

Chapter 5

‘I’m a celebrity, get me into politics’

The political celebrity and the celebrity politician

Philip Drake and Michael Higgins

The aim of this chapter is to examine the endorsement of politicians by celebrities and the increasingly interwoven nature of celebrity and politics. Although our focus will be on contemporary matters, the introduction of celebrity into the political sphere is by no means a recent phenomenon. Indeed, anxiety over the perceived influence of celebrity upon the political process – and upon the public at large – has been a concern for much of the twentieth century. The sociologist Leo Lowenthal (1944), for instance, examined the evolution of the popular biography and noted that there had been a shift in media coverage from ‘idols of production’, such as industry leaders and politicians, to ‘idols of consumption’, such as film and sports stars. Just over a decade later C. Wright Mills (1956) argued that the increasing power of celebrities had enabled them to become a new ‘power elite’ to be ranked alongside the political elite.

Developing these critiques, P. David Marshall (1997) takes a neo-Marxist approach in arguing that modern celebrity is a direct product of late-capitalist society. For him there is a ‘convergence in the source of power between the political leader and other forms of celebrity’ (1997: 19). Marshall argues that celebrities and politicians are commodities sold to audiences, and the relationship developed in capitalist societies between the ‘leader’ and the ‘crowd’ is central to the creation of both, suggesting that ‘in the rationalization of the social, the celebrity ... celebrates the potential of the individual and the mass’s support of the individual in mass society’ (1997: 43). According to this argument, both celebrities and politicians promote similar myths of individualism, and construct a public form of subjectivity that expresses freedom and aspiration in a capitalist democratic society. However, Marshall also acknowledges the operation of different kinds of celebrity (with varying demands placed upon them by the public), noting that ‘in politics, a leader must somehow embody the sentiments of the party, the people, and the state [whereas] in the realm of entertainment, a celebrity must somehow embody the sentiments of an audience’ (1997: 203). We shall suggest that the distinction between the two, the subject of this chapter,

is not always straightforward and that the division between these spheres of activity has become increasingly blurred. In an age dominated by mediated politics, politicians also need to address their electorate as audiences. Granted, by relating celebrity to the processes of capitalism, Marshall usefully debunks the idea that celebrity is simply a status rewarded to talented individuals. However, his analysis of the celebrity politician is limited by a focus on the system in which celebrity is produced, thus neglecting to fully distinguish between different kinds of politicians and celebrities, and the ways in which they present themselves to the wider public. Through political campaigning and image management, the politician – like the celebrity – aims to appeal to a mass audience, but, we shall argue, this is not accomplished in quite the same terms. A key aim of this chapter is to address this distinction through an analysis of celebrity and political performance.

With the rise in influence and power of celebrities identified by Lowenthal and Mills, the political sphere has become intertwined with celebrity and the value that celebrity endorsement can bring to political causes. Just as in advertising, gaining the support of prominent celebrities functions as a means of promoting product (in this case a political agenda) and leveraging media coverage. Examples of this include John F. Kennedy's links to Hollywood stars such as Frank Sinatra and Marilyn Monroe, and, more recently, the courting of rock stars (Oasis, Bono, Paul Weller and others) by New Labour in Britain. At the same time, celebrities have increasingly entered the domain of formal politics. The rise of Hollywood film star Ronald Reagan to the Presidential Office and the recent successful election of Arnold Schwarzenegger as governor of California are the most obvious examples, although the UK also has cases of its own, such as the elections of actress Glenda Jackson and journalist Martin Bell as Members of Parliament.

Another indicator of the traffic between the political and celebrity spheres is that politicians are increasingly seen in popular formats such as the television talk show. Thus the appearance of Bill Clinton performing saxophone on the *Arsenio Hall Show* (Paramount, 1989–94) or the seven appearances of UK Liberal Party leader Charles Kennedy on the topical BBC comedy show *Have I Got News For You?* (1990–) – leading to his nickname of 'chat-show Charlie' – are now almost to be expected. Contemporary politicians are aware that an appearance on a popular television show enables them to reach a wider public and circulate their image more effectively than any conventional political speech in parliament. Perhaps concerned that a disaffected public has lost interest in formalized politics, politicians also often attempt to use celebrities to garner media coverage at moments of political need. Hence in 2004 Bruce Springsteen, REM, Dave Matthews and Pearl Jam performed 'Vote for Change' concerts across the USA in support of John Kerry, the Democrat presidential candidate. In the same year

the rock star Bono, of the band U2, garnered widespread media coverage by telling the UK Labour Party conference that Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were the 'Lennon and McCartney' of politics, and the governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, endorsed George W. Bush by defending his policies through reference to his own celebrity past – a performance that was widely reported across national and international news networks.

Contemporary political culture and the rise of performative politics

As we have outlined, there is a widespread critical belief that the development of celebrity has contributed to a change in contemporary political, democratic culture. In their introduction to a recent collection on the 'restyling' of politics, John Corner and Dick Pels (2003) argue that this can be broadly divided into two positions. The first is pessimistic, based on the view that contemporary party politics has come to rely too much on image and spin and not nearly enough on rational argumentation. Nick Jones (1999) describes the emergence of an industry of 'spin doctors', dedicated to refashioning political culture and debate to suit the aesthetic needs of the media and the marketplace. Citing the guidance of these image managers, and the collaboration both of politicians themselves and of mainstream media, Bob Franklin (2004) argues that politics has begun to be 'packaged' for sale like any other consumer product. The result of this is an emphasis on the immediate palatability of the image rather than on the intricacies and social consequences of policy content. For Franklin, the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger to major political office served to verify the extent of this 'supremacy of style over substance', and the descent of democracy into a pool of artifice and trivia (2004: 12).

The second position is more optimistic. Corner and Pels suggest that a 'performative restyling' of politics does not have to be viewed in a negative manner but might be fashioned to the service of a more inclusive political culture (2003: 16). Invoking performance theory drawn from theatre and anthropology, they suggest that this perspective allows a greater understanding of how a largely mediated political culture can attract and engage with its audience. Corner (2003) argues that the 'mediated persona' – the public image of an individual – functions as a central, and perhaps necessary, aspect of contemporary mediated democracy. He suggests that politicians are required to perform a personalized 'self' to the public, and need to attempt to convince us that this self operates congruently with the political demands placed upon it. Sometimes this performance appears to reveal aspects of a private self and at other times is called upon to maintain an unflappable public authority. As well as offering a potential means of insight into the character and intentions of political actors, Corner suggests

that a historically and technologically informed view of the 'mediated persona' enables a more productive and transparent relationship between the political process and the cultural dimension in which it operates.

John Street also addresses the politician as performer and argues that 'the style is part of a process, just as is marketing and branding. Styles are manufactured too, but in analysing this process we need to appreciate the appropriate analogy – not commerce but celebrity, not business but show-business' (2003: 97). He too stresses the need to view politics as a form of performance and discusses the need for politicians to adapt different styles to different settings. This is accomplished by varying their mode of performance across media appearances and deploying a recognizable 'idiolect' – the particular repertoire of voice, expressions, gestures and styles associated with their persona. Just as with actors, skilled politicians vary their performance according to the demands placed upon them by different media genres, and so assessment of their performances will also vary according to the context in which they appear. Appearing on the topical television satire *Have I Got News For You?*, for instance, demands a more self-reflexive, informal and comedic political performance than that appropriate to a more formal political context such as a policy speech.

We will now consider some examples of the intersection between politics and celebrity, looking in more detail at Bono and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Both examples are speeches given to political party gatherings in 2004 and both were given widespread media coverage. We turn first to an address to the 2004 UK Labour Party annual conference by the Irish rock star Bono, on tackling poverty in Africa, and then consider the speech given by Hollywood movie star turned state governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to the 2004 US Republican Party Convention, in which he advocates President George W. Bush's election for a second term.

Bono as a political celebrity

Bono is an interesting case because he is not a politician by occupation but a highly recognizable international celebrity. The source of his fame and personal wealth is his position as lead singer of the successful rock group U2. Yet, as Street (2004) warns, this does not mean that the form of celebrity exemplified by Bono should be read as apolitical. Throughout their careers, the members of U2 have produced overtly political songs, such as 'Sunday, Bloody Sunday' and 'Mothers of the Disappeared', and have dedicated their albums to various political causes. They also appeared at both the 1985 Live Aid and 2005 Live 8 concerts in support of ending Third World poverty. Bono has continued to use his individual renown to sit on the Commission for Africa and intervene in debates concerning the relief of poverty, to the extent that Bill Clinton names him as 'the person most responsible'

for the passage of a bill on third world debt relief through the US Congress (Varga, 2003). Bono has sought to exert his influence on British political policy as well, and John Street describes a photograph from summer 1999 showing Bono and Bob Geldof discussing debt relief, with Prime Minister Tony Blair wedged between them 'listening intently' (2002: 434).

The point we should take from this as we look at Bono's performance is that it would be misleading to examine his words in isolation from his celebrity persona. Bono is known as a kind of entertainer who, in John Street's words 'pronounces on politics and claims the right to represent people and causes ... without seeking or acquiring elected office' (2004: 438). Bono's address therefore operates in parallel with the subtext of his image as someone who holds political views and has a history of putting them into action, all from the position of detached integrity that comes from occupying a space outside of the main political apparatus. We will try to show, however, that although his renown undoubtedly gives Bono substantial political influence, he must also deal in his address with the lack of democratic mandate implied by his celebrity status. In other words, as well as reflecting on the access and apparent influence politically active celebrities such as Bono may enjoy, our reading of the celebrity advocate must take account of the widely held view (especially by journalists) that the engagement of celebrities within politics brings substantial dangers of obscuring political debate in a mist of fame and glamour. As both of our examples are political speeches, the focus in this chapter will be primarily on verbal performance and the rhetorical construction of Bono's political claims. While we acknowledge that Bono's speech is clearly a bodily performance, the reason for our focus is that it addresses a tendency within writing on celebrity to privilege visual signifiers over other aspects of performance.

Bono's speech is quite complex, as it needs to address and reconcile several aspects of his public persona. To consider how he does this, it is useful to draw upon Erving Goffman's (1974) book *Frame Analysis* and his concept of 'keying'. Goffman defines the key as 'the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed [temporarily into] ... something quite else' (1974: 44–5). This is useful here because if one of the goals of a lengthy political monologue is that the audience remain attentive for its duration, it is usually necessary to break from the main political frame with recollections and humorous asides. Keying simply refers to the means by which the speaker manages these asides; how they switch from their primary role as political advocate to such secondary roles as perhaps 'practically-minded businessperson', or 'stand-up comedian', or even 'bashful rock musician'. To engage in keying is therefore to temporarily shift the terms of an interaction and the way in which it should be read, in a manner that suits the needs of the matter in hand. The cues that signal such shifts can be semantic, but in contexts such as

political speeches – and, in this case, in Bono’s delivery – cues can also take the form of a switch in posture and tone of voice.

Bono’s speech is a complex of keying instances, but two main patterns seem to develop. The first is that he manages his credentials in the speech by brief periods of ‘keying down’. These are moments in which he seems to temporarily concede to doubts concerning his right to speak, which are then followed by transitions in which he reconciles his celebrity position with his holding the political stage. What follows are two examples from Bono, both of which call attention to his position as a rock musician:

[You’re probably better off asking] anyone but a rock star. I mean, get yourself a source you can trust – one who, say, when he hears the word ‘drugs’, probably thinks ‘life-saving’ rather than ‘mind-altering’.

Can you take this from a rock star? ‘All you need is love’ when all you need are groceries?

What these extracts have in common is that they are certainly intended to be funny. Both examples draw upon and toy with the popular image of the rock star as drug-addled on the one hand, or naïve and other-worldly on the other. At the same time, both are also based on a conceit of self-depreciation that assumes the presence of a sympathetic and friendly audience. These lines could be counted upon to raise a laugh – which of course they did – because all those present would be more than familiar with Bono’s sober and practical approach to the eradication of third world poverty, in spite of his being a rock star. Yet for all that, the humour depends upon the very currency of these negative images of celebrity. Indeed, when we factor in the infinitely more diverse television audience, an interpretation emerges in which, for all its immediate comedy, Bono’s approach has the dual function of addressing and diffusing the negative impact his rock star status may have on his credibility to offer political advice.

The second pattern relates to the overall development of the speech. At the beginning of the address, a distinction is maintained between the political elements of the discourse and Bono’s celebrity credentials. This section of the speech steps along on such political assertions as ‘this is not about charity, it’s about justice’ and ‘the war against terror is bound up in the war against poverty’ (a line that he subsequently attributes to Colin Powell, and has re-used in speeches across the world), while also invoking broad, mutually reassuring notions of a British and Irish disposition towards charity. However, by the time we get to the second main section of political discussion in the speech, and after he keys down and offers a transition passage, Bono has started to embellish the political frame with narratives of the personal, and speaks on the basis of his own

upbringing and social background on the streets of Ireland. He then returns to a conventional political frame, before keying down again (conceding 'he is just a rock star'). However, after a brief transition, his return to the main political frame has a significant new element – this time the address proceeds on the basis of his celebrity rock star experiences. This section of Bono's performance begins with the following passage, teasing the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer:

Now you know why Tony Blair and Gordon Brown are really excited that U2's got a new album coming out – why?

Because I'll be away on tour next year.

But even from a tour bus I can be a pain in the arse. That's my job.

And I've got some very interesting friends, there's as many of them in mothers' unions as trade unions.

It's not just purple Mohawks we've got going, it's blue rinses.

Again, humour plays a significant part in reading Bono's address. Contrasting pairs are offered, placing the expected alongside the unexpected, and a form of lexical choice normally ill-suited to the frame is utilized. That is, political speakers, used to selling themselves to their public, rarely define their occupation as being 'a pain in the arse', but rock stars can. Having then asserted his celebrity status as one from which to speak with force, he then engages in a final keying down, although this time it could be better described as a mock keying down in which he apes the cynic's ironic interpretation of his being there:

I am Tony Blair's apologist. The rock star pulled out the hat at the Labour Party conference.

Of course, Bono's humour is necessarily controlled and instances of keying must remain answerable to the dominant frame. Accordingly, he immediately reins back from this aberrant explanation by reassuring the assembled delegates:

I've more faith in the room than that. I've more faith in your leaders than that.

Bono here emphasizes the benefit of his experience as a celebrity, and dismisses potential objections that he acts as a stooge. He then moves to conclude his speech with a passage in which he implicitly claims equal credentials with the audience and recasts the political element of the speech within an inclusive mode of address, saying 'We're serious, this is gigantic' and culminating in a final plea beginning 'Do we have the will to make poverty history?'

The most interesting aspect of Bono's performance is the amount of rhetorical effort he must expend to account for the possibility that his celebrity credentials might impede his right to speak, while he also stresses the political experience and reputation for action he has gained as a result of his celebrity activities. Bono's need throughout to shift position – or engage in keying – shows his ability to assert the validity of his position as a celebrity speaker offering political endorsement, while for our purposes it also typifies a broader necessity to deal simultaneously with negative and productive associations of celebrity.

However, as we have indicated earlier, this analysis is still insufficient: a further dimension needs to be taken into account. Bono and U2 frequently lampoon celebrity culture in their songs, videos and rock concerts (most famously in their 'Zoo TV' tour which satirized global media culture). Bono's star image is therefore one that is self-reflexive and self-mocking, often ironic, yet at the same time invested with sincerity, performing Irishness in its stereotypical sense. (He is thus also seen as an amiable, funny, religious, working-class 'rascal'). Alongside his trademark visual signs – the ever-present wrap-around sunglasses, his grungy rock star attire – Bono is a determinedly embodied performer. In his live performances he throws himself around the stage, shifts between different personae, and he frequently intersperses U2's songs with speeches about social and political issues. Analysis of his political pronouncements needs to be contextualized through his public image, the songs that he writes, and the politically charged speeches that he gives on stage. The affective and connective power of Bono's presence in politics should be understood in terms of his overall celebrity, and this is brought to bear in his political performance.

Arnold Schwarzenegger as celebrity politician

Unlike Bono, Schwarzenegger speaks in his capacity as an elected politician. In John Street's (2004: 437) schema, Schwarzenegger is an example of someone who trades on his celebrity background with the purpose of getting or maintaining political office. Indeed, as his role on this occasion is to endorse George W. Bush for re-election as president, Schwarzenegger also speaks as a representative of the Republican Party at large. But of course the reason that Schwarzenegger is known internationally, and by those who do not maintain a keen interest in state politics, is his hugely successful movie career. Having grown up in Austria, Schwarzenegger rose to prominence for his hypermasculine physique in the films *Pumping Iron* (1977) and *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), before taking an iconic role in James Cameron's 1984 film *The Terminator*. Since then, Schwarzenegger's career has continued through such star vehicles as *Total Recall* (1990), the self-reflexive *Last Action Hero* (1993), as well as reprising his

Terminator role in two highly successful sequels. Alongside his action hero persona he also appeared in successful comedies that effectively played upon and sent up his star image, including *Twins* (1988), *Kindergarten Cop* (1990) and *Junior* (1994). Schwarzenegger became a US citizen in 1983, and has been involved in political activities on behalf of the Republicans since the 1990s, to the extent that he was appointed as chairman of the President's Council of Physical Fitness and Sports by President Bush senior (BBC, 2004). Importantly, in terms of his image, he is married to Maria Shriver, a member of the Democrat Kennedy family, jointly presenting an unusual crossing of political divides.

Schwarzenegger's political career has drawn heavily upon the opportunities presented by extent of his movie stardom. He decided to run for election as governor of California in late 2003, the same year as the international release of *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*. As Rachel Smolkin (2003) points out, the degree of attention given to his campaign was far greater than could be expected of any aspiring politician who did not also happen to be a movie star. Schwarzenegger was accorded the platform of *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* to announce his candidature, and attracted a press entourage that saw reporters from *Access Hollywood* jostling for position with correspondents from the *Washington Post* (Smolkin, 2003: 42). Schwarzenegger was able to use his celebrity profile to engineer the tone of his media appearances and limit scrutiny of his policies. He opted to restrict interviews to either relatively informal chat formats (with such other celebrities as Oprah Winfrey and Howard Stern) or to remain with the more politically sympathetic media outlets (such as the pro-Republican Fox News channel). Throughout, the experience and renown of Schwarzenegger's stellar movie career has been a key feature of the management of his political career, and he has frequently cross-referenced this in his political appearances.

There is a crafted articulation between celebrity and the political establishment that is also apparent in the widely reported political speech by Schwarzenegger that we have chosen to examine. In comparison to Bono's performance, Schwarzenegger's speech has much more of the structure of a traditional piece of political oratory, with a few reasonably subtle but extremely significant differences from the commonplace politician. Traditional oratory techniques employed by Schwarzenegger include hailing an upright and virtuous 'us' in opposition to an inferior and sinister 'them' (Atkinson, 1984: 37), and 'projecting' his announcement of the name of the US President to maximize the enthusiasm of the audience reaction (Atkinson, 1984: 49). In common with Bono, however, Schwarzenegger takes to the stage and immediately refers to his celebrity status:

Thank you. What a greeting. This is like winning an Oscar. As if I would know.

Like Bono, Schwarzenegger uses humour to address and foreground the reason for his fame. Moreover, his status as a movie star is drawn upon in a manner that assumes fairly substantial prior knowledge on the part of the audience. That is, Schwarzenegger takes for granted not only that the audience know he is a movie star but that they are able to share in a critical judgement on the supposed standard of his acting abilities, or are at least familiar with the widely circulated view that Schwarzenegger is a star known for his action and comedic rather than actorly performances, and that these modes of performance are often accorded a low cultural status (Drake, 2004: 80). Whereas Bono marshals the jokes towards addressing doubts of his right to be there, Schwarzenegger's speech begins on the assumption that the audience are in a position to participate in the pretend mocking of the calibre of his acting. This, however, has the similar effect of demonstrating to the audience his own sense of humour, an ability to make a joke at his own expense, and his general ease in front of an audience. In Goffman's terms, by commenting upon the terms of his framing through his movie star persona, Schwarzenegger is able to construct a mode of engagement less susceptible to awkward political interrogation.

In his address, Schwarzenegger embarks on a fairly lengthy personal reflection. His movie star status is placed temporarily to one side, and this section of the performance is devoted to the construction of a personal narrative of delicate humility and a background of former political oppression, typified by politically convenient statements such as 'My family lived in fear of the Soviet boot' and 'I finally arrived here in 1968. I had empty pockets, but I was full of dreams'. Apart from one intertextual reference to his future celebrity, drawing upon his self-referencing movie role in *Last Action Hero* – 'I was a little boy, I wasn't an action hero back then' – references to his personal success at this stage of the address are oblique enough to be included in a broad discourse of opportunity for all and 'you can achieve anything'. The concept of democratic inclusion and 'equal' opportunity is central to constructions of both political participation and mythic ideologies of stardom.

Schwarzenegger's speech is most conventional, however, in its extensive use of what Maxwell Atkinson (1984) calls the 'claptrap'. While the term has gathered negative connotations to refer to outwardly pleasing but empty talk, Atkinson uses the idea of the claptrap to explore rhetorical devices or techniques that motivate and choreograph audience applause. For example, in the following list of points given by Schwarzenegger later in the speech, the repeated resolution 'then you are a Republican' has the dual function of using what Atkinson calls an 'us term', while at the same time signalling the audience to respond. That we have reached the last item on the list is flagged by introducing it 'And, ladies and gentlemen', thereby ensuring that the pause that follows is filled by sustained and rapturous applause:

If you believe your family knows how to spend your money better than the government does – then you are a Republican!

If you believe our educational system should be held accountable for the progress of our children – then you are a Republican!

If you believe this country, not the United Nations, is the best hope of democracy in the world – then you are a Republican!

And, ladies and gentlemen, if you believe we must be fierce and relentless and terminate terrorism – then you are a Republican!

Yet in spite of these traditional political elements, celebrity remains central to understanding the power of this speech because the impact of these devices is made considerably greater by intertextual references to Schwarzenegger's movie star career. We have already looked at his opening quip about the likelihood of his winning an Oscar, and his citation of *Last Action Hero*, and to these we can add a reference from the *Saturday Night Live* television show to those advocating an alternative economic policy as 'girlie men'. And, of course, a movie reference to *The Terminator* ('terminate terrorism') has been engineered into the last and climactic item of his list reflecting upon what it is to be a Republican.

Perhaps inevitably, however, the speech itself climaxes in Schwarzenegger's *pièce de résistance* 'I'll be back', again from *The Terminator* series of movies, and an expression subsequently pivotal to his celebrity image. This is developed into the 'list of three', a technique that Atkinson (1984: 57) describes as the ideal claptrap formulation, this time asserting national resurgence. Conceivably because the reference itself has become such a clichéd one, so central is it to his star image, Schwarzenegger actually delivers this particular line by placing in a quotation from someone else:

[On an injured soldier] And do you know what he said to me then? He said he was going to get a new leg and get some therapy – and then he was going back to Iraq to serve alongside his buddies. He grinned at me and said, 'Arnold – I'll be back.'

Ladies and gentlemen, America is back – back from the attack on our homeland, back from the attack on our economy, back from the attack on our way of life.

This example deliberately recalls those scenes from the Terminator movies where Schwarzenegger's hard-bodied action hero is repaired and made fit for active service again. At the same time, it demonstrates a knowing and comic self-reflexive awareness of his own image. However, it is again significant for the speech that Schwarzenegger is able to assert his credentials to speak, not only through his action-hero persona but through his formal political position 'as

governor of the great state of California'. To recap, in spite of the traditional elements present, we want to suggest that the celebrity of Schwarzenegger is central to understanding his performance, such that it is assumed throughout that the audience are familiar not only with him, but with his movie roles and his ongoing status as a Hollywood star. In other words, the speech endorsing the President was delivered on the basis of a shared understanding in and acceptance of the terms of Schwarzenegger's celebrity.

While Bono and Schwarzenegger might be said to present quite different cases – where one is elected and the other is not – it does seem that the case of Schwarzenegger shows a greater fusing of the celebrity and political status in claiming the right to speak and to offer endorsement on political issues. Certainly, we should take into account that Schwarzenegger is the elected governor of California, but it remains that his speech involves none of the activities of concession-making that we see in Bono's approach. In part, this may be due to differences between the American and British political spheres, and indicate a greater ease in the former of such an intersection of celebrity and politics than might be deemed acceptable in the latter. Indeed, Schwarzenegger's use of his celebrity credentials throughout his campaign is consistent with a high degree of contentment at being both celebrity and politician simultaneously.

Although Schwarzenegger is more content than Bono to explicitly link his political and star personae, what both celebrities have in common is that they seek to harness their fame to position themselves outside of the political mainstream, albeit in slightly different terms. In Marshall's account (1997: 226), both are staking a claim to represent political issues to the public in a way that is uniquely theirs, by juxtaposing their exceptionalness with a claim to be somehow 'ordinary', and therefore better able to represent the views of the popular audience and voting public. Added to his departure from conventional political rhetoric, even Bono's instances of 'keying down' and his deliberate distancing of himself from formal politics (still claiming he can be a 'pain in the arse') may be read as reaffirming his status as an ordinary man, able to voice popular opinion amongst politicians distanced from their public. Schwarzenegger, for his part, deploys his immigrant status and avoids complex political arguments in order to show that he is a 'regular guy' just keen to 'get things moving', in opposition to a supposedly self-interested, traditional political elite.

Both in the structure and content of the speeches and in their bodily performances, the rhetorical emphasis on the personal backgrounds and activities of Bono and Schwarzenegger feed into what Corner has termed the 'kinetic' element of an energetic political persona (2003: 69). That is, both speeches project the image of an individual in constant and productive movement, even while speaking from behind a podium. Bono's performance is of a restless rock star, with a lilting, emotional voice railing impatiently against the slow pace of

politics and willing it to make progress, whilst Schwarzenegger performs with a distinctive physicality embodied by his intimidating presence (his body is sculpted, muscled and barely contained by his suit) and his staccato Germanic vocal delivery that insistently recalls his career-making *Terminator* performances. Thus, in the matter of iconic display the 'demeanour, posture and associative contexts of the political self' is invariably presented through the prism of celebrity (Corner, 2003: 69), albeit that Schwarzenegger wears the suit and tie that his state office demands, while Bono's self-consciously alternative rock star garb is offered as indexical of a different, new, exciting, perhaps more trustworthy form of political representation.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused upon two case studies: the celebrity endorsement of New Labour by rock star Bono, and the self-referencing movie-star performance of Arnold Schwarzenegger as politician. These examples, one of a political celebrity and the other a celebrity politician, raise a number of wider questions about the intersection between celebrity and politics. First, to what extent do celebrities, and politicians endorsed by celebrities, engage a public disengaged from formal politics: that is, do they enable political issues to be aired to a wider audience? Such an argument suggests that celebrities perform a public service in bringing politics to an audience that traditionally feels excluded from political discourse. Second – the contrary view – to what extent does endorsement of particular political causes by celebrities actually make it more difficult for the mediated political process to operate effectively. That is, do celebrities who come to dominate media coverage of political issues without any electoral mandate actually worsen rather than address a democratic deficit?

Our chapter has tried to consider the celebritization of politics through the examination of two celebrities: Bono and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Both examples demonstrate the re-framing of political debate through celebrity discourse, and both performers make knowing reference to their respective celebrity images. However, we have suggested that this is done on different terms. The performance frame adopted by Bono is one that clearly indicates his independence from but influence over the political sphere (hence his criticism of Tony Blair's involvement in the Iraq war) and through this his reliability and integrity are emphasized, simultaneously both supporting and critiquing New Labour. Schwarzenegger, by constantly referring to his movie star past, keys his performance such that his actions and policies are justified by the conviction, force and high visibility of his action-hero screen persona. What this reveals is that an analysis of the relationship between celebrity and politics needs to take into account the *particular* celebrity, the mode of performance they adopt, their earlier image,

and the political claims that they make. Overall, celebrity performance in the political sphere should be seen in the context of the increased profile of career politicians as celebrities in their own right. We have therefore argued for the continued prominence of the constructed persona as an important means of delivering politics via the mass media. To dismiss celebrity as a mere symptom of the trivialization of politics would be to fail to recognize its significance as a means of contemporary political engagement.

Bibliography

- Atkinson, J. Maxwell (1984) *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics*, London: Routledge.
- BBC (2004) 'Profile: Arnold Schwarzenegger' in www.bbc.co.uk [accessed 25.3.05].
- Corner, John (2003) 'Mediated Persona and Political Culture', in John Corner and Dick Pels (eds), *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity and Cynicism*, London: Sage, pp. 67–84.
- Corner, John and Pels, Dick (2003) 'Introduction: The Restyling of Politics', in John Corner and Dick Pels (eds), *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity and Cynicism*, London: Sage, pp. 1–18.
- Drake, Philip (2004) 'Jim Carrey: the Cultural Politics of Dumbing Down', in Andrew Willis (ed.), *Film Stars: Hollywood and Beyond*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 71–88.
- Franklin, Bob (2004) *Packaging Politics: Political Communications in Britain's Media Democracy*, London: Arnold.
- Goffman, Erving (1974) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*, Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Jones, Nicholas (1999) *Sultans of Spin: The Media and the New Labour Government*, London: Victor Gollancz.
- Lowenthal, Leo (1961) [1944] 'The Triumph of Mass Idols', *Literature, Popular Culture and Society*, Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books, pp. 109–40.
- Marshall, P. David (1997) *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Mills, C. Wright (1956) *The Power Elite*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smolkin, Rachel (2003) 'Star Power', *American Journalism Review*, December 2003/January 2004: 42–6.
- Street, John (2002) 'Bob, Bono and Tony B: The Popular Artist as Politician', *Media, Culture & Society* 24: 433–41.
- (2003) 'The Celebrity Politician: Political Style and Popular Culture', in John Corner and Dick Pels (eds), *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity and Cynicism*, London: Sage, pp. 85–98.
- (2004) 'Celebrity Politicians: Popular Culture and Political Representation', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6: 435–52.
- Varga, George (2003) 'Part-time Rocker, Full-time Humanitarian: Bill Clinton, Others Sing Bono's Praises', *Union-Tribune*, 2 March.