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No more babes on the stage: The changing modes of spectatorship in Athenian live-music nightclubs

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Introduction

Greek culture, and music in particular, has been defined by a relentless antagonism between occidentalist and orientalist discourses. This phenomenon, what Michael Herzfeld calls disemía (1987: 111-7), has affected numerous literary and performance domains and has been thoroughly investigated in relation to Greek popular and folk music, both historically and ethnographically. ¹ However, little effort has been made towards the examination of how these tensions are played out in the urban popular music nightclub of the late-capitalist era. Echoing the volume’s focus on the emerging ontologies of popular music performance, this chapter will explore the ways in which recent trends in nightlife entertainment have designated a shift in the accepted modalities of spectatorship. More specifically, I will discuss how the audience’s bodily behaviour and the manipulation of the performance space have switched from the established participatory mode of engagement (audience dancing on stage next to the performer) towards a spectator-mentality (audience consuming alcohol from their designated seats). As this chapter will argue, this is a complex process entailing cultural politics, economic considerations, labour relationships, embodied subjectivities, and identity claims coming from a variety of competing social actors including pop-singers, instrumentalists, entrepreneurs, and fans. Based on extended ethnographic research within the professional music circuit, this essay will compare the significance of the two types of nightclub participation in relation to the genres of music performed and the types of sociocultural imaginaries that each fosters.

The venues that serve as the ethnographic field for this account are called pístes (plural of písta, literally ‘stage’) and they are the main loci of live-music entertainment in Greek urban nightlife. Pístes in Athens, specifically, host the most prominent popular music stars for performance seasons that last usually from November until April each year. Music shows take place three or four nights per week, starting at around midnight and lasting typically more than five or six hours until early in the next morning. Each of those nightclubs feature a number of singers, the most established of whom is the headliner usually referred to as the ‘big name’ (megálo ónoma), supported by two or three ‘secondary names’ (déftéra onómata). The types of pístes that operate within the Greek capital can be crudely divided into two general categories: the laïkes pístes (literally ‘folk stages’), also referred to as bouzoukia,² and the ‘modern’ or ‘pop’ pístes. Although the defining feature of each of those types of venues is the music genre with which the main artist is associated, as I will argue in this chapter, the transition from one to the other type also relates to a range of performance practices and modes of spectatorship, rich in socio-cultural connotations.
The clientele of pístes comprises people from very diverse backgrounds in terms of class, age, and gender. However, the established range of admission prices and designated club areas ensures that spectators do not mix freely. A simple entrance ticket gives the holder access to the area furthest away from the stage, a space for standing audience members only. Seating areas, located closer to the stage, are reserved for those willing to pay a minimum-consumption rate, measured through a ratio of bottles of alcohol per table. Moreover, the proximity of a group of spectators’ table to the stage is dependent upon how much they are willing to tip the maître. These ‘tips’ often represent the largest expense for spectators, since a good table on a busy night might require a tip of two or three-hundred euro. In effect, this procedure of price-scaling creates a hierarchy of paying customers, which is also spatially manifest: the more a group of spectators are willing to spend, the closest they will be to the stage. Proximity to the stage is desirable not only because spectators will be able to witness the show more intimately, but also because it will allow them to engage more successfully in two essential practices of the písta: ‘flower-tossing’ and dancing. Tossing flowers (usually white and red carnations) is an activity associated more with the laïkés pístes. It is used to designate the audience’s appreciation towards the singers and dancers, while at the same time operating as a way to flaunt one’s wealth. The audience members buy these flowers in small baskets from the louloudoúdes (flower-girls) who are employed by the club.

Figure 1: Stage of Athenian písta covered in flowers (photo by the author)

In the main part of this chapter, I will discuss my ethnographic experience within the two types of pístes, in the former as an audience member and the latter as a musician employed in the club’s band. Through these descriptions I will elaborate on the changing modes of
A night at bouzoúkia

I entered the club Muses, located on Syggrou Avenue – one of the hotspots of south Athenian nightlife, just after midnight on a cold January Friday night. I had been invited by Vaggelis, the second keyboardist in the Starz club band where I was also employed, so I called his mobile once I arrived in front of the bouncers. Rumours about the connections between the club owner and the local criminal underworld made me quite nervous, so I decided that being accompanied by an insider would be a good idea. He arrived to greet me at the door and let the bouncers know that I was his guest and a fellow musician from another club, making it clear that I would not be paying the entrance fee. They replied with an ‘ok maëstro!’, a title acknowledging his status as one of the musical directors of the show, but also affording him a good deal of social capital.

The maëstros of a nightclub’s orchestra is a person who carries authority based on his musical knowledge (cultural capital) but also on his ability to coordinate and lead the other instrumentalists as a group of labourers. He makes sure that the rehearsals run smoothly and that musicians are prepared and punctual, negotiates their payments, and even ensures the appropriateness of their outfits. As a result, the successful maëstros commands a lot of respect from his peers, while simultaneously he has access to the higher strata of the nightclub’s social field: the singers, music industry managers, and club owners.

Some differences in the conventions between the ‘modern’ Starz club, in the central area of Thisseio in Athens, where I had been working and this laikí písta (urban-folk stage) were immediately apparent. What first struck me was that the audience were eating. This was a convention surviving from older music clubs, which I had never witnessed in person before. Numerous musicians had reported to me that they found it quite uncomfortable to perform while the audience were having dinner, and they were glad that this practice had seized in more ‘modern’ nightclubs. I asked my host about the practice of consuming food; he explained that the whole service was timed so that it did not coincide with the performance of any of the ‘big names’ (megála onómata). While the ‘opening act’ was taking place, dinner was served and plates were generally cleared before the ‘entrance’ of the headliners of the programme. In contrast, in the ‘modern’ club where I was performing, food was limited to nibbles (usually fruit and cheese) and it was served throughout the programme as an accompaniment to bottles of alcohol.

A significant element was the position of the instrumentalists. Following the conventions of laïkó performance, the instrumentalists did not occupy the main stage, a space reserved for the singer with the occasional appearance of a bouzouki soloist. Traditionally, instrumentalists would be confined to the nether region of the stage, thus allowing enough space for the main singer to move at the front, and monopolise the audience’s attention. However, this club’s interior architect had conceived of a more original idea: instrumentalists were placed on an elevated balcony about five metres above the stage, under which there was a hidden opening serving the singers’ extravagant stage entries. This design served multiple purposes: the instrumentalists were out of the way allowing for the singers’ uninterrupted movement, performers could be seen from all regions of the spectators’ seating since they
were placed on different levels, and finally the stage appeared quite spectacular in this three-dimensional expansion.

If the backing instrumentalists were visible to the audience (even if ostracised from stage) the same was not the case for backing vocalists. Twenty minutes into the show, four young women carrying wireless microphones came and sat at the table next to us, among some scattered, disengaged audience members. We were situated up on a balcony and, since the club was not overly full, this gave us some privacy. ‘Τι λεει, μαέστρο?’ (‘What’s happening, maestro?’), one of them said to my host, who immediately went over to greet them. I realised that these were some of the backing vocalists, on their break I presumed judging from the lit cigarettes in their hands. Vaggiélis invited me over for introductions; ‘This is Yiannis, we work together in Sakis’s band’, he said, conveying all the important information about my identity. I started chatting to the woman closest to me, when suddenly the singer next to her picked up one of the wireless microphones off the table, turned the switch on and started singing. Amazed and perplexed I stop talking mid-sentence. ‘So what’s Sakis like?’, the first woman asked me without even trying to keep her voice down, while her colleague kept on singing. Reluctantly, I started recounting some of my experiences at the Starz club, all along waiting for a command to keep quiet next to a person trying to perform backing vocals. No shushing was forthcoming, however. I watched and talked to the four women while they took breaks from singing to take a pull of their cigarettes, drink, or discuss among each other. At the same time, their well-harmonised voices surrounded and augmented that of the stage singer, without attracting any of the audience’s attention.

Situated off the stage and only partly engaged in the performance itself, these female vocalists struck me as very peculiar ‘performers’. Their contribution was as integral to the sound that reached the audience as those of the stage participants, however their presence was disembodied, almost virtual, while their bodies existed in a space designated for informal socialising rather than in the spotlight. Similarly to the numerous technicians present in the club, their contribution was tremendously valued for its result, but it could be argued that it was not strictly performative, to the extent that it was not visually witnessed or even audibly realised by the less-knowledgeable audience members.

The way that programmes are structured in laïko clubs is quite uniform. Each nightclub usually features three or four well-known singers, who appear on stage in reverse order of their popularity. The so-called ‘first programme’ (próto prógramma) showcases each singer’s current hits, usually with the purpose of promoting a new album release. During this section of the programme, the audience is primarily watching and listening, while eating or consuming alcohol. The stage setup, lighting, and bodily performances of this first half of the show serve to emphasise its spectacle-character. Visual effects and often videos are utilised, the whole space on stage is occupied by the performers, whose movement is often choreographed, sometimes with the addition of professional dancers alongside the main singer. Moreover, during that first half of the show, songs are usually sung at full length, separated by pauses for applause. The singer often introduces specific songs, especially if they are featured in an upcoming or freshly released album.

What I found to be the most significant performative feature, however, and the defining line of a laïki písta, was the ‘second programme’ (déftero prógramma). This latter half of the show serves the purpose of dancing. The set list includes more well-known and
often older popular hits, while maintaining a balance between different dance styles, especially the most common two: zeimbékiko (traditionally thought of as a male dance) and tsifteteli (principally danced by females). On that particular night, the first singer of the ‘second programme’, opened the stage to the audience at around 3am, by exclaiming ‘na sas do òlous stin pista tóra!’ (‘let’s see you all on stage now!’). These types of utterances serve to give the signal that the stage is no longer off-limits for the audience. During the 1990s, the phrase ‘òla ta morá stin písta’ (‘all the babes on the stage’) had become iconic of this liminal phase of the nightclub show, when audience members, and especially overly-sexualised female bodies, take over the performance space and from spectators they transform into spectacle. That particular phrase had become quite banal by 2008 when I was conducting my fieldwork, so singers found alternative and, incidentally, less sexist ways of conveying the same message.

Moments after the call was expressed by the female singer, the stage was filled with dancing bodies. I watched in astonishment while she struggled to maintain even the smallest territory on the stage floor in order to perform. The same popular star who an hour earlier had dominated the crowd’s full attention while they watched mesmerised from their tables, was now almost pushed off the stage, her voice serving a mere supporting role to the audience’s bodily exuberance. These two phases of the old-school laïko show represent a cycle of reciprocity and a transformation of power-roles. During the ‘first programme’, audience members incarnate a spectorial role of fandom: they abide to strict stage vs. seating area management, they applaud and express their admiration to the popular star in globally recognisable ways. The ‘second programme’, however, serves a reversal of power both attentively and territorially: the singer is confined far to one side of the stage, acting as a facilitator of high-spirit (kéfi)\textsuperscript{10} to dancing bodies that claim space and attention for themselves.

\textbf{Performance in a ‘modern’ písta}

In the nightclub season of 2008-9, I found myself employed as a keyboard player in the band of Sakis Rouvas, a prominent pop singer. Sakis (he is always referred to by his first name among fans and media) has maintained a vibrant presence in the Greek pop music industry and the media since the early 1990s, some of it fuelled by his turbulent personal life and the intense speculation around his sexuality.\textsuperscript{11} During that season, Sakis was also presenter of the Greek version of music talent show franchise \textit{The X Factor}, which augmented his media prominence and added momentum to his live performances. The line-up of \textit{Starz}, the club where Sakis was performing, was promoted as the offset to the numerous laïko clubs around the city, since it was featuring what was considered to be ‘modern’ acts. This was manifest in the anglicised club name, the song list which included numerous Anglo-American hits, and the make-up of the band that comprised two electric guitars, a saxophone, an electric bass, a drum set, two keyboardists, and—at most significantly—no bouzouki.

The nightclub’s ‘modern’ and ‘global’ aesthetic was also made visually evident through the display of images from Manhattan’s urban landscape all around the venue’s walls. The management’s preoccupation with conveying a ‘modern’ image concerned even the seating arrangements. After a thorough consideration of how to maximise space and accommodate more customers, the club owners had agreed that couches and small round
tables were more appropriate, since they would also disassociate the club’s image from the practice of food consumption, prevalent in folk-music clubs. As if the decoration and repertory were not communicating the ‘modern’ intention clearly enough, the production team also prepared a short video, which was shown at the beginning of the ‘first programme’, containing a tongue-in-cheek aesthetical manifesto. Set to the music from Star Wars, and employing the film’s instantly recognisable scrolling text sequence, the message to the audience read:

Once upon a time, many light-years ago, in a tiny little country called Greece, the inhabitants used to enjoy themselves until the wee hours of the morning in these funny nightclubs called bouzoukia. They even had this peculiar custom of tossing flowers towards the singers, to reward them for entertaining them. Huge loads of flowers; sometimes even baskets full of them! But that was when the crisis appeared, hitting the country like a comet. No one celebrated anymore, and the nightlife was covered by deep melancholy. But the light at the end of the tunnel did not take long to appear, in the form of a new club of alternative entertainment called Starz, whose artists were about to pack their bags for Hollywood. But since that was a bit far, they thought of something simpler: to bring Hollywood over here!

The short video served the purpose of mocking the competitors (the ‘funny’ nightclubs, bouzoukia), while at the same time promising an ‘alternative’ type of entertainment, straight ‘from Hollywood’. To this end, the programme also featured two well-known female entertainers, the Maggira Sisters, who developed a thirty-minute-long parody musical show, mimicking such international artists as Michael Jackson, the ABBA, and Amy Winehouse. In fact, the two sisters went as far as to script this whole act in English, a decision that received mixed feedback from the audience many of whom complained that they missed most of the jokes. In response to this, a few weeks into the season the performers changed the dialogues from English to Greek, but pronounced in what was presumed to be an American accent. The ‘Hollywood’ aesthetic, however, only went so far as not to compromise the profitability of the venue. For example, although the video ‘manifesto’ was openly mocking flower-tossing, the club owners were adamant that this practice would be encouraged during performance, given its unparalledled lucrativeness.

One of the most striking differences between bouzoukia clubs like Muses and the ‘modern’ Starz was in audience behaviour. In both settings, the programme was arranged in accordance with the conventional succession of acts: opening act, less-known singers’ first programme, main singer’s first programme, interval with DJ, second opening act, less-known singers’ second programme, main singer’s second programme, and a closing set featuring all artists. At no point, however, was the stage open for the audience to dance. In fact, as the next section will analyse, strict stage policing was in place to ensure that the artists did not get in physical contact with spectators. This restriction of access to the stage fundamentally altered the reciprocal relationship intrinsic to the pista experience, while at the same time transforming the singer from a facilitator of entertainment to a star who is to be adored from afar. This transformation was in accordance with the intention to ‘modernise’ the show. I
repeatedly heard the club’s managers making clear that ‘this is not a skyladiko’\textsuperscript{12}, where such practices flourish.

The imperative of ‘modernisation’ was seen as suitable for the demographic of the clientele, which was unmistakably more middle-class and western-gazing than the frequenters of a typical bouzoukia club. Sakis’ status as a long-standing sex-icon ensured the dominant presence of female audience members comprising ages from late teens to women in their forties and fifties, as well as a visible representation of gay men, which, augmented by Sakis’ own sexual ambiguity, contradicted some of the heteronormativity typically found in laïkes pístes.\textsuperscript{13} In this context, the assemblage of ‘modernising’ aesthetic cues including the song choices, instrumentation, décor, cultural references of the sketches, dressing style of the performers, and seating arrangements, all worked towards a rhetoric of self-affirmation for both the producers and the consumers. While the club declared its ‘modernity’ as juxtaposed to the folk pístes, the spectators affirmed their own deviation from established ‘folk’ practices, thus advertising their cosmopolitanism. Thus, the club’s ‘modernising’ intention was fulfilled through a circular process: a series of aesthetic cues attesting to the club’s translocal character attracted audience members anxious to perform their own cosmopolitan self-conception, in turn constituting the club as a space for the congregation of ‘modern’ bodies, behaving in a ‘modern’ way.

This aesthetic decision, however, was not without economic repercussions. What the owners realized a week after the club’s opening was that many customers tended to depart midway through the show, in order to relocate to a ‘true’ (alithiní) písta. As soon as this problem was identified, a meeting was arranged between the management, the main artists, and the maéstros in order to deal with the issue.\textsuperscript{14} The club-owners’ interpretation was that, as the night progressed and the customers’ alcohol-induced exuberance increased, they were in search of more folk-style music and the opportunity to dance. This generated a pressing dilemma of aesthetics versus profitability: were they to stay true to their cause of modernising the Athenian nightlife, or should they succumb to the conventions of the pístes? Their final decision mirrored what they perceived to be a compromise between both imperatives: Sakis, the main singer, would incorporate more ‘well-known folk songs’ (gnostá laïká) in his second programme, encouraging the audience to sing along with him; the space segregation between singers and audience, however, was not negotiable. In order to understand the importance of this performative rule, we need to examine the practices of stage policing and their importance in qualifying the performer as ‘star’.

**Stage policing**

On the first day of our rehearsals in the venue, two months before the start of the performance season, I was introduced to Yiorgos, the nightclub’s ‘stage manager’ (the term is used colloquially in English). During the long waiting hours between rehearsals, and while backing instrumentalists were waiting for the –always fashionably late—main singers to arrive, I witnessed Yiorgos fulfilling mundane tasks such as repairing cables, setting up instrument stands, and making sure that stage entrances were clear and secure. Yiorgos was a slim man of average height, extroverted and with good sense of humour, always managing to keep the crew entertained during the slow, frustrating hours of preparation. On the first night of performances, however, Yiorgos had clearly adopted a new role. I struggled to recognise
him when he entered the backstage area dressed in black and wearing dark sunglasses. ‘Have you joined the CIA?’, one of the sound engineers joked, but Yiorgos did not look entertained. ‘I’m here to take chicks off the stage tonight’, he replied in what I perceived to be a sarcastic tone, although I could not be entirely sure.

During his twenty-five-year-long pop career, Sakis Rouvas had developed a large group of predominantly female followers, who were notorious for attempting to get in physical contact with him on stage. As was explained to me by the maëstros, a long-time collaborator of Sakis’, it was exactly this habit that made the presence of a stage-manager vital for the smooth running of the show. Indeed, during the four-month season in Starz, I observed Yiorgos while he escorted hundreds of female fans off the stage, sometimes the same person repeatedly in the course of one performance.

![Figure 2: On the left, Yiorgos pushing two females off the stage, after they attempted to embrace their idol (photo by the author)](image)

While serving practical needs regarding the continuity of the show and the singer’s safety, this practice of stage-policing also operated as a strategy which helped the singer to construct his own persona. I regard the duties of the stage manager as a tool that ultimately transformed the performer from a facilitator of kéfi (as summarised by the old motto ‘all the babes on the stage’) to an idolised, literally unreachable ‘celebrity’. In effect, the removal of fans who attempt to share the stage space with their pop idol at once reconfigures not only the power dynamics of the performer-audience relationship, but also the cultural connotations of the performance occasion. Bodily expression, spectators are ultimately told, is acceptable as long as it is confined to the seating area. Audience members can get up from their seats, dance around their tables and stools, project their voices and toss flowers toward their idol on
stage, but the encounter is to remain spatially segregated. As a result, the established reciprocal procedure common in bouzoukia is replaced by a more static and unilateral exchange in the ‘modern’ písta, where the audience and the performer remain in their respective roles as consumers and pop-idol throughout the duration of the show.

Conclusion: binary discourses and the neoliberal písta

In a discussion of how the state asserts dominance within neoliberal polities, Ferguson and Gupta (2002) focus on the twin concepts of ‘verticality and encompassment’, both of which become symbolically potent through connotations of spatial topography. They argue that ‘these two metaphors work together to produce a taken-for-granted spatial and scalar image of a state that both sits above and contains its localities, regions, and communities’ (2002: 982). The ‘modern’ písta struggles to constitute a similar authority of verticality and encompassment, by enforcing stricter topographies of participation, where the old ritual reciprocity is substituted by an institutionalisation of stricter roles that are to be maintained, behaviourally and spatially, throughout the performance.

By tracing the changes in spectatorship from the bouzoukia to the ‘modern’ Athenian pístes, this chapter has identified a transformation in the roles of audiences and performers in Greek popular nightlife. What I have suggested is that a seemingly minor reconfiguration of performance space, namely restricting the audience’s access to the stage for dancing, captures a number of social preoccupations, central to Greek cultural intimacies.17 As clubs are increasingly keeping audiences off the stage, music industry stakeholders are asserting their power in order to shape a new kind of spectacle. Yet, this modification of performance conventions in effect relates to a series of familiar dichotomies. These can be temporal, insofar as artists present the new circumstances within a continuum of ‘old-fashioned’ vs. ‘current’. As the Starz debates showed, binaries can also be geopolitical, with reference to discourses of ‘parochial’ vs. ‘metropolitan’, or ‘Eastern’ vs. ‘Euro-American’. Finally, they invoke socioeconomic distinctions through a language of aesthetics, where the ‘tasteful’ modern club is juxtaposed to the ‘decadent’ or ‘trashy’ skyládiko.18

Furthermore, as the chapter has illustrated, this performative transformation is related to a wider effort towards the disembodiment of the music industry in which the diverse implicated actors are invested for often contradictory reasons. Reference to neoliberalism in this context does not imply an alignment between the ideologies of the Greek neoliberal political elite and the practices of the písta, even though some continuities between the two could be articulated.19 Rather, I am concerned with neoliberalism as ‘a new understanding of human nature and social existence’ within an ‘intersection of power, concepts, modes of existence and subjectivity’ (Read, 2009: 26). In this sense, I see a two-fold impact of neoliberalism on the písta experience: a preoccupation with the maintenance of ‘consumption zones’ (Harvey, 2007: 147) and an emphasis on mediation and distance. As Auslander (1999) has argued, neoliberal capitalism often promotes visual, mediatized representations over unmediated interactive experience, since the former can be marketed more successfully.20 In this effort, the production of new relationships between ‘pop idol’ and ‘fan’ can be both more profitable and easier to maintain than the fluid reciprocal interaction existing in laikes pístes. The increasing spatial division between ‘stars’ and audience facilitates the emphasis on the
visual (and virtual) aspects of the show, the introduction of more efficient audio technologies, and the assertion of more professional control over the course of the performance event.

This shift towards the mediatized event, however, cannot be radical and complete. As the economic repercussions in Starz club illustrated, the cultural intimacies of the Greek laïkés pístes are pleasurable enough to convince audiences to search elsewhere if they are not satisfied by the venue where they find themselves. In a music industry where popular stars need to continuously reaffirm their relationship with audiences through live performance events, the decision not to allow ‘babes on the stage’ can give rise to unpredictable intersections between sociocultural aesthetics, neoliberal capitalism, and musical performance.

Notes

2 The term laïkes derives from the music genre that dominates the programme, the so-called laiko, which is an urban-folk song style that developed out of rebetiko from the 1950s onwards. Bouzouki, the plucked lute-type instrument, has been so strongly identified as a marker of this style that its name often stands for the whole circuit of entertainment around the laiko genre. Following the vernacular, I will be using the terms laïkes pístes and bouzoukia interchangeably in the chapter to designate the nightclubs featuring laiko song and dance.
3 During the year of my ethnographic fieldwork in 2008-9, entrance fees ranged from ten to twenty euro per person.
4 Employee responsible for greeting the customers and allocating tables.
5 For a more focused discussion of the nightclub experience from an instrumentalist’s perspective, see Tsioulakis (2013).
6 Those rumours intensified when, a mere few weeks after my visit, the club owner was gunned down just outside his establishment.
7 On the forms of capital and their relationship to symbolic power, see Bourdieu (1986).
8 In my engagement with Athenian nightclubs I never came across a female maéstros (the noun itself is grammatically masculine). This, however, is reflective of the general demographic of professional instrumentalists within the popular music industry, who are in their overwhelming majority male.
9 A similarly widespread practice among backing vocalists was to sing from the dressing rooms, backstage. A colleague of mine once suggested that she would gladly do it from home if the necessary technology was available.
10 Keil (2002: 95) similarly explains how Roma musicians in Greek Macedonia are seen as instrumental in facilitating kefi, despite their low social status within wider society.
11 Greek media in the late 1990s and early 2000s repeatedly reported stories about the alleged relationship with his male manager, but at the time when I was employed in his band, Sakis was married to a female fashion model, who had just given birth to their first child.
12 Literally ‘dog’s den’, a pejorative term for populist laiko clubs that are perceived as ‘lower-class’ entertainment.
13 I discuss the issue of heteronormativity and intolerance within Athenian pístes in another publication (Tsioulakis, forthcoming).
14 These private discussions were reported to us lower-ranking instrumentalists later by the maéstros, and only to the extent that the decisions affected our performance.
15 An overplay of masculinity, often manifest in sexist language, is common within the homosocial environment of male instrumentalists and technicians.
16 These female fans are often referred to in popular slang as rouvites (roughly translating as ‘Rouvas’s little girls’) and are infamous for their extreme displays of adoration towards him. Some of this behaviour, however, is engaged with ironically, especially by some of his earlier fans who are now well into their forties.
17 Stokes (2010: 13-25) has shown how the rise of gasinos, the Turkish popular music clubs, captured local cultural intimacies with ambiguous connections to Islam, the State, and the emergence of neoliberalism.
For an in-depth analysis of aesthetics as a strategy for social distinction, see Bourdieu (1984).

See Tsioulakis, forthcoming. Also, Öykü Potuoğlu-Cook (2006) has illustrated that intersections between neoliberalism and Islamism in Istanbul have direct effects on the way in which the bodily performance of belly-dancing becomes a field for the production of gender and class discrimination.

Thomas Turino (2008) presents a similar juxtaposition between what he calls ‘presentational’ and ‘participatory’ performance, which he connects to the professionalization and marketability of music-making.

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