Ngen Celebrity Vlogs:
The Virtual and Virginal Performances of the Disney Triumvirate on YouTube

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The emergence of the internet has, over the last twenty years, created a new space in which notions of community, new forms of interpersonal communication, and tactics for subversion are increasingly possible. The video-sharing site YouTube, since its inception in 2005, has become the ideal iteration of these online, virtual possibilities. In almost four years, the site has grown from a mode of production into a cultural manifestation of the way people connect to the internet, live in the world and communicate with others. Kansas State University's online "Digital Ethnography Project" notes that, as of March 2008, the total number of uploaded videos on YouTube was just over 78 million, and that this number was growing by close to 200 000 each day. The online video blog (vlog), which is one of the most popular video formats on the internet, accounts for almost 5% of all videos on YouTube, and over 10 000 new vlogs are added to the site each day. Usually recorded in the performer's home, the vlog serves as a means of expressing a performer's everyday thoughts and feelings. These testimonials are an immediate emotional response and rarely feel rehearsed. There are no cuts implying editing, and the performers often stumble over their words, focusing instead on the transmission of their emotions. The unrehearsed nature of these videos emphasizes, rather than negates, their aesthetic implications. Vlogs are a performed first-draft of their offline, and in some cases online, experiences in the world. When contextualized as virtual performances – virtual by being on the internet and performance by existing in-between – vlogs can be examined as potentially radical sites of critical inquiry.

The internet exists in cyberspace and is virtual in the sense that it exists outside of quotidian time and space. However, rather than a virtual reality separate from everyday existence, the internet has become a facet of our real world that extends our actual, sensory, lived experiences. Cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum highlights how the real and the virtual have aligned as "simulation is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. [. . .] It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1). However virtual, the internet is not just an extension of the real. It is in fact, a part of what constitutes reality. In line with Baudrillard's notion of the hyperreal, our twenty-first century reality is made up of all facets of time and space that individuals interact with. Vlogs are hyperreal as they meld the actual and the virtual. These videos are not merely representations, but move toward simulation. This is directly predicated by the virtualness of the form, and of the internet. Mark B N Hansen, a new media theorist, refers to the hyperreal as "the whole image (the panorama)" (49). Like much of the other new media scholarship that exists, this panorama highlights the treatment of the virtual as a part of what constitutes reality.

The virtuality of the internet not only breaks a binary between virtual and real, but also that of the lived and mediatized. Contemporary notions of what constitutes liveness, and so performance, have been called into question. This notion of liveness has been

predicated on that which it calls its opposite- the mediatized. However, Philip Auslander points out that everything is mediated, including any live performance, and so, the definitions of liveness that have helped to make up contemporary performance theory are flawed. YouTube, as a site where performing bodies are (re)presented reiterates this activation, enabling a sort of liveness that is facilitated by the virtual. The basic assumptions about liveness, including the need for actual space and time, become totally irrelevant on the internet and when discussing the online digital body. As Auslander himself points out regarding liveness: "digital technologies have reopened those fundamental questions. A new technology has created a crisis that may lead to a different understanding of liveness" (*Live From Cyberspace* 17). Key to expanding notions of liveness is an articulation of the contemporary body/mind/subject. Removed completely from the Cartesian mind/body split, the contemporary subject is composed of limitless combinations and interactions between the mind, the body and technologies. This constant in-between existence of the subject prevents it from ever being entirely present or entirely absent. Jonathan Marshall names this state as *asence* - "the almost ontological uncertainty, or suspension of being, between presence and absence" (2). Marshall argues that the online body is always crossing borders and boundaries thus inhibiting it from becoming totally present or absent:

> The asent body, the asent self, as neither present or absent becomes a virtual body like a ghost. Sometimes the virtuality is taken as real (as in the narrative of how the virtual world allows true expression of authentic being), and sometimes it is the offline world which is taken as real (as in the narrative of how computer use is an escape from, or abandonment of, real life). However, the overwhelming of one category pole by "the other" might not tend to solidify the dominant pole but unsettle it. The Ghost becomes not pure spirit or matter but an uneasy oscillation (12).

Extending Marshall's notion of asence, we chose to refer to this contemporary reworking as the *asent subject*. It is this iteration of the subject that is found online – and thus in vlogs.

Although the vlog format is commonly recognized as one that propels users into instant celebrities, TV and film personalities also use this format to extend their performed subjectivities. Three of Disney's most bankable stars, Miley Cyrus, Demi Lovato and Selena Gomez, regularly vlog for their fans. Cyrus's YouTube Channel (http://www.youtube.com/ user/mileymandy) currently has almost 14 million views, while Lovato and Gomez's channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/therealdemilovato) has over 11 million. The in-between-ness, which is inhabited by both the vlogger and viewer, differentiates these performances from other forms of entertainment featuring Cyrus, Lovato and Gomez that have been constructed for traditional mass consumption (film, TV, radio etc.) All three are television personalities, with their own headlining show, as well as singers and movie stars. As part of the Disney family, they work on projects and perform in concerts together and with other Disney personalities, such as the Jonas brothers. When performing as Disney stars, these young personalities have to maintain a clean image. For example, the Disney movie *Camp Rock* (2008) revolves around Lovato's character's budding relationship with a singer played by Joe Jonas. In the end, rather than following the romantic movie trope of an ending kiss – a trope that is

constantly reinforced in Disney's animated movies – the two hug, thus maintaining their desexualized, tween image with friendship, rather than romance, at its core. This image is important for maintaining the marketing of Disney's products, which must appeal to children but be approved of by parents. While on one level promoting family and friendship, the TV shows, movies and music featuring these teen stars come out of a Disney tradition that supports and relies on mass consumerism. The plethora of products featuring these young stars is so great that Lovato even commented recently via her Twitter: "I never imagined I'd wake up on Easter, with my face on a basket. Thank you Easter Bunny. I'm embarrassed for the rest of the day. Hahahaha." Similar to the stars' vlogs, the ability to comment in real-time via this networking site destabilizes their seemingly static subject positions and role within the Disney ideology. The stars' vlogs, as a result of their virtuality and apparent self-mediation, can also potentially destabilize this ideology. In our assessment of these Disney stars' vlogs, we have chosen to focus on one vlog created by Lovato and Gomez, and a mimic vlog of it by Cyrus and her friend Mandy Jiroux (Figures 1 and 2). Both videos maintain a generally accepted vlog aesthetic – with a one-take direct address to the viewer. Cyrus and Jiroux maintain much of Lovato and Gomez's original dialogue, which includes discussing makeup, vintage t-shirts and inside jokes. These two videos created a controversy when Cyrus was accused of mocking the other two Disney stars, who some say had been hired due to Cyrus' increasingly scandalous behaviour (Sanders). Gomez was also dating Cyrus' ex-boyfriend, Nick Jonas, at the time. Because of these accusations, Cyrus apologized indirectly via print media, stating: "They were being funny on their show, and [as] Elvis says, 'Imitation is the greatest form of flattery,' so we were, like, imitating them. You know, like, being funny" ("Miley").
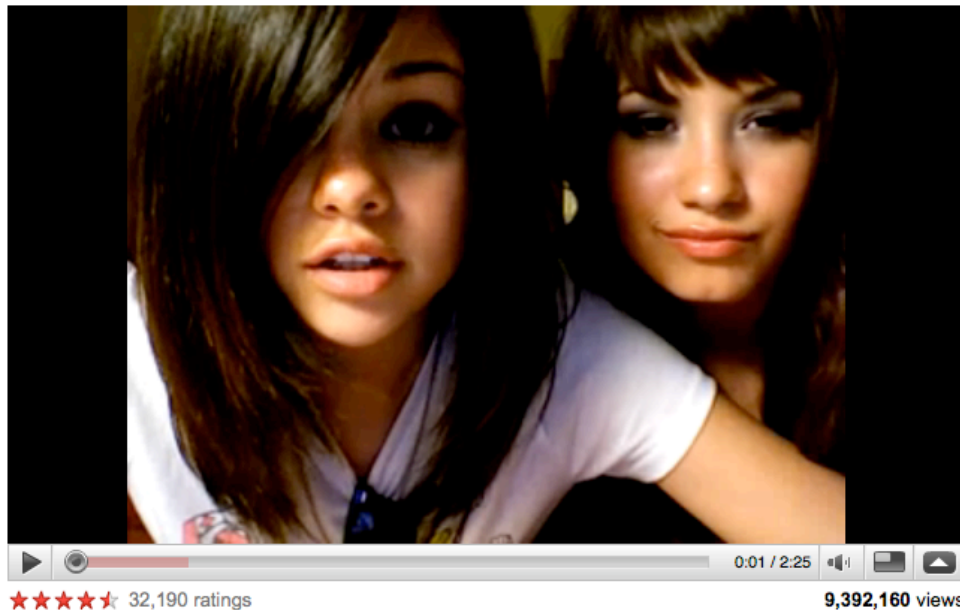

Figure 1: Screenshot of Selena Gomez and Demi Lovato's "original" vlog.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhGEO9XDmis

The Miley and Mandy Show!!!! Is my makeup to dark?

0:03 / 3:12

★★⯪☆☆ 55,278 ratings   **6,924,997** views
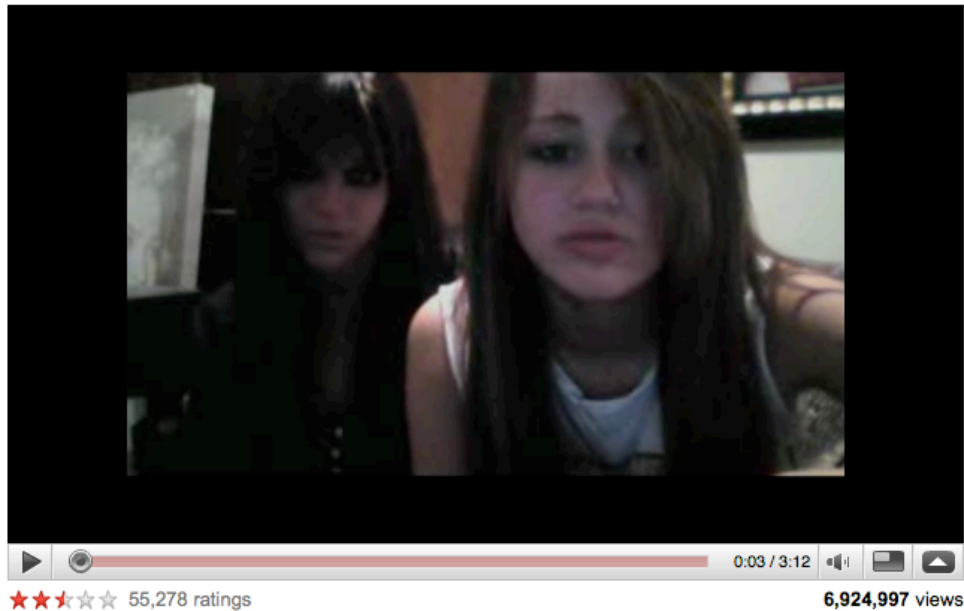
Figure 2: Miley Cyrus and Mandy Jiroux's vlog mimic.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fzX92p2czw

While globally, over 1.5 billion people have regular access to the internet, this discussion will focus on younger users – those who either regularly watch Disney's television programs or those who are fascinated by the popularity of these Disney stars. This first group – born after 1997 and now in their tween years – have been referred to as part of Generation Z, or the new Silent Generation (Hawkins and Schmidt). According to the *Urban Dictionary*, "these are the kids that are born under a computer and have no past memory of life during the Cold War. They grow up with cell phones, iPod's, Hannah Montana, High School Musical, MySpace, YouTube, and homeland security." The second group is potentially more diverse, including Ngeners such as ourselves. Originally coined by Don Tapscott in 1997's *Growing up digital: The Rise of the Net Generation* as the more than 80 million North Americans born between 1978 and 1998, the Ngen is marked by Y2K, YouTube, and the pressing influence of interactive media— from broadcast (television) to digital (internet) culture. Because Tapscott's book was written before Generation Z's existence, we extend the notion of the Ngen to include this younger group. For Ngeners the world is a small space, and every corner, perception, and ideology is available the instant an interest is piqued. They are webusers that do not just access the internet for entertainment or static net relationships, but regard it as entirely integral to their daily lives and relationships. For the Ngen the internet is not only a tool for them to use, but represents the way they network, share, and communicate online and offline. Experiencing the world digitally does not simply rely on lived, actual, personal experiences. The media, which Ngens consider a part of their daily lives, shapes, filters, and spins all information. Young webusers know this and respond reflexively within these media. The internet, and specifically sites like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, is a part of the everyday rituals that mark the subjectivities of its users – the *asent subject*.

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These technologies are both conceptually, and actually, as they extend their subjectivities online via their keyboards and webcams, extensions of the body. The internet is the definitive mode of production of these generations, and the vlog is their ultimate symbol of how communication travels, and in fact, connects in this digital, internet culture. This is a culture that relies on a multiplicity of frames – both literally as computer interfaces and conceptually as interactivity – that makes the format inherently intermedial.

Developed in performance studies as a way to describe and name contemporary theatre practice that employs technology on stage with live bodies, intermediality has expanded in meaning and can now be regarded as a mode of perception in its own right. Intermediality, as defined by performance theorists, links contemporary modes of perception and its ability to inform current modes of performance. At its base level, Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt define intermediality as the integration of digital technology and non-theatre media in a performance space and resulting (new) forms of representation (11). However, Chapple and Kattenbelt also state that intermediality, while linked to technology and its place in society, can occur in a performance that does not use any modern or contemporary technology. Peter M. Boenisch agrees that intermediality is "an effect created in the perception of observers that is triggered by performance—and not simply by the media, machines, projections or computers used in a performance" (113). Focusing on the way a performance is received instead of how it is intended, intermediality pushes the medium with which content is displayed to the forefront of how exactly the content is in fact received. Boenisch adds that "media are by no means a neutral means to communicate or express something, but, on the contrary, they essentially shape what can be thought, said and stated at all times" (105).

Boenisch extends the concept of the intermedial regarding it not only as the use of digital technologies on stage with live bodies, but as "an effect performed in-between mediality, supplying multiple perspectives, and foregrounding the making of meaning rather than obediently transmitting meaning (103). This definition views intermediality as a type of indeterminacy. Robert C. Holub notes that literary works represent objects as indeterminate or "between aspects of dimensions" (562). This belief puts the center for meaning making onto the reader who has to fill in the blanks, or gaps, in the text. This effect is not only a part of audience reception, but extends to practitioners as well. Especially in the West, perception has been shaped by technology, and this perception can be addressed in performance through both the creation of a performance and its reception. The role of technology in everyday existence links to Hansen's definition of new media as "the body- the body's scope of perceptual and affective possibilities- that informs media interfaces. This means that with the flexibility brought by digitization, there occurs a displacement of the framing function of medial interfaces back onto the body from which they themselves originally sprang" (22). Hansen locates the term new media not by focusing on the new in reference to the medium itself, say the internet for example, but instead references the medium's emerging, and in fact, new ability to activate the spectator via their body. The study of new media is also heavily interested in the body as the centre for meaning-making (Hansen). Regarding the body as the frame with which all interactions with technology must be read, technology and the body become one and the same. This actively stages the processes at work regarding how

webusers perceive the offline world and their own subjectivities within this world. Hansen describes the shift of perception of the contemporary subject position as one that is enabled by technology: "technology allows for a closer relationship to ourselves, for a more intimate experience of the very vitality that forms the core of our being, our constitutive incompleteness, our moral finitude" (106).

The importance of these contemporary modes of perception is intricately linked to intersubjectivity. In twentieth-century critical thought, there was a shift from understanding the formation of the subject as subjective to intersubjective. N. Katherine Hayles believes that digital technology is not simply changing single subjects, but is rather altering how subjectivity works. The virtual subject is created through interaction with digital technology, which extends to the body and creates a cyborg – or *asent* - subject whose body is "extended or disrupted" through this relationship (qtd. in Saltz 73). Matthew Causey notes that when digital bodies meet live bodies the experience can be uncanny, which leads to what he calls a "split subjectivity" (2). However, intermedial performance – using either digital technologies or not - can move beyond a split subjectivity and into an intersubjective, or spectral subject position. Mario J. Valdés defines intersubjectivity as the "escape from the confines of subjectivism through language to a process of communicative interaction" (Valdés). Maurice Merleau-Ponty extends the idea of the subject created through language by defining "*inter-subjectivity* as dramatically *inter-corporeal*" (Wagner 128). In performance, bodies are defined by this inter-relationship between performers, spectators and other media. David Z Saltz names this intersubjective subject position as collaborative. He claims that digital technology bridges gaps between subjects and creates a collaborative subject "not anchored firmly in any pre-existing, individual subjectivity. Rather, it relies on the contributions of multiple subjects to synthesize a single virtual subject" (75).

The performance of the vlog is intermedial. Here, the in-between-ness of the internet does not only reference the subject or the space the subject is inhabiting. Intermediality becomes the gap between media and the effects these gaps activate in the webusers participating in the performing and viewing of the vlog. The concept of the intermedial also struggles to break the distinction between the actual and the virtual worlds. Boenisch notes "if we foreground the undeniable ontological difference between the factual and the fictional worlds, we can see that representation establishes a hierarchy between the two and assumes a mimetic relationship between the actual thing and its mediatized representation" (109). Vlogs on YouTube stage the intermedial explicitly. When watching a video on Cyrus, Lovato and Gomez's channels, the webuser has immediate access to text describing the video, related videos, other videos posted by the Disney stars, and, of most significance, text and video responses to the central video. These elements are not additional material, but available on the same webpage simultaneously. These YouTube pages are a multiplicity of frames projected through a screen/mirror. These are the central components of new media scholarship.

These YouTube webpages – via their intermediality - activate liveness as the webusers interact with the material. Any action on the webpage promotes this: clicking the mouse, choosing a video, commenting on a video, etc. Every webuser is potentially a participant,

and this online interaction facilitates an activation that leads to liveness. All sections of these webpages act as representations and extensions of the *asent subject*. First, you see the video screen itself. It takes up the most space, and because it is not static, it is often the first place webusers look. This is where the actual digital representation of the *asent subject* is manifest. Webusers see the performer in their own actual space and in virtual space. They are seeing double. While webusers are watching the video online, they consider the fact that the video is representing a space in real time and real space. Directly below the video is information about the popularity of the video. This includes the number of times it has been viewed, the average rating the video has received, and most significantly, text and video responses to the video. These seemingly extraneous components of the site activate the viewers. However, this is an activation that the channel author can choose to engage with or not. On Cyrus and Jiroux's mimic vlog, all comments and video responses have been disabled. As their other vlogs do not have disabled response areas, the controversy over the video is probably the reason for this decision. Instead, responses – which frequently refer to a possible feud between the Disney stars – are only available on Lovato and Gomez's Channel, which has over four hundred video responses and over 80 000 text responses.
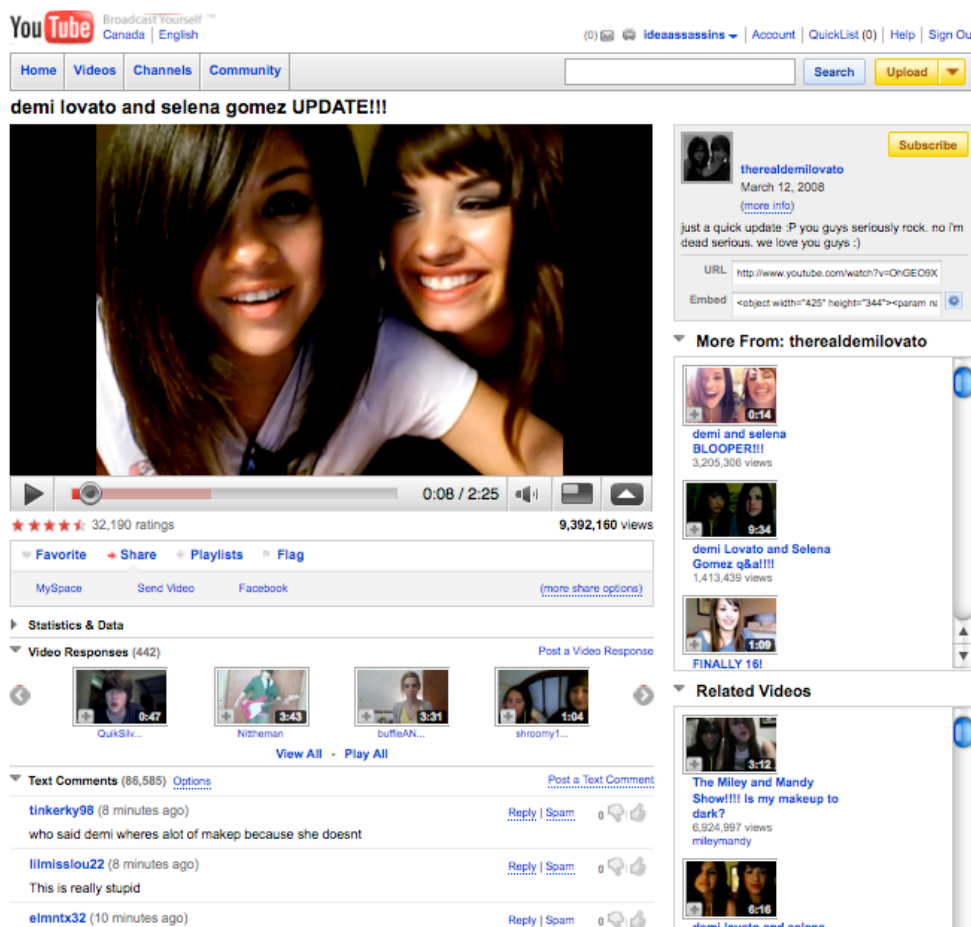

Figure 3: Screenshot of the page containing Selena Gomez and Demi Lovato's "original" vlog. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhGEO9XDmis

In collaboration with the video itself, these responses activate the webuser watching the vlog and emphasize the fact that each viewing of the vlog will be unique and completely dependent on who is watching. Additionally, to the right of the video, there is information written by the performer about the specific vlog, including the date the video was added to the site, a link to the profile of the video's creator, and "more from this user" and "related video" columns. This built-in intertext extends the video's frame, first to the other areas of the YouTube page, and then, via this intentional indeterminacy, back on to the webuser's *asent subject-body*. On the page containing Lovato and Gomez's "original" video, a webuser may choose to watch either more of the duo's videos or Cyrus and Jiroux's mimic response (Figure 3). So then, the digital representation of the space the vlog takes up becomes a direct digitization of the performing, participating vlogger. Vlogging, when contextualized as digital performance, inhabits a virtual space that extends beyond the screen, moving into both the performer and audience members' body. The vlogs' inherent virtuality and the unique subject position afforded as a result of this virtuality, enable a sort-of liveness that invigorates not only the performer, but that of the spectator as well.

In addition to comments and the vlog responses, the performers' virtual shift to one fluid collaborative subjectivity emphasizes multiplicity. Baudrillard argues that the clone—in this case the double, or the fragmented subject—puts an end to the body:

> This is how one puts an end to totality. If all information can be found in each of its parts, the whole loses its meaning. It is also the end of the body, whose secret is precisely that it cannot be segmented into additional cells, that it is an indivisible configuration [. . .]. (97-98).

Webusers work to define and shape this never stable and always re-imagined medium/technology. Donna Haraway names this as a cyborg subjectivity, which "is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (34). Here the splits between live and mediatized, real and fictive are again rejected. Online, the "boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (34), and what instead emerges is an intersubjective, spectral subject-position that, in performance, decides what it is and how it would like to portray itself. Haraway states "by the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all [. . .], theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism. In short, we are cyborgs" (35). The cyborg identity is spectral as it can assume any subject-position it likes, and however virtual, can extend to the subjectivity of the webuser. The cyborg is also an intersubject as instead of relying on the markers of oneself in order to piece together a static subjectivity, it is through the interaction with other users online that this becomes organized. This connection between the human and the machine, with its reference to interaction, is about activity. Simply separating performers and spectators becomes completely redundant on the internet as all webusers perform both roles simultaneously. However virtual, the webusers, as they connect to others via the screen/mirror/internet, participate in each instance of reception, performance, and reaction. Continuing with this useful mirror metaphor, the webuser is ultimately interacting with him or herself. What is highlighted by these interactions is the webuser's fluid subject position and its relationship to what is being performed and responded to.

As previously stated, webusers can actively choose what to engage with on the Disney stars' channels. This ability to construct multiple frames and to reflexively implicate oneself marks an intersubjective, *asent*, cyborg subject position. This intersubjectivity is inherently built into the YouTube site and part of the everyday subjectivity of the Ngen. This contemporary subject position – when located as a process of intermediality – maintains the in-between and thus relies on the constant renewal of gaps and traces. These gaps and traces are exactly what mark the radical potential that is also inherently built into these systems – as they playfully force webusers to have a hand in the construction of their own subjectivity, ideology and reality. Webusers interacting with these two vlogs participate in an alternative naming of the Disney stars. While webusers may be familiar with the stars' Disney sanctioned material, the static mass-mediated personas Disney works to create are exploded via the gaps created within these digital interactions. All three stars (and Mandy Jiroux) claim they are friends, which maintains The Disney Channel's dominant ideology. However, the existence of Cyrus and Jiroux's mimic – which chooses to emphasize the differences between the two vlogs - challenges this. Webusers, in their reception, have chosen to focus on the possible tension between the young stars (and Jiroux) with thousands of text and video responses either taking sides or discussing the celebrity feud. This online, virtual feud fueled by the webusers has extended to the mass media that Disney employs to reinforce the importance of these personalities. Gossip websites and print media constantly update the public – frequently citing the YouTube channels – about the status of the supposed feud.

Via the vlog's intermediality, the concept of the virtual becomes the key concept through which to read performance on YouTube. Cyberspace, as mentioned previously is virtual in the sense that it exists outside of quotidian time and space. However, when in reference to the spectator it takes on an additional phenomenological meaning - it becomes the capacity to be in excess of one's actual state, enabling though this active spectatorship, the *asent subject*'s ability to through perception, think critically. In a recent article, *Performance Research* describes the virtual as being "imbued with a sense of location, function and body state" (Virtual/Virtuality 137). Although several layers of meaning are necessary when discussing the virtual in terms of cyberspace and of performance, what connects all of these variations is the webuser's body-subject. More importantly, the article locates the body-subject and the virtual as primary spaces for critical awareness—"virtuality becomes the space of radical potential, with scope for existential, artistic, and political transformation" (139). Part of this "radical potential" lies in the previously discussed ability of the *asent subject* to seek out information and ways of simulating/(re)presenting themselves online. The previously mentioned responses on Lovato and Gomez's Channel include video mimics by fans. While on one level, these mimics come out of a tradition of celebrity obsession in which fans attempt to gain as much immediacy and access to stars as possible, they also emphasize the constructed-ness of this relationship. Accessing these (self)mediated vlogs, on top of Disney's mass produced materials, enables webusers to engage critically with the trope of the Disney teen. The gaps between Cyrus, Lovato and Gomez as mass produced and mediated subjects and these online, virtual (re)presentations allows fans to either reinforce or reject this stereotype.

It is not only the indeterminate space that the body-subject takes up in the virtual, but it is the body-subject itself, which becomes the central site of the in-between. The vlogger's body includes the actual body (the represented) and the online digital body (the presented). These two fragments are not separate entities, but are both part of a limitless, spectral subject that is defined by, and as, the virtual. Similarly, the vlog viewer's body-subject also inhabits the virtual. In this case, the viewer and vlogger–the participants–all help to facilitate the "amalgamation of different dimensions, [and] an integration of different perceptions, materialities, corporealities" ("Virtual/Virtuality" 137). This notion also extends to the binary between performer and spectator. This dualism is shattered online, as the virtual is inhabited by all participants. The separation normally thought of as integral to any performance is regarded as a construct, and, in such a space, the potential for each participant to engage actively grows exponentially. Again, it is the ability to engage with these stars beyond Disney's sanctioned material, that breaks the performer-spectator binary. The distinction between the stars' public persona and personal lives blurs as both the stars and webusers forge new connexions and create shifting boundaries.

Figure 4: Cortney Lohnes and Kim McLeod's (IdeaAssassins) vlog mimic.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeRr38jK9DM

As previously stated, an important aspect of the webuser's interaction with the vlog is through video responses. In order to implicate ourselves in this collaborative subjectivity and the ongoing intertextual mediations surrounding these stars, we – as our performance collective IdeaAssassins (http://www.youtube.com/user/ideaassassins) – created a vlog mimic of the Cyrus and Jiroux vlog called "The Cortney and Kim Show Mimic!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" (Figure 4). In our video, we actively emphasize Cyrus and Jiroux's mimicking by extending it. Jiroux is well-known as Miley's significantly older (and legal) best friend. In order to highlight this difference – which creates a gap between

Jiroux and Lovato, who she mimics - Cortney performs as a deadpan, conservatively dressed forty-something. In contrast, Kim mimics Cyrus, who in turn is mimicking Gomez, by clearly satirizing the sexuality of teen stars. This hyper-performance invokes mimicry as a strategy to destabilize Cyrus' celebrity. While Cyrus and Jiroux deviated from the dialogue in Lovato and Gomez's vlog, we chose to emphasize the gaps that they created in their deviation by copying Cyrus and Jiroux's mimic word for word. Our mimic is not only in response to the two stars' vlogs, but is also consciously part of a greater series of simulacra. In making this mimic vlog, we were aware of the multitude of other mimics available on YouTube. Our mimic is thus a meta-response that highlights not only the differences between the stars' vlogs, but also the ongoing gaps being created by webusers in response to these vlogs.

In contemporary iterations, mimicry is used to explode recognizable cultural referents, especially those linked to race. The act of mimicking activates the spectator via mimicry's inherent reliance on multiplicity and expectations. When choosing to view mimics of these Disney stars, webusers are explicitly participating and creating the gaps. Homi K. Bhabha, when describing colonial mimicry, states that "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (86). This idea can be extended to contemporary forms of mimicry as he continually repeats the idea of "almost the same, but not quite" in order to stress that mimicry never leads to a complete mimetic copy, but rather exists in the in-between. It is this in-between-ness that leads to mimicry's radical potential. Mimicry, which is always a meta-performance, emphasizes gaps. Our mimic thus alters the reception of either Cyrus and Jiroux's vlog or Lovato and Gomez's vlog, further destabilizing any notion of their static subjectivity. Bhabha's description of colonial mimicry is also extended in this example as Lovato and Gomez were created as mimics of Cyrus – as the ultimate singing and acting Disney sensations. By choosing two stars with visibly diverse ethnicities, Disney attempted to appeal to the increasingly diverse makeup of their audience. Cyrus and Jiroux's vlog undermines this attempt as they reinforce the differences between themselves – as white Americans – and Lovato and Gomez. By pointing out the choices that Cyrus and Jiroux make when performing themselves as other, our mimic shifts the focus from the mimic itself to the act of mimicking and the gaps between the two.

When the two Disney stars' vlogs and our mimic are watched in tandem (which is encouraged on the IdeaAssassins blog), a new dynamic is created. These three videos–as mimics, mirrors, and doubles of each other–fragment their subjects, creating a co-production of repeated goals and intentions. These explicit remediations lead to, what media theorists J David Bolter and Richard Grusin refer to, as the "networked self" (4). This additional subject position is manifest as a result of the emergence of the virtual "expressed in digital multimedia and networked environments, [which] suggests a definition of self whose key quality is not so much 'being immersed' as 'being interrelated or connected.' The hypermediated self is a network of affiliations, which are constantly shifting" (4).

In our mimic, we focused on the sexuality of these teen stars, and specifically of Cyrus. As Disney's most bankable star, Miley Cyrus has become a regular in tabloid media – both in print and online. Stories about Cyrus almost always focus on the problematic marriage of her Disney teen personality and status as a sexualized object. Last year, controversial, but sanctioned, photos of Cyrus appeared in *Vanity Fair* (photographed by Annie Leibowitz). Simultaneously, private pictures of a scantily-clad Cyrus posing for the camera were leaked online. This media focus directly informs Cyrus' subjectivity and any perception of her online persona. These aspects of her *asent* subjectivity are overtly referred to in the IdeaAssassins mimic. When mimicking Cyrus' discussion of her Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles t-shirt – a mimic of Gomez's Power Rangers t-shirt – Kim refers instead to her bra and points to her breast when talking about her favourite Ninja Turtle. As this was an overt focus of our mimic, it is not surprising that the one video response we received focused on Cyrus and her celebrity sexuality. This video, by Logiepie (http://www.youtube.com/user/Logiepie), focuses on the ability of any webuser to easily access sexually charged material featuring Cyrus (Figure 5).
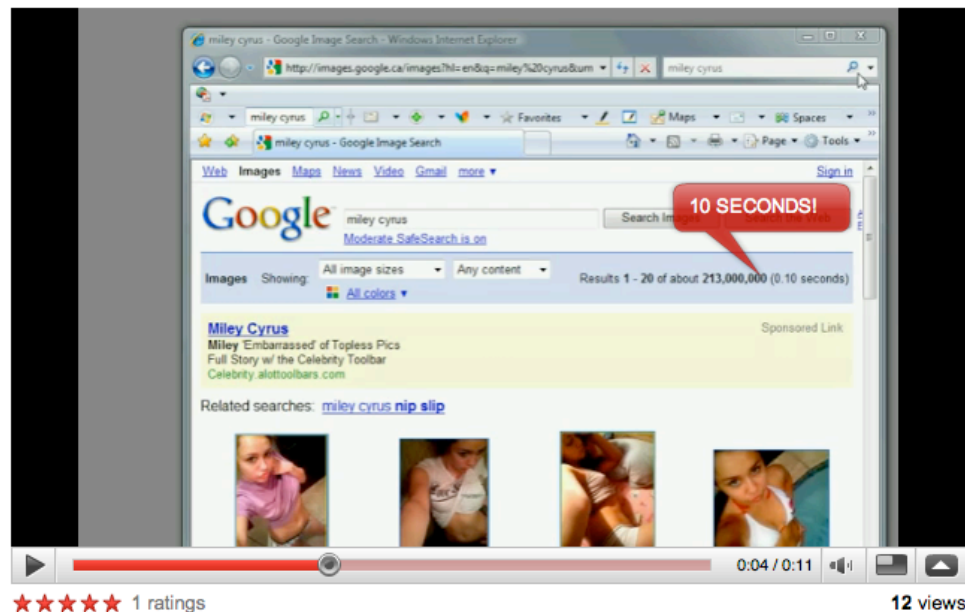

Figure 5: Meta-mimic response to the IdeaAssassins vlog mimic.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kARI_0boHao

By activating webusers – via the virtual in-between – these celebrity vlogs and responses to them emphasize the contemporary *asent* subject position. In addition to redefining the notions of celebrity and how teen sexuality is disseminated and defined in popular culture, interactions with these vlogs extend to everyday existence. In February 2009 the pervasiveness of this online interaction spilled into the Disney Channel show *Sonny with a Chance*, a star vehicle for Lovato. The series begins with Lovato's character, Sonny, being invited to co-star on her favourite sketch comedy show after producers see her online videos. Disney thus subsumes the online video performance for the plot, but fails to acknowledge its potential to destabilize the tropes the show itself relies on.

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