persona, Ziggy Stardust, to Camp. Buckley argues that two influences, Andy Warhol and the Camp sensibility, provided Bowie the means to create the Ziggy Stardust persona.

Focusing on three of Sontag’s strategies of Camp—the exaggerated, the use of personas, and irony—Buckley provides examples of how Bowie exemplifies each.

⁶⁵ Watts.

⁶⁶ Coleman, 80.

⁶⁷ Edwards.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ David Buckley, “Still Pop’s Faker?” *The Bowie Companion*, ed. Elizabeth Thompson and David Gutman (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1996), 3-11.

Beginning with Sontag's basic definition, "Camp is a vision of the world in terms of style - but a particular kind of style. It is the love of the exaggerated, the 'off', of things-being-what-they-are-not,"⁷⁰ Buckley remarks on his view of exaggeration as "an aesthetic which Bowie championed in the seventies and which he still flirts with today: namely the triumph of artifice, of theatricality, of irony, over truth, authenticity and emotional verisimilitude."⁷¹ Using Sontag's argument of Camp as found "in objects and persons...life as theatre"⁷² to demonstrate a Camp reading of Bowie's use of personas, most notably with Ziggy Stardust, Buckley refers to the lyrics "It was cold and it rained, so I felt like an actor,"⁷³ from the song "Five Years" in *Ziggy Stardust* (1972), as further proof of Bowie living life as theatre. Finally, Buckley concludes his section on the Ziggy period with this statement: "The overall effect, both musically and visually, is one of irony. Once again, Susan Sontag put it so well: 'One is drawn to camp when one realizes that 'sincerity' is not enough. Sincerity can be simply philistinism, intellectual narrowness.'"⁷⁴ Again, Buckley refers to the lyrics of "Rock 'n' Roll Suicide" from *Ziggy Stardust* to portray Bowie's use of irony in how he played with disengaging the audience in his live performances. Buckley's examples of Ziggy Stardust as Camp are focused on the visual side of Camp. When actually referring to Bowie's music, Buckley focuses on the lyrics to draw a Camp reading.

In searching for Camp within a music performance, we are faced with questions:

To what extent can we separate the aural from the visual in music, particularly with

⁷⁰ Sontag, 56.

⁷¹ Buckley, 3.

⁷² See Note 71.

⁷³ David Bowie, "Five Years," *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972; RCA, 1984 CD).

⁷⁴ Buckley, 7.

reference to a Camp reading? Can the music and image function without each other?

Jarman-Ivens attempts to separate the visual and aural aspects of a musical performance in order to locate Camp in the music, but she seems to require discussion of the performance style to support her reading. Her addition of visual aspects in her analysis, such as the way Liberace lifts his hands, brings the focus back to Camp as a visual aesthetic. As previously stated, a wide variety of sources consider Bowie's Ziggy Stardust persona as exemplifying the Camp aesthetic. My analysis of Bowie's musical and visual output during his time as Ziggy Stardust will suggest if Camp, Bowie's intentions at a Camp reading would be considered by Isherwood as low Camp and by Sontag as impure Camp. Using Jarman-Ivens' study "Notes on Musical Camp," focusing on an exaggerated system of tension and release, I will determine the extent to which Bowie's musical performance during his Ziggy Stardust period can be considered Camp. As for the visual component of Bowie's Ziggy persona, I will draw on the works of Isherwood, Sontag, Newton, Booth, Geyrhalter, and Rodger as evidence suggesting that Bowie is low Camp. Chapter 2 will focus on Bowie's "Let's Spend the Night Together" from the *Aladdin Sane* album, and I will compare the live performances and audio recordings of both Bowie's version to the original by The Rolling Stones, in order to locate Camp in a musical performance. In Chapter 3, I will locate camp aurally in the songs "Ziggy Stardust" and the single "John, I'm Only Dancing," both from the early days of the Ziggy Stardust persona.

CHAPTER 2: “LET’S SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER”

Freya Jarman-Ivens, in “Notes on Musical Camp,” evaluates two performances of Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23 (1875)—one by Horowitz and the other by Liberace—and Liza Minelli’s performance of “Auf wiedersehen mein Herr” from *Cabaret*, in order to highlight Camp traits in a musical performance. In the course of her analysis, she classifies ten traits one could incorporate into a musical performance to elicit a Camp reading.

<u>Musical Trait</u>	<u>Camp Effect</u>
Elongation of note values and/or chords	Pathetic
Diminution of note values and/or chords	Lighthearted, mischievous, and silly
Rushed tempo changes	Crudeness
Exaggerated use of dynamics	Crudeness
Unresolved dominant chord	Tension, anticipation
Tonic and dominant alternation in a minor key	Tension, anticipation
Use of out-of-tune instruments	Tension
Intimate vocality and lack of instrumental support	Anticipation
Instrumentalists speed up the tempo, while vocal line remains steady	Anticipation
Short, sharp, spitting delivery juxtaposed with portamento and vibrato laden belting voices ⁷⁵	Exaggerated, over-the-top impression

⁷⁵ Freya Jarman-Ivens, “Notes on Musical Camp,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology*, ed. Derek B. Scott (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 201-203.

As Jarman-Ivens argues “There are textual, contextual and performance elements that must be taken into consideration when identifying the thread of camp in the fabric of the music. The clear separation of such elements is, of course, not entirely possible, but I hope I have demonstrated that, with detailed performance analysis and a sound theoretical foundation, highlighting camp in music is not impossible either.”⁷⁶ My understanding of Jarman-Ivens’ argument is that music is performance based and attempting to detach the visual aspects from the musical performance leads to an insufficient analysis. Therefore, we must include all aspects brought on by the musical performance, including staging, the performer’s costumes and makeup, body movements by performers, as well as the music. As such, a thick analysis must include a discussion of music and the images presented by a performance. Applying Jarman-Ivens’ methodology of locating Camp in musical performances, in conjunction with Susan Sontag, Mark Booth, and Esther Newton’s work on Camp for the visual side to a musical performance, this chapter will address the question: Is David Bowie’s 1973 cover of The Rolling Stone’s “Let’s Spend the Night Together” (1967) Camp?

“Let’s Spend the Night Together”

“Let’s Spend the Night Together,” written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards in 1966, was released by The Rolling Stones in 1967 as a single, and was also included on the United States version of their album, *Between the Buttons* (1967). A controversial performance of the song on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in January of 1967 found Sullivan requesting a change in lyrics to “let’s spend some time together.”⁷⁷ The band obliged and

⁷⁶ Jarman-Ivens, 203.

⁷⁷ Murray R. Nelson, *The Rolling Stones: A Musical Biography*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 51.

performed the song as Sullivan requested. Jagger, not too thrilled with the censorship, rolled his eyes when the camera focused on him.⁷⁸ Regardless of the sexually suggestive lyrics, the single reached the number one spot on the US charts. James Hector, in his book, *The Complete Guide to the Music of The Rolling Stones* (1995), claims that Jagger was inspired to write the song after a night with his new girlfriend Marianne Faithfull. Musically, Hector states, “The single forfeited the cavernous RCA Studios production style in favour of an up-front piano/bass/percussion sound, with hardly a guitar in sight...Most impressive of all was the use of the organ which built steadily through the song, so that by the climax, it was the dominant instrument.”⁷⁹ The use of sexually suggestive lyrics and the dominant use of percussion and piano instrumentation evoke an almost primal feel—arguably created the perfect springboard upon which Bowie could add his own style.

Bowie’s 1973 cover of “Let’s Spend the Night Together” appeared on the *Aladdin Sane* album and was the opening number during the Christmas Ziggy Stardust Tour (December 23, 1972-January 9, 1973) and the 1973 Ziggy Stardust Tour, also referred to as The Aladdin Sane Tour (February 14, 1973- July 3, 1973). The song was also featured in the film *Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars*,⁸⁰ which covers Ziggy Stardust’s farewell concert at the Hammersmith Odeon on July 3, 1973. Bowie’s first wife, Angela comments on his intentions:

When you cut a new version of a song so firmly identified with the original artist, you’re paying tribute, naturally, and that’s good, you’re flattering. But if you have

⁷⁸ Nelson, 51.

⁷⁹ James Hector, *The Complete Guide to the Music of The Rolling Stones*, (New York: Omnibus Press, 1995), 8.

⁸⁰ *Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture*. dir. by D.A. Pennebaker (1973; Virgin Records Us/Sunset Home Visual Entertainment, 2003 DVD).

the status David had, you're also staking your own claim to the song's glory and history. And in this case I have no doubt whatsoever that David was out to steal Stones thunder—or more to the point, Stones territory. He was tomcatting the turf, spraying young scent over the old cat's, as he had done with Marianne Faithfull.⁸¹

Whether or not Bowie was out to “steal Stones thunder,” Bowie did manage to find his way into the song's history, as it is hard to find reviews on the Rolling Stones' version without mentioning Bowie's famous cover. James E. Perone, concurs with Angie Bowie's claims, adding that “By deconstructing such a well-known song and offering a single 1970s-oriented interpretation of the meaning of the text, Bowie takes a huge risk. He risks alienating listeners who hear the song differently; he also takes a chance by changing the song's musical setting from that of the Stones' original.”⁸² The risk Bowie has taken with covering this song has proved beneficial as many view Bowie's version, as David Buckley perceived it, as a superior version.⁸³

Two essays, Ben Gerson's 1973 review of *Aladdin Sane* and Perone's chapter in *The Words and Music of David Bowie*, offer the same basic idea of Bowie revamping the sexuality of the original, although both men come to different conclusions on the effectiveness and intent of the song.⁸⁴ Gerson's view on the song's sexual connotation is presented in his statement:

‘Let's Spend The Night Together’ continues The Stones preoccupation. Here, one of the most ostensibly heterosexual calls in rock is made into a bi-anthem: The

⁸¹ Angela Bowie with Philip Carr, *Backstage Passes* (New York: Putnam, 1993), 244.

⁸² James E. Perone, *The Words and Music of David Bowie* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 36.

⁸³ David Buckley, *David Bowie: The Complete Guide to his Music* (London, UK: Omnibus Press, 2004), 26. Agreeing with Buckley, Chris Welch, in his book *David Bowie: We Could Be Hereos: The Stories Behind Every David Bowie Song* (1999), argues the same statement “the Spiders' version of ‘Let's Spend The Night Together’ is superior to the original”(62). “Bowie performs the unprecedented feat of beating the Stones on one of their own songs,” claim Roy Carr and Charles Shaar Murray, in *David Bowie: an Illustrated Record* (56).

⁸⁴ Ben Gerson, “David Bowie: Aladdin Sane” *Rolling Stone* July 19, 1973. James E. Perone, *The Words and Music of David Bowie* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007).

cover version is a means to an ultimate revisionism. The rendition here is campy, butch, brittle and unsatisfying. Bowie is asking us to re-perceive 'Let's Spend The Night Together' as a gay song, possibly from its inception. Sexual ambiguity in rock has existed long before any audience was attuned to it. However, though Bowie's point is well taken, his methods are not.⁸⁵

Gerson's claim of an intentional reconstruction of the song into a bi-anthem was warranted during 1973. Bowie was married to Angie Bowie and had a son, Zowie Bowie, at the time of the famous Michael Watts article, "Oh You Pretty Thing" (1972) in *Melody Maker*, where he outs himself as bi-sexual. Viewing Bowie as gay or bi-sexual, naturally Gerson would see any cover by Bowie of a typical heterosexual song as an attempt to provide a homosexual interpretation. Perone challenges Gerson's argument, offering another insight on Bowie's version by stating:

If one deals with the track as an extension of the Ziggy Stardust, fictitious band performances of Bowie and company's previous album, or if one even just evaluates the Bowie arrangement and performance as a glam adaptation of 'Let's Spend The Night Together,' then the track makes a whole lot more sense. It is not a paean to the Rolling Stones. It is, however, an arrangement and performance that brings the almost purely physical lust of the original clearly into the realm of sex as physical pleasure. Bowie's spoken mini-drama at the end of the track also suggests that the couple's copulation can be seen as an act of defiance against the control of their parents. He adds a distinctive harder edge to the sexual politics of what the Rolling Stones had committed to back in the 1960s.⁸⁶

Perone offers an arguably understandable view of the song functioning as a glam adaptation, which closely resembles my view of the song. What Bowie did was take a typical masculine rock and roll song and provided the alternative, the arguably feminine-glam-Camp view. Bowie amped up the sexuality into a carnal variation of the original, he took the invitation from "let's spend the night together" to the direct statement "let's make love!" Throughout the *Aladdin Sane* album, Bowie leaned more towards sexuality

⁸⁵ Ben Gerson, "David Bowie: Aladdin Sane," *Rolling Stone* July 19, 1973.

⁸⁶ Perone, 36.

than the *Ziggy Stardust* album. It is no surprise that Bowie would find an already—at that point in history—sexually explicit song, and add even more sexuality in his version.

A striking feature that several writers tend to focus on is Mike Garson's piano playing in "Let's Spend The Night Together." Nicholas Pegg suggests that the "defining feature of *Aladdin Sane* is the arrival of pianist Mike Garson, who had joined the Spiders for the first US Tour."⁸⁷ Bowie himself comments on the addition of Garson to the Spiders, "You wouldn't think of bringing a fringe avant-garde pianist into the context of a straight-ahead rock and roll band, but it worked out well...It brought some really interesting textural qualities to the album that wouldn't have had quite the same feel on it if Mike hadn't been there."⁸⁸ Robert Matthew-Walker, in *David Bowie: Theatre of Music*,⁸⁹ describes Garson's playing on "Let's Spend The Night Together" as "an electrifying performance, from the grabbing, absurdly flak-ridden piano introduction—as though Jerry Lee Lewis had been taking lessons from Barraqué."⁹⁰ Garson's piano arrangement for "Let's Spend the Night Together" added a sense of an over-the-top exaggeration to the song. He took a straightforward typical rock piano part and revamped it into a frantic, aggressive, and improvisational adaptation. His exaggerated arrangement sets up the Camp aesthetic for the remainder of the song.

Visual Analysis

Bowie's focus on the visual aspects of the musical performance places his intentions on what Sontag describes as "an affinity for certain arts...all the elements of visual décor,

⁸⁷ Nicholas Pegg, *The Complete David Bowie*, (London, UK: Reynolds & Hearn, 2009), 132.

⁸⁸ David Bowie quoted in Pegg, 300-301.

⁸⁹ Robert Matthew-Walker, *David Bowie: Theatre of Music*, (Toronto, Canada: The Kensal Press, 1985).

⁹⁰ Matthew-Walker, 93.

for instance, make[s] up a large part of Camp.”⁹¹ Bowie, when preparing for the upcoming tour, placed the visual aspects at the forefront. The video guide, *Rock Milestones: David Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust* contains an interview with Angie Bowie, who organized staging, and costumes, where she comments, “What I was interested in, was whether we were delivering quality material. I know it sounds Camp, but I’m serious, I’m really just that old-fashioned. I just wanted to know that it was a great show, and the music was as great as it could be and you could hear it, and they looked good and it was exciting.”⁹² Sustained through 1973, the Ziggy Stardust character underwent several visual changes in costuming and make-up, as well as the stage show. These changes morphed the Ziggy and Aladdin Sane into one persona. The addition of more Kabuki costumes by Kansai Yamamoto, and Bowie’s new make-up artist Pierre Larouche during the end of the 1973 Ziggy Stardust Tour added a more stylized look to the new Ziggy. Bowie’s fascination with Japanese Kabuki theatre transferred into his stage show in the ’73 tour. The purpose of Bowie’s use of Kabuki costuming is described by Pegg: “Embracing the conventions of Kabuki theatre, in which changes of mask and costume denotes changes of mood and personality, Bowie now began integrating his costumes into the ‘text’ of his shows, conferring on the gaudy apparel an implied significance it had hitherto lacked.”⁹³ *Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars: the Motion Picture*, directed by D.A. Pennebaker,⁹⁴ showcases Bowie’s famous retirement concert on July 3, 1973. The stage design for this show was minimal in keeping with Bowie’s Kabuki

⁹¹ Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp” reprinted in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 55.

⁹² *Rock Milestones: David Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust*. (2006; Classic Rock Legends, 2006 DVD)

⁹³ Pegg, 463.

⁹⁴ *Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture*. dir. by D.A. Pennebaker (1973; Virgin Records Us/Sunset Home Visual Entertainment, 2003 DVD).

theme, in which the importance was placed on the actor, not the plot. Bowie recalled that “The Ziggy shows themselves were just great music and rather smart costume changes.”⁹⁵ The stage was set up with dark curtains, with three white circles with a red flash in each. Bowie explains the origin of the flashes, stating that “The flash on the original Ziggy set was taken from the ‘high voltage’ sign that was stuck on any box containing dangerous amounts of electricity.”⁹⁶

Bowie applied his own make-up during the early days of his Ziggy tour. In his book *Moonage Daydream: The Life and Times of Ziggy Stardust* (2005), he writes that, “I used to enjoy doing the make-up. It felt relaxing and put me in a kind of serene place before the show. Lindsay [Kemp] had taught me the rudiments and I picked up other tips as I went along. Both the fabulous Tamasaburo, star of the Japanese kabuki, and Kansai gave me a lot of advice on applying kabuki-style schlep.”⁹⁷ The addition of Larouche heightened the quality of Ziggy’s image on and off stage; Bowie describes Larouche, as “the most creative make-up artist I’ve worked with. When I brought all the Kabuki powders back from Japan, he went crazy with them and for weeks my stage persona went all geisha.”⁹⁸ Several noticeable changes in Bowie’s appearance include his famous orange hair now dyed red, silver lipstick, dark black eyeliner, and a silver circle in the middle of his forehead. Explaining the appearance of the silver circle, Bowie clarifies:

The round glitter circle on my forehead was an exaggeration of the type that my friend Calvin Lee used to wear in the Sixties. Calvin was an extraordinary looking Chinese American Professor, and had played a part in inventing that funny shiny silver optical paper that was popular at the time. He used to wear a small half-inch

⁹⁵ David Bowie *Moonage Daydream: The Life and Times of Ziggy Stardust* (New York, NY: Universe, 2005), 80.

⁹⁶ Bowie, 223.

⁹⁷ Bowie, 248.

⁹⁸ Bowie, 256.

circle of it in the middle of his forehead. A kind of futuristic third-eye thing, I guess.⁹⁹

Costuming for the performance of “Let’s Spend the Night Together” at the Hammersmith Odeon finds Bowie wearing a feminine, skin-tight, red and black with rabbits print one-piece by Kansai Yamamoto, which Bowie describes as “the impossibly silly ‘bunny’ costume.”¹⁰⁰ The one-piece barely covered Bowie’s crotch and his derriere was visible. The make-up for this costume included black eyeliner, black and silver eye shadow, bright pink blush applied along the whole cheek, and bright pink lipstick. For this specific performance, Bowie wore one dangling earring on his left ear lobe. Bowie’s feminine image fitted against his almost visible male genitals fits Newton’s description of Camp. She states, “Masculine-feminine juxtaposition are, of course, the most characteristic kind of camp.”¹⁰¹ The Spiders, costumed in outrageous outfits, fit cohesively with Bowie’s costumes. Mick Ronson, lead guitarist, outfitted in a Camp rendition of European 1700s male fashion. His costume consisted of a white satin long sleeve shirt, which had slits down the chest as well as on both arms, metallic black and gold breeches with white socks, and black buckled leather platforms. His blonde hair was shoulder length, and his make-up consisted of dark eye make-up and light red lips. Bass guitarist, Trevor Bolder, best known for his long sideburns that he would dye white and red, wore tight fitted, flared red pants with a metallic silver tunic and platform boots. Mick Woodmansey, drummer, was costumed in a silver jumpsuit with short platinum blonde hair. Woodmansey resembles Bowie in the *Ziggy Stardust* album cover. Pianist Mike Garson,

⁹⁹ Bowie, 238.

¹⁰⁰ Bowie, 80.

¹⁰¹ Esther Newton, “Role Models” reprinted in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 103.

dressed in black slacks, a plaid jacket, and a white shirt with an oversized white bow, was seemingly the odd one out as far as costuming.

Bowie's amalgamation of different visual, dramatic, and musical influences created an "unpolished" polished character. Seen as a functional creation of a persona, Ziggy Stardust's appearance does not attempt to hide or smooth over the rough edges created by combining different influences. All features are overtly easily identifiable, creating what Sontag describes as "too much" and teetering on "it's good because it's awful."¹⁰² Many critics, fans, and scholars consider the Ziggy Stardust character as exemplifying androgyny¹⁰³ through the blurring of gender. Bowie's use of androgyny throughout the lifespan of the Ziggy persona places him squarely in the Camp aesthetic. As Sontag states, "The androgyne is certainly one of the great images of Camp sensibility."¹⁰⁴ The construction of tension and the use of feminine qualities to undermine the masculine nature of rock and roll create asexual qualities that elicit Camp.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Sontag, 59 and 65.

¹⁰³ Christopher Sandford, in his *Bowie: Loving the Alien* comments "Bowie's immediate response was to create a character called Aladdin Sane—essentially, he revealed, "Ziggy in America". Most of Aladdin's props came from the previous production. There were the same futuristic clothes (oriental now), and the same androgyny and perceived decadence" (108). Nicolas Pegg writes that, "In 1973 David's studied androgyny was still misunderstood by many..." (132). Laura Fissinger, in her 1973 article for *Creem*, states, "So, David. Thanks for the hair that sticks out on top, hair that sticks out at the crown, androgyny, creative pillaging from rock's past..." (188).

¹⁰⁴ Sontag, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Booth discusses the confusion of Camp that is labeled as being exclusively homosexual. Although Camp leans towards the effeminate side, Booth argues that, "Camp people tend to be asexual rather than homosexual." Mark Booth, "Campe-Toi! On the Origins and Definitions of Camp," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and The Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 70.

Camp Analysis of “Let’s Spend the Night Together”

Using my chart of musical traits that Jarman-Ivans has identified as eliciting a Camp reading, I have numbered each trait for ease when referencing the traits in my analysis.¹⁰⁶

In Bowie’s version of “Let’s Spend the Night Together,” we first find differences in the tempo of the song, which is the third trait. The Rolling Stones’ version has a straight 4/4 time signature at a tempo of 120 beats per minute; Bowie, with the same time signature, has sped up the tempo to 162 beats per minute, to create a faster, energy-driven interpretation of the original. The first trait, the elongation of notes to evoke a pathetic feeling in the music, is found in measures 10 and 11, (see Ex. 2.1). The F# on the word “time” takes up four beats, where in the corresponding measures, measure 16, in the Rolling Stones version, “time” only takes up one beat, (see Ex 2.2). Vocally, Bowie repeats the F# on the vowel, in an almost sighing quality.

EXAMPLE 2.1 David Bowie, "Let's Spend The Night Together," mm. 9-11

¹⁰⁶ The traits are numbered as 1) Elongation of note values and/or chords; 2) Diminution of note values and/or chords; 3) Rushed tempo changes; 4) Exaggerated use of dynamics; 5) Unresolved dominant chord; 6) Tonic and dominant alternation in a minor key; 7) Use of out-of-tune instruments; 8) Intimate vocality and lack of instrumental support; 9) Instrumentalists speed up the tempo while vocal line remains steady; and, 10) Short, sharp, spitting delivery juxtaposed with portamento and vibrato laden belting voices.



EXAMPLE 2.2 The Rolling Stones, "Let's Spend The Night Together," m. 16

Another example of this trait occurs in measure 15 in which Bowie slides from E-C#-E, which extends the lyric "tired" to three beats, (see Ex. 2.3). Bowie's version also changes the lyric from "tongue getting tied" to "tongue getting tired," which suggests a more sexually explicit meaning. A final example can be found in measures 19 and 20 on the lyric "I'm a high," where Bowie takes the Rolling Stones half a beat and drags the lyrics out over a frantic four beats. Bowie provides a stutter effect on the letter "H" in the word high, sung on a C#. The Rolling Stones' version of those lyrics does not directly elicit a drug usage undertone, but Bowie's almost screaming vocals arguably take on a different interpretation of a drug induced sexual advance.



EXAMPLE 2.3 David Bowie, “Let’s Spend The Night Together,” m. 15

Throughout the song, Bowie changes lyrics to portray a more sexualized version. The removal of Jagger’s “My, my, my, my” allows Bowie to launch straight into the first verse to get to the proposal of a sexual encounter. Another noticeable change occurs at the end of verse 2, where Jagger sings “We could have fun just groovin’ around” while Bowie’s version changes “groovin’” to “foolin’” to directly imply sex. I have included a side-by-side view of the lyrics of both versions below.

The Rolling Stones (Jagger/Richards)

Verse 1:

My, My, My, My
 Don't you worry 'bout what's on your mind
 (Oh my)
 I'm in no hurry I can take my time (Oh my)
 I'm going red and my tongue's getting tied
 (tongues's getting tied)
 I'm off my head and my mouth's getting
 dry.
 I'm high, But I try, try, try (Oh my)

Chorus:

Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever

David Bowie (Jagger/Richards)

Verse 1:

Well, don't you worry 'bout what's been on
 my mind
 I'm in no hurry I can take my time
 I'm going red and my tongue's getting tired
 Out of my head and my mouth's getting dry
 I'm hi-hi-hi-high.

Chorus:

Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever

Let's spend the night together now

Verse 2:

I feel so strong that I can't disguise (oh my)
 Let's spend the night together
 But I just can't apologize (oh no)
 Let's spend the night together
 Don't hang me up and don't let me down
 (don't let me down)
 We could have fun just groovin' around
 around and around
 Oh my, my

Chorus:

Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together
 Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever

Bridge:

You know I'm smiling baby
 You need some guiding baby
 I'm just deciding baby; now-
 I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together
 Let's spend the night together now

Third Verse:

This doesn't happen to me ev'ryday (oh my)
 Let's spend the night together
 No excuses offered anyway (oh my)
 Let's spend the night together
 I'll satisfy your every need (every need)
 And I now know you will satisfy me
 Oh my, my, my, my, my

Chorus:

Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together now

Let's spend the night together now

Verse 2:

I feel so strong that I can't disguise, oh my
 Well, I just can't apologize, no
 Don't hang me up but don't let me down
 We could have fun just by fooling around,
 and around and around and around

Chorus:

Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together now

Bridge:

Oh, You know I'm smiling baby
 You need some guide baby
 I'm just deciding baby
 Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together now

Third Verse:

This doesn't happen to me every day
 No excuses I've got anyway, heh
 I'll satisfy your every need
 And I'll know you'll satisfy me, oh my-my-
 my my-my

Chorus:

Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together
 Now I need you more than ever
 Let's spend the night together

Spoken:

They said we were too young
Our kind of love was no fun
But our love comes from above
Do it! Let's make love! Hoo!

Chorus:

Let's spend the night together
Now I need you more than ever
Let's spend the night together, now

The notable difference between both versions of the song is Bowie's addition of spoken lyrics in the coda. The lyrics, measures 54 through 64, are as follows: "They said we were too young, our kind of love was no fun. But our love comes from above, do it, let's make love!"¹⁰⁷ According to Perone, "Bowie's spoken mini-drama at the end of the track also suggests that the couple's copulation can be seen as an act of defiance against the control of their parents."¹⁰⁸ As Bowie is speaking, the band has begun their crazed improvisational section, adding the saxophone. The band completely stops as Bowie reaches the words "love comes from above," the guitar and drums provide three interjections in the ending "do it, let's make love." This section clearly falls into what Jarman-Ivans' describes as "intimate vocality and lack of instrumental support,"¹⁰⁹ which elicits Camp by providing anticipation. We see the same trait used in measures 33 through 36 in Bowie's version of the bridge. Bowie performs the lyrics "You know I'm smiling baby, you need some guiding baby,"¹¹⁰ in a speech-like manner, while Mick Woodmansey rolls the cymbals continuously. The Stones' version uses this same

¹⁰⁷ David Bowie, "Let's Spend the Night Together," David Bowie, *Aladdin Sane*, (1973; RCA 1984 CD).

¹⁰⁸ Perone, 36.

¹⁰⁹ Jarman-Ivans, 201.

¹¹⁰ David Bowie, "Let's Spend the Night Together," David Bowie, *Aladdin Sane*, (1973; RCA 1984 CD).

staccato effect. On the lyric “together” Bowie shortens the note value for “-geth-“ to an eighth note, which adds to the feel of an aggressive bouncy version of the chorus.

Another example of the second trait occurs in The Rolling Stones’ introduction.

Consisting of ten measures, the band sings an almost fifties style doo-wop “Bah-ba dah-dup bop bop ba dah dup” accompanied with electric guitar, bass guitar, piano, and the very prominent drum set. Bowie’s version begins with thirteen seconds of Ronson on electric guitar holding out the root, E, of the dominant chord, while a synthesizer and the piano begin a crazed improvisation. The introduction is only four measures, and the Stones’ introductory doo-wop singing is absent. With the piano banging away, we are lead straight into the first verse of the song.

The musical performance of “Let’s Spend the Night Together” begins with Bowie stating, “This is for Mick [Jagger].”¹¹¹ There are several differences between the audio recording and the live performance. The most noticeable can be heard in the spoken section. While the band sings “let’s spend the night together,” Bowie recites his spoken lyrics to the audience. During this section, the loud cymbal rolls are absent. Ronson begins the introduction by holding the root of the dominant chord while extending his arm and pointing to the right with Bowie, who is squatting, holding on with both hands under his arm. Bowie stands upright and points to the right with Ronson, as Mike Garson begins his improvised piano introduction. The performance begins as Bowie shakes his hips and makes large gestures with his arms. Throughout the performance, he uses feminine gestures, usually to emphasize the lyrics of the song. Examples of this strategy include, Bowie tapping the side of his head while singing, “Well don’t you worry ‘bout

¹¹¹ Bowie quoted in the live performance from *Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture*.

what's been on my mind,"¹¹² placing his hand on his chest as though shocked while singing "And now I know you'll satisfy me, oh my, my, my,"¹¹³ and pointing upwards during the spoken section "our love comes from above."¹¹⁴ As Bowie moves around the stage, he alternates between jerky-skippy and fluid dance movements. It is as if there is a duality between personas in this song, as if Bowie is playing both the dominant and subordinate roles without specifying a gender for each.

Having analyzed the recording of Bowie's "Let's Spend the Night Together," the song offers a glimpse of the direction the musical performance would take towards a Camp interpretation. Aurally, Bowie's version of The Rolling Stones' song reflects the Camp aesthetic as described by Jarman-Ivans. The elongation and diminution of note values, as well as the use of intimate vocality with little instrumental support create a Camp version. He reaches the closest to a Camp interpretation in the live performance at the Hammersmith Odeon, where we are given both the visual and aural elements that combine to create an even greater sense of the Camp aesthetic. I suggest that not only does Bowie's image fit into the definitions of a Camp aesthetic, but Bowie's musical performance of "Let's Spend the Night Together" also supports a Camp reading. Considering both the images presented by the live performances as well as the musical interpretation in the performances, Bowie's overtly androgynous, sexualized, and calculated fashioned characteristics in the performance of "Let's Spend the Night Together," offer up a Camp interpretation of The Rolling Stones' original.

¹¹² David Bowie, "Let's Spend the Night Together," David Bowie, *Aladdin Sane*, (1973; RCA 1984 CD).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ See note 113.

CHAPTER 3: “ZIGGY STARDUST” AND “JOHN, I’M ONLY DANCING”

As I showed in Chapter 1, critics and scholars consider David Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust period (1972-1973) as eliciting the Camp aesthetic. With very few exceptions (Buckley 1993), all focus on the visual aspects of Bowie’s persona and stage show. The creation of Ziggy Stardust has arguably overshadowed his music during this period, which spanned three albums—*The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972), *Aladdin Sane* (1973), and *Pin-Ups* (1973).¹¹⁵ Many books and articles referencing these albums focus on Bowie’s use of androgyny and sexuality in rock to remark on societal issues during the late 1960s and 1970s. David Buckley, in his book *Strange Fascination: David Bowie, The Definitive Story* (2005), argues that:

Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust character queered pop, challenged the machismo of cock rockers such as the Stones and Led Zeppelin, and helped to deconstruct the whole rock edifice. Cock rockers’ musical skills were equated with their sexual prowess. The cock rocker pushes himself to extremes and indulges his animalistic appetites. Women are objects of both desire and abuse, to be dominated, manipulated and debased. Bowie positioned himself at a tangent to these constructs of masculinity. His public persona was not dominating or aggressive in any traditional ‘masculine’ sense. He was, as producer Ken Scott remembers, an absolutely pristine specimen. Ziggy may have been suitably ‘well hung’ in the tradition of male rock machismo, but this was set against a whole range of non-macho attributes which rendered him less of a stud and more a sort of Eastern drag queen masquerading as a high priest/priestess. He defined himself in

¹¹⁵ Many sources focus primarily on the persona of Ziggy Stardust, when discussing Bowie during his Stardust Years. The music is discussed in relation to the image that is being presented.

performance not as animalistic and raw but as an aesthete; a cerebral outsider debarred from strong feeling.¹¹⁶

The deconstruction of masculinity in rock music credited to Bowie finds his Ziggy Stardust persona reflecting what Susan Sontag in her “Notes on Camp” describes as, “the triumph of the epicene style.”¹¹⁷ Bowie’s use of sexuality within his music and image became focused in the Ziggy Stardust persona. He began to address the issues of sex and homosexuality in both the music and image, in a way no other musician had addressed before him. Discussing sexuality in society, in a 1974 interview with beat poet William S. Burroughs and Bowie, *Rolling Stone* journalist, Craig Copetas asks Bowie his views on sexuality. Bowie replied: “It’s [sexuality] just there. Everything you can think about sexuality is just there. Maybe there are different kinds of sexuality, maybe they’ll be brought into play more. Like one time it was impossible to be homosexual as far as the public was concerned. Now it is accepted. I’m regarded quite asexually by a lot of people. And the people that understand me the best are nearer to what I understand about me.”¹¹⁸ Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust character unearths its significance by addressing societal issues through the creation of a mirror reflecting society, and, according to Donald Brackett, “Bowie’s mirror is simply sprayed with irony.”¹¹⁹

If we agree that Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust’s persona is Camp, then the question arises as to whether Bowie’s music can stand alone (without the visual aspects of his

¹¹⁶ David Buckley, *Strange Fascination: David Bowie, The Definitive Story* (London: Virgin Publishing Ltd, 2005), 141.

¹¹⁷ Susan Sontag “Notes on Camp,” in *Camp: Queer Aesthetic and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 56.

¹¹⁸ Bowie quoted in Craig Copetas “Beat Godfather meets Glitter Mainman” in *Rolling Stones* February 28, 1974 reprinted in Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman, *The Bowie Companion*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1996), 109-110.

¹¹⁹ Donald Brackett, *Dark Mirror: The Pathology of the Singer-Songwriter* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 52.

performance art) in being referred to as Camp. Or, does the Ziggy Stardust persona have to be included in the discussion? Is the live performance, where the music and visual elements are combined, the only way we can identify Camp? In addition, can we identify Camp aurally through studio recordings? If the possibility of locating Camp both in the musical performance as well as aurally through the studio recording is attainable, then the question arises: Which is more Camp? In searching for Camp traits “in the music itself,” I will analyze two songs from early in the Ziggy Stardust period, “Ziggy Stardust” and the single “John, I’m Only Dancing.”

Camp Analysis of “Ziggy Stardust and “John, I’m Only Dancing

Bowie’s defining album, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972), includes the title track “Ziggy Stardust” which narrates the tale of the fictional band, The Spiders from Mars, and their leader, Ziggy Stardust. Recorded on November 11, 1971 at Trident Studios in London, the song provided cohesiveness to the album about the fabricated rock star. Although, the title song to the legendary album and persona, “Ziggy Stardust,” never became a hit in the UK or the US charts. Bowie performed the song live throughout the Ziggy Stardust tours in the UK, Japan, and the US, and rarely was the song performed in subsequent tours.¹²⁰

Reviews of the song focus on Bowie’s homage to the rock icons he is parodying through his lyrics (included below), using his Ziggy Stardust persona. Chris Welch, in his book *David Bowie: We Could Be Heroes* (1999) express a view widely held by other critics, “Here at last were clues to Ziggy’s identity in this crucial track devoted to the

¹²⁰ James E. Perone, *The Words and Music of David Bowie* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 267.

being who summed up all the elements of Bowie's idea of a perfect pop star. At least we knew that, like Jimi Hendrix, he played the guitar left-handed and like Mick Jagger he had 'God-given ass'.¹²¹ Pegg elaborates, "but the cryptic observation that 'he was the Nazz' suggests a host of other possibilities. The Nazz was a name shared by erstwhile backing bands of both Todd Rundgren and Alice Cooper. The 'leper Messiah' might refer to the stage delusions of Vince Taylor or Peter Green while 'well-hung and snow-white tan' suggest[s] the coked-up sexuality of Iggy Pop's stage persona."¹²²

"Ziggy Stardust" (Bowie)

Verse 1:

Ziggy played guitar, jamming good with Weird and Gilly and the Spiders from Mars.
He played it left hand, but made it too far.
Became the special man, then we were Ziggy's band

Ziggy really sang, screwed up eyes and screwed down hairdo
Like some cat from Japan, he could lick 'em by smiling
He could leave 'em to hang
Came on so loaded man, well hung and snow white tan.

Chorus:

So where were the spiders while the fly tried to break our balls
Just the beer light to guide us,
So we bitched about his fans and should we crush his sweet hands?

Verse 2:

Ziggy played for time, jiving us that we were voodoo
The kids were just crass, he was the nazz
With God given ass
He took it all too far but boy could he play guitar

¹²¹ Chris Welch, *David Bowie: We Could Be Heroes The Stories Behind Every David Bowie Song 1970-1980* (New York, NY: Thunder Mouth Press, 1999), 53.

¹²² Nicholas Pegg, *The Complete David Bowie*, (London, UK: Reynolds & Hearn, 2009), 267.

Extended Chorus:
 Making love with his ego
 Ziggy sucked up into his mind
 Like a leper messiah
 When the kids had killed the man I had to break up the band.
 Oh yeah
 Oooooooo
 Ziggy played guitar

A musical analysis of Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" reveals a typical early 1970s American and British rock and roll song. The instrumentation of the song includes vocals, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, bass guitar, and drum set. The song is in a basic rock form: Intro A A' B A'' B' Coda, with the A sections being the verses and the B sections the chorus. Harmonically, the song is typical in comparison to other rock and roll songs. The A section ends on a plagal cadence on measure 20, while the B section ends on a deceptive cadence on measure 25. The entire song ends on a final plagal cadence. The song begins with a repeated four-measure introduction, which contains the now well-known guitar motive repeated throughout the song. As Bowie enters, his voice is in the middle register, in a comfortable range throughout the entire song. Bowie performs as the two narrators telling the story of the infamous Ziggy Stardust, using different timbres to indicate the different characters. The first narrator begins at measure 5, singing through measure 9. The vocal quality of the first narrator contains a strong cockney accent. During measures 10 through 12, both voices sing in unison, as Bowie uses double vocals on the recording. The second narrator begins at measure 13 singing through measure 20, containing a more refined vocal quality without an accent. The chorus begins with both timbres in a high register, with Bowie utilizing squeaky vocals for both timbres. Throughout the song, the band is playing with Bowie to support the melody. During

instrumental sections, both the electric guitar and bass pass the melody back and forth. The straightforward harmonic structure, instrumentation, and vocality of “Ziggy Stardust” do not elicit a Camp reading. Aurally, the song finds the band, as well as Bowie in a more reserved sound compared to their later work.

Bowie recorded the single “John, I’m only Dancing” on June 26, 1972 at the Olympic studios, in the height of Bowie’s UK Ziggy Stardust Tour, later released as the B-side to the hit “Starman” in the UK. The US release of the single was halted because of the song’s sexual undertones; it was later released in the US in 1976 on the compilation album *ChangesOneBowie*.¹²³ Bowie has released three different versions of this song, the original version recorded in 1972, the 1973 version that included saxophone, which was originally intended for the *Aladdin Sane* album. The third version released in 1979, remixed the original 1972 version, which “reduc[ed] the echo on Bowie’s vocal and push[ed] it higher in the mix.”¹²⁴ This study will focus on the original 1972 version of the single. Mick Rock gave “John, I’m Only Dancing” the music video treatment. Shot on August 18, 1972 during the rehearsals for the show at the Rainbow Theatre, Bowie and Rock created a video that fed the confusion the listeners had already gained from the recording. Pegg describes the video as, “Intercutting moodily side-lit shots of The Spiders with a pair of androgynous dances from the Lindsay Kemp Company.”¹²⁵

The controversy over the release of the single surrounded the confusing lyrics. Did John, the lover, catch Bowie and a woman together? Arguably, all sources on “John, I’m Only Dancing” discuss the sexually ambiguous nature of the song. Buckley describes

¹²³ Pegg, 119.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ See note 124.

it as “one of Bowie’s few overtly gay songs.”¹²⁶ In agreement, Matthew-Walker writes that the single is “perhaps the most explicit up to that time in terms of sexual ambiguity... The song’s gay nature did not preclude popularity; the quality of the music would have guaranteed that.”¹²⁷ Perone assesses the song’s significance of placing issues of sexuality into the forefront of society. He argues, “‘John I’m Only Dancing’ raises interesting questions about sexual identity and stereotyping. Questions such as ‘What makes me think that Bowie’s character is bisexual?’ or, ‘Do I hear any stereotypes of supposedly gay mannerisms in Bowie’s vocal style that lead me to believe that the character is bisexual?’”¹²⁸ The questions Perone raises seem relevant to this study. If Perone believes we can identify whether or not Bowie’s vocal style suggests a specific sexuality, then we can certainly identify Camp traits within his vocal style as well.

“John, I’m Only Dancing,” already seen as a sexually ambiguous song, is arguably the most Camp compared to his other work during this period. In an analysis of the score, we find the same instrumentation and the same basic rock form used in “Ziggy Stardust.” Harmonically, “John, I’m Only Dancing” provides a different approach to the typical dominant chord, and cadences. The V chord, in the starting key of G Major, is noticeably absent from the entire song. During the chorus Bowie begins to modulate to A Major, which creates tension that is suggested by the lyrics, included below. At this point Bowie and John are in a confrontation as Bowie is reassuring him he is only dancing with the woman.

¹²⁶ David Buckley, *David Bowie: The Complete Guide to his Music* (New York, NY: Omnibus Press, 2004), 23.

¹²⁷ Robert Matthew-Walker, *David Bowie: Theatre of Music*, (Toronto, Canada: The Kensal Press, 1985), 30 and 108.

¹²⁸ Perone, 33.

“John, I’m Only Dancing” (Bowie)

Verse 1:

Well Annie's pretty neat, she always eats her meat
 Joey comes on strong, bet your life he's putting us on
 Oh Lordy, oh Lordy, you know I need some loving
 Oh move me, touch me

Chorus:

John, I'm only dancing
 She turns me on, but I'm only dancing
 She turns me on, but don't get me wrong
 I'm only dancing

Verse 2:

Shadow love was quick and clean, life's a well-thumbed machine
 I saw you watching from the stairs, you're everyone that ever cared
 Oh Lordy, oh Lordy, you know I need some loving
 Move me, touch me

Extended Chorus:

John, I'm only dancing
 She turns me on, but I'm only dancing
 She turns me on, but don't get me wrong
 I'm only dancing
 John, I'm only dancing
 She turns me on, but I'm only dancing
 She turns me on, but don't get me wrong
 I'm only dancing
 Dancing
 Won't someone dance with me?
 Touch me,
 Ohhh!

The chorus begins with an E minor chord (vi in G major), as bassist Trevor Bolder plays the E minor scale, while Bowie’s vocals are outlining the E minor triad. The pivot chord modulation begins as we are thrown into E major (m. 23) which becomes the V of the new key of A Major, followed by an ascent to the tonic via F major (\flat VI) and G major (\flat VII) chord, (see Ex. 3.1). The chorus ends with a weak imperfect authentic cadence with the \flat VII going to the tonic A Major chord, which creates a pathetic modulation.

We are then abruptly taken into the second verse, back in the original key, G Major. The tonal ambiguity caused by the modulation to a non-closely related key certainly creates the sense of tension aurally.

17 18 19 20

John, I'm on - ly danc - ing. — She turns — me on —

G: vi

21 22 23 24

— but I'm on - ly danc - ing. — She turns — me on —

A: V

EXAMPLE 3.1 "John, I'm Only Dancing," mm. 17-32

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 25 to 28, and the second system covers measures 29 to 32. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line is written in a single treble clef, while the piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are: "but don't get me wrong,-- I'm on - ly danc- ing." The piano part features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. Measure numbers 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32 are indicated above the vocal staff. Chord symbols "A: bVI" and "bVII" are placed below the piano staff in measures 25 and 27 respectively. A first ending bracket labeled "1." spans measures 30, 31, and 32.

EXAMPLE 3.1 continued

Bowie's vocals are noticeably more feminine in the piece than in "Ziggy Stardust." He is in the upper register of his voice during the entire song. Geyrhalter suggests that the use of the feminine vocality, ambiguous lyrics, as well as an androgynous appearance create a sense of the Camp aesthetic.¹²⁹ As Bowie begins the chorus on the name "John," his

¹²⁹ Thomas Geyrhalter "Effeminacy, Camp, and Sexual Subversion in Rock: The Cure and Suede" *Popular Music* 15, no. 2 (1996): 217-224.

voice creates an almost sigh as he sings the chorus in a reassuring manner towards the character John. Revisiting Perone's questions: "What makes me think that Bowie's character is bisexual?" or, 'Do I hear any stereotypes of supposedly gay mannerisms in Bowie's vocal style that lead me to believe that the character is bisexual?',"¹³⁰ I respond that the feminine vocality employed by Bowie in the song, suggests that he is speaking to his male lover about a woman who, "turns [him] on."¹³¹ The entire song contains moments of tension, which Freya Jarman-Ivans identifies as eliciting Camp. The use of ambiguities within the music and lyrics creates the sense of androgyny in the song. Androgyny is, as Sontag describes, "one of the greatest images of Camp sensibility."¹³²

Visual Analysis

Bowie performed both "Ziggy Stardust" and "John, I'm Only Dancing" during the first Ziggy Stardust UK Tour. The Bowie-to-Ziggy Stardust persona transformation was partially influenced by Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). According to Bowie, "Both of these films provoked one major theme: There was no linear line in the lives that we lead. We were not evolving, merely surviving. Moreover, the clothes were fab: *2001* with its courreges-like leisure suits and *Clockwork's* Droogs, dressed to kill."¹³³ In early 1972, Freddie Burretti was hired to make Ziggy and the Spider's outfits, to resemble Kubrick's creations. Bowie made slight changes to the original Kubrick costumes; "To lessen the image of violence I decided we should go for extremely colorful and exotic materials in place of the Droog

¹³⁰ Perone, 33.

¹³¹ David Bowie, "John, I'm Only Dancing," David Bowie, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars* (1972; EMI, 2002 CD).

¹³² Sontag, 56.

¹³³ David Bowie *Moonage Daydream: The Life and Times of Ziggy Stardust* (New York, NY: Universe, 2005), 12.

white cotton.”¹³⁴ Outfitted in jumpsuits, each a different pastel color, the Spider’s costumes were complete with Droogish blue jean codpieces. Bowie’s choice of footwear, for the band as well as himself, as recounted by Bowie, was “the stylish wrestling boot, calf high, flatfooted and laced to the top, again in various hues of shiny vinyl.”¹³⁵ Daniella Parmar and Japanese designer Kansai Yamamoto influenced the famous Bowie dye job and hair-cut. Bowie met Parmar through Burretti, and was fascinated with her short peroxide white hair. Beginning his association with the Kabuki theatre,¹³⁶ Bowie adapted Yamamoto’s bright red Kabuki lion wig, used on his models, into the Ziggy orange hairdo.

During the Rainbow Theatre performances, Bowie and Mick Rock shot the video for “John, I’m Only Dancing.” The video provided the images of ambiguity already suggested by the music. Bowie, carrying his guitar behind his back, is dressed in skintight blue jeans, and a blue bomber jacket, in light makeup with a small fake tattoo of an anchor on his cheekbone, and the band was dressed in their *Clockwork Orange* jumpsuits. The video begins with Bowie stepping into spotlight and posing on the blacked-out stage. Bowie stands directly in front of the camera, while the band plays in the background. As Bowie sings his feminine gestures increase, he begins to touch his neck then moves to his

¹³⁴ Bowie, 17.

¹³⁵ Bowie, 17.

¹³⁶ Bowie also drew a great amount of influence from Eastern Culture, more specifically the Kabuki theatre from Japan. Kabuki originated from the Nō theatre around the end of the sixteenth-century during the Edo period, with the first Kabuki performance in Kyōto in 1596. The term kabuki developed from the Japanese word kabuku, which means, “to incline”. Rapidly it began to take on the definition of the unusual, and carried an undertone of sexual immorality. Written using three Chinese characters, 歌舞伎, Kabuki translates to “Song, Dance, and Skill.” The Kabuki influence would be seen in greater detail during Bowie’s last stages of the Ziggy Stardust persona. Earle Ernst, *The Kabuki Theatre* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), 10.

chest to emphasize the lyrics, “touch me.”¹³⁷ Placed throughout the entire video, scenes of the Astronettes dancing are used to coincide with the lyrics as well. While Bowie sings, “shadowed love is quick and clean,”¹³⁸ the video shows the shadows of two dancers in a provocative pose. During the ending, Bowie begins to touch his chest more aggressively than before, this time unzipping his jacket so you can see his chest. The video is arguably Camp, based on Bowie’s use of androgyny. In this case, the music and image can be separated and both the video and the audio recording can be considered Camp.

The only recorded live performance of “Ziggy Stardust” comes from his last night at Hammersmith Odeon in 1973. Outfitted in a white satin long sleeved, turtle neck, short kimono and white knee high boots, Bowie was in full Ziggy make-up as well as the band. Although he looked Camp, his actions on stage during the performance of this song suggest otherwise. While singing this non-Camp song, Bowie stands at the microphone for each verse, with minimal hand gestures. As the chorus begins, he grabs the microphone and walks across the stage. The performance seems restrained compared to the performance of “John, I’m Only Dancing.” “Ziggy Stardust” does not educe Camp in the musical and visual performances. I can conclude that through the aural and visual aspects, “John, I’m Only Dancing” elicits a Camp reading. The tonal ambiguity of the chorus also provides an example of Camp within the music. Bowie’s application of androgyny in the lyrics, the visual aspects—the persona Ziggy Stardust, his music video and live performances—as well as in the music of the song find “John, I’m Only Dancing” directly in the Camp aesthetic.

¹³⁷ David Bowie, “John, I’m Only Dancing,” David Bowie, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars* (1972; EMI, 2002 CD).

¹³⁸ David Bowie, “John, I’m Only Dancing,” David Bowie, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars* (1972; EMI, 2002 CD).

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

Typically thought of in primarily visual terms, Camp has recently begun to be discussed in musical terms as evidenced in the writings of Thomas Geyrhalter (1996), Kay Dickinson (2001), Gillian Rodger (2004), Steven Cohan (2005), and Freya Jarman-Ivens (2009). My analysis of David Bowie's music during his "Stardust Years" contributes to this scholarship. Applying Jarman-Ivens' methodology for locating Camp in music in the analysis of Bowie's musical performance of a cover of The Rolling Stones "Let's Spend the Night Together," I found Bowie's version eliciting a more Camp reading than the Stones' version. Aurally, Bowie applies several traits that Jarman-Ivens has identified as Camp. The rushed tempo of the entire song creates a rough interpretation of the original. Bowie's elongation of note values in the vocal line provides a pathetic feeling not felt in the Stones' version. The altering of the lyrics by Bowie, provide a much more sexual connotation to the song. From the original "tongue getting tied" and "we could have fun grooving around" to Bowie's overtly sexual "tongue getting tired" and "we could have fun fooling around." Finally, Bowie creates tension through the added spoken dialogue against an improvisational section that fights the dialogue for dominance. The live performance at the Hammersmith Odeon full of feminine gestures, and androgynous costumes push the teetering Camp song over the edge into a full Camp interpretation. Therefore, the music of Bowie's "Let's Spend the Night Together" fully supports the

Camp image he has created. Using Jarman-Ivens' theoretical framework for locating Camp within a musical performance, we have validated her claim of locating Camp in music, through my usage of David Bowie.

Focusing on the task of separating the visual aspects of a musical performance, Chapter 3 centered on using audio recordings as a possible means to achieve this task. Audio recordings allow us to separate the visual and musical aspects in live performances and focus on the aural elements presented. As Theodore Gracyk suggests, an audio recording implies a musical performance that is strictly aural. The Camp analysis of a strictly aural nature focused on two songs that date from the early part of the Ziggy Stardust persona, which are widely considered Camp by many critics—"Ziggy Stardust" and "John, I'm Only Dancing." Beginning with "Ziggy Stardust" my study has shown that an aural listening as well as a musical analysis of the score of "Ziggy Stardust" does not evoke the Camp aesthetic. The title track works harmonically very similar to any typical rock and roll song out during the early 1970s. Bowie's vocality is quite restrained in comparison to where Bowie would take his voice during the later part of Ziggy persona and into the album *Aladdin Sane* (1973). Throughout the song, the band supports Bowie's vocal line as they work together to create the narrative. As we find in later Ziggy-era songs, the band is usually off on an improvisational tangent while Bowie fights his way through to provide the melody. The musical performances of "Ziggy Stardust" also do not enhance a Camp reading. Bowie uses restrained performance gestures throughout the song. The non-Camp implications on "Ziggy Stardust" can be applied to most of Bowie's music during this early period, as most songs off the *Ziggy Stardust* album are constructed similarly to this song.

“John, I’m Only Dancing” is arguably the most Camp of all songs released under Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust period. The most noticeable feature is the lyrics, which caused several people to interpret this song as his most overtly gay song. Bowie’s feminine vocal style creates the added ambiguity that the lyrics suggest. He stays within his high register throughout most of the song. During the chorus, his voice evokes an almost pathetic excuse as he reassures John that he is only dancing. Within the chorus, we find moments of tension caused by the tonal ambiguity of the weak modulation that coincides with the implied confrontation with Bowie and the character John. Harmonically, Bowie takes us through a journey of different tonalities, and finally we are relieved to have gone back to the tonic. As we fully expect Bowie to use a typically strong dominant-functioning V chord to tonic to end the chorus, he instead modulates to a non-closely related key and employs an imperfect authentic cadence, and abruptly we are back into the second verse in the original key. Isolating the music from the visual, “John, I’m Only Dancing” clearly elicits a reading of the Camp aesthetic. Using ambiguous lyrics, vocality, and harmonic structure Bowie provides an androgynous song that corresponds to his already Camp image. Visually, the music video complements the Camp implications from the song. Although Bowie is dressed in jeans and a jacket, his vocality in combination with his feminine facial expressions and gestures provide the juxtaposition of masculine and feminine. This analysis of “John, I’m Only Dancing” suggests that it is possible to separate the music from image in a performance and locate Camp in an audio recording.

The issue arises of Bowie’s intentions to evoke Camp in his music and image. The amalgamation of different mediums, cultures, and genders into his Ziggy Stardust character were calculated events by Bowie. He aimed at creating a new form of music

that relied heavily on the visual aspects of the performance. His intentions fall directly into what Christopher Isherwood labels as low Camp and what Susan Sontag describes as impure Camp. My contribution, within the area of locating a Camp aesthetic, lies in the possible separation of the music and image, locating Camp strictly "within the music." The significance of this thesis aimed at using Jarman-Ivens' study of locating Camp in music in order to validate her methodology for use in future research of Camp and music. With her model, searching for Camp in musical performances has become possible. Much more research in locating Camp in the music, without the visual aspects, needs to be visited. Although, my focus has been on Camp in popular music, future research in the area of Camp and music must address Sontag's statements of specific composers' work as being Camp, such as W.A. Mozart and Samuel Barber. Using Jarman-Ivens' methodology, locating Camp "in the music," is now possible.

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