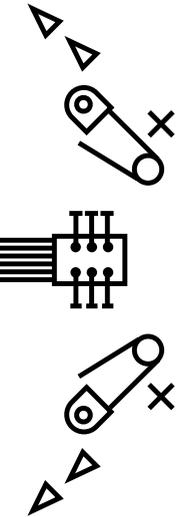


Together and face to face: New Model Army and its audience



New Model Army is a British independent rock group which started in 1980. If the longevity of this group that comes from the punk is linked to its militant and artistic posture which claims for a total independence (MA enjoys its own recording studio and its own label) its originality and its strength are also based on its own notion of community, metaphorically called “the Family”, whose aim is to give a shelter in front of Thatcherian individualism, the collapse of social links and the alienation to the modern way of living. Constantly celebrated by the group all along their 12 albums, renewed by an Internet site where the musicians can chat with their followers, this symbolical and original parenthood becomes real in the community behaviors which are noticeable during concerts when the artists and their audience are facing with each other and that the show is as much on the stage as in the hall. Yet, this face-to-face raises many questions. In fact, the specific dances, linked to identity, of the fan community as well as the human pyramids that overhang and dominate the group catch a large part of the general attention. By creating a specific arena of visibility, they also symbolically contribute to feed a competition between the scene and the public and give shape to a kind of an artistic and exclusive group counter-power, a phenomenon on which Justin Sullivan, NMA’s leader, expressed himself in a critical way.

Therefore, within this symposium, our communication will scrutinize the originality and complexity of the links that unite this independent group with their fan circle. We will first describe and question the peculiarities developed and ritualized by this audience in terms of gestures, choreographic expressions and original acrobatic movements, physical presence, the space and visibility within the concert. Then, we will analyze how a rock group and a flow of spectators who feel they belong to a clearly identifiable group, can move and interact with each other, taking into account the usages, the behavior of being and moving together, the particularity of being “a body”. We will then discuss the competition effects that at a symbolical and artistic, maybe discursive (the influence of the Web) level eventually put the artist in a situation which is not as comfortable as we might think since he faces a part of his audience which is the most committed, visible, active, even the most militant.