

Dome

Anthems, Anti-Heroes & Taylor Swift



“ Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man .”

I saw Bruce Springsteen at the Entertainment Centre and from the back row it was one of those unforgettable performances topped off by encountering Clarence Clemmens with orange juice at Bondi Beach the next day. I saw Midnight Oil in the same venue with every suburban urchin known to man belting out each song word for word. I saw Aretha play at the Radio City Music Hall in New York. I had dinner with Jimmy Barnes' guitar player and he told me that playing a stadium is a life defining event high that is hard to recover from. I was bused with thousands through the streets of Washington to Clinton's Inauguration "An American Reunion" Concert in which Fleetwood Mac, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Linda Ronstadt, Michael Jackson, Mariah Carey, Crosby Stills & Nash, Roseanne Cash, Judy Collins, Bruce Springsteen, Aretha and Barbara Streisand all shared a stage for one unforgettable night. To top all this off I have seen Bamba and the Pigram Brothers play in Broome and walk up the famous stairway to the moon.

But the seven performances of Taylor Swift in Melbourne and Sydney surpass any popular performance that anyone has ever seen or felt in this country. I suspect Taylor Swift has not only conquered Australia she has conquered the world. The Americans have truly, in Wim Wenders'

words, infiltrated our subconscious, more than that, our dreams and imaginations. The most sophisticated American statesmen and ambassadors know that media and entertainment is the greatest diplomatic trump card overcoming all obstacles, seducing the toughest and most cynical minds and bridging all political and cultural divides. The way we cognise space has changed. With these shows and the interaction of tens of thousands of artisans and imaginations and costume designers, a new horizon dawns.



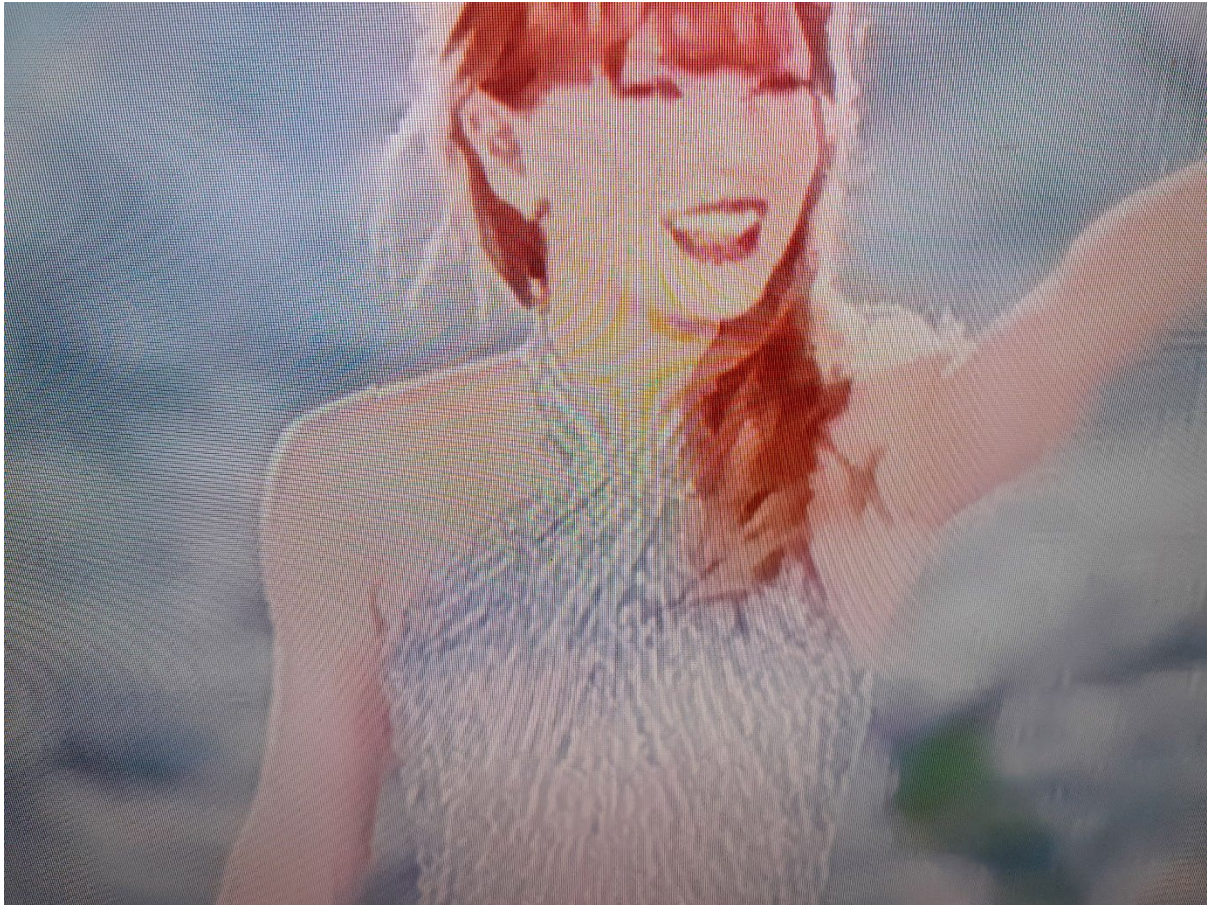
Everything has changed with these shows. The technological wonders of the Vivid Festival have met dance, song and technical innovation and within that an extraordinary talented and astonishingly energetic woman channelling the heart beats and thoughts of tens and thousands. Before too long concerts will include the dreams and mental images of fans. Virtual reality goggles issued like Taylor Swifts amazing friendship bracelets and will they allow fans to sing and play with the performance and appear on stage. There will be unlimited seating and concerts will be able to occur in free outside space.

The seven performances in Melbourne and Sydney edged us to the beginning of a new frontier. The science of cognition or understanding how mind and intelligence work embraces philosophy, psychology, artificial intelligence and neuro-science those who are starting to work in this field will be inundated with papers about how a football field or stadium was transformed into a field of dreams, imaginings, desires, fears, loves... and we will start to wonder where the fans and Taylor Swift begin and end.

Therapists will not only rate songs for melodic comfort and emotional resonance, they will, in the future, prescribe performances. For it is fundamentally this quality that shapes the Taylor Swift performances. Tens of thousands identify with the lyrical depth, resonate with the emotions and are comforted by Taylor's voice and music. Her life is their life.

Do the Taylor Swift concerts also form a model of what is acceptable? The power of infiltrating the collective unconscious is there with Adolf Hitler and Donald Trump. At the heart of what is acceptable is the ability of critical self reflection and it is here where Taylor Swift's formidable song

writing craft and the very structure of her performance comes to the fore. For what structures everything is the self reflection through song writing of a young woman's life.



At times in the giant stadium it seems there is a fragile gossamer thread of a tiny woman's spirit lifting tens of thousands of people into the sky. Then that golden thread becomes overwhelmingly powerful – who is a more powerful human force on the planet than Taylor Swift in an open stadium of 96,000 people?

I have seen the neon of Tokyo and heard of the amazing dragons in the sky in China. All of this bound by tens of thousands of young women and girls, and not so young women and men singing their hearts out. This is a new performance, a ballet and a video coming to life in front of your very eyes in a great sporting stadium that has suddenly changed its whole character. As day turns into night the magic unveils.

The idea of a band sitting static on a stand playing goes out the window. Make no mistake the band is an all important energy centre driving the anthems and the drums and bass assume some sort of new majesty. But with cordless instruments the players too become a force permeating space. The drummer is the anchor who simply drives the sound but the players and the instruments become performers and this I think is only the beginning of where this will go.

The stadium itself becomes a giant multi-dimensional theatre of astonishing proportions: Giant football stadiums as pleasure domes. Even the football warriors come to pay homage and are simply bewildered and caught up in it all. Like Vivid this sets a new standard in not lighting but illumination and what can be done. One imagines ten story high astral, hologram figures of the future. Theatre, music, performance has left the confines of a stage and four walls and occupies all of the dimensions of nature itself. Clouds with ladders, great swimming pools, rainbow snakes, appear and disappear.

All of this part illusion and part emotion and part new technological wizardry. Stitched together with carpets of sound pumped by the urging live band and gorgeous dancers and dont forget the miraculous voices leading tens of thousands of understudies all singing and performring and gesturing themselves. And yes the modern alchemy does even include the weather in ways and forms that could never be conceived. The weather that wiped out all the power in our little town is also under the command of the great feminine master performer.



Tempests of the natural world and the sight of lightning across hundreds of miles of plateau are the greatest spectacular sights and sounds, but perhaps they too are in the sights of the new choreographers and designers. For the sound and participation of tens of thousands of singing, dancing participants with human feelings and passions only add to the energy.

In history the supernatural dimensions of a great human tide of women tuned together as one, mothers and daughters under a full moon singing, praying, chanting, dancing and putting their hearts and souls together resonate. Is this why this energy is so uplifting? How can the performer possibly survive such adulation and come down to normality? Does this mean that the high can never be

eclipsed as we have seen with so many in the past who have reached the greatest heights of fame and performance? And the answer is “no” like one of the songs itself. For this energy is warm and kind and good. It enthuses and encourages and repairs hearts and minds. It will never let you down. It relishes the spirit and feeling and allows you to go to sleep like the touch of one hundred thousand mothers nurturing their babies.



In all of this images of womanhood flood in from every moment in history – Joan of Arc, a Cleopatra, an angel, maidens running over lavender meadows, nature spirits and nymphs, the great virgin and the temptress and devilish pranks, a Midsummer Nights dream, a forest, Cathy and Heathcliff.

What is astonishingly there all the time is Taylor’s unique voice: lyrical alto to lyrical mezzo-soprano in the key of C and G. We believe this voice, it moves us. It is so intimate and some of the most extraordinary moments occur when she is singing virtually unaccompanied with just her strumming blue guitar.

So this is what happens when woman is the boss. This energy that is unleashed is not negative. It is pure and nurturing. The artist spreads the magic and is lead to greater heights and higher levels of performance. Joy and beautiful vibrations abound. These heights can be achieved and still the artist is not consumed by the power. Eve and Magdalen are no longer scape goats, nature is tamed beautifully. Wars end. Things fall into place. All this is what we have been missing.

The artist is touched, purified and strengthened with the astonishing sound and spirit that surrounds her and so are we all and the performance goes on to higher heights and greater inspirations. There is this moment, where the ear buds come out and the acknowledgement is there. This is not just me this is you. We are in this together. For a moment it seems too much to bear but the sheer joy of it all seems to fill the atmosphere. Laughter and tears fall like rain. Hearts beat as one. A cocoon of love

and wonder has been created that can only be good and this time it wont be allowed to be cut down or changed.



Think about the anthems. We all know anthems ... Working class man, Born to Run, Times are a Changing.. some are powered by words, some are powered by performance and artistry. These anthems we hear in the pleasure dome are truly powered by woman power and love. Here is something new and epic and bold on the world stage. Make no mistake these tens of thousands have memorised these lyrics for good reason, for this is a picture of their choices and dilemmas and possibilities and hope. This is a journey and what a rollercoaster ride it is. The structure of the show is brilliantly part of Taylor Swift's life that has become part of her fans lives.

Love

Miss Americana and the Heartbreak Prince ever-recurring romance

Cruel Summer..- the tragic beauty of unrequited love and youthful dreams

The Man - tonight woman will be in charge and watch what happens, "can you not step on my gown"

You Need to Calm Down – I think not

Lover – rhapsody in blue and gold and purple

The Archer – tempest of love

Overcoming Fear

Fearless - dancing right there in the stadium

You Belong with me – triumph of love and meaning over superficiality

Love Story – Romeo and Juliet in a small town, in modern life: “It’s a love story, baby, just say, “Yes”” (and overcome centuries of tragedy)

Possibility/Impossibility of Happily Ever After

Tis the Damn Season – the price of fame well understood..

willow – womanly love

marjorie – inspiration transcending death

champagne problems – turning down a powerful man, the perils of defying expectations

tolerate it – mars and venus

ready for it – let me paint you a picture of how good this could be

delicate – vulnerability in a cool world

don’t blame me - true passion is messy

look what you made me do – a woman spurned

Daring

Enchanted – melting hearts (Matt Billingslea’s drums)

Long live – Freddie Mercury at the Grand Old Opry

Growing Up

22 – the pure joy of youth re-savoured

We are never ever getting back together - oh but yes we are

I knew you were trouble – being used

all too well – the lost scarf of love

Legends

seven – the unique, indelible spirit in us all

the 1 - prince charming lost at the bus stop

betty – precious best friend done wrong, redemption?

the last great american dynasty – throw in Gatsby

august – moment of perfection.. can it only be temporary?

illicit affairs – observations of nature and the order of things “and it dies and it dies and it dies a million times”

my tears ricochet – love tragedy

cardigan – “when you are young, they assume you know nothing” but of course you know everything... take heart

style – the maturing Taylor Swift has all the class of a modern day Audrey Hepburn and it is delightful to see that evolution

blank space - magic, madness, heaven, sin

shake it off – one of the anthems of our time, shaking off the weight of modern personal life

wildest dreams – impossible love and heart break

bad blood – scars

Surprise

How you get the Girl – sage advice
White Horse – “This ain't Hollywood, this is a small town”

The Restless, Sleepless Nights

Lavender Haze – finding something to believe in
Anti-Hero – “It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me”
Midnight Rain – “He wanted a bride, I was making my own name”
Vigilante Shit – dressing for revenge
Bejeweled – shimmering
Mastermind – hubris?
Karma – karma is my boyfriend..

What a portfolio of song and performance? Incomparable. And the only message that the audience wanted to send back was:

“This night is sparkling, don't you let it go
I'm wonderstruck, blushing all the way home
I'll spend forever wondering if you knew
This night is flawless, don't you let it go
I'm wonderstruck, dancing around all alone
I'll spend forever wondering if you knew
I was enchanted to meet you

Please don't be in love with someone else
Please don't have somebody waiting on you”

And there is so much more to come from the remarkable woman Taylor Swift.