

# THEY KILLED IT

*Spencer Compton*

Friend	Hey Concert Attendant, what's up?
Concert Attendant	Hey Friend! Not much, you?
Friend	Oh, not much.
Concert Attendant	Cool.
Friend	Yeah.
Concert Attendant	Hey Friend, I don't remember—were you at the show the other night?
Friend	No, who played?
Concert Attendant	Oh man, This Band played and they really killed it!
Friend	Oh cool!
Concert Attendant	Yeah!

**QUESTION:** what does it mean to compliment a band's musical performance by exclaiming "they killed it"?

**ANSWER:** art and imperialism are cast in the same mold.

Since the advent of staple items like religion, class and debt, art and imperialism have enjoyed a curious intermingling of definition and form. One morphs into the other to suit its interests, and shortly thereafter they become indistinguishable. One may think it is pulling a fast one on the other, but they are too intimately involved to keep secrets. Recent specimen of this amalgamated effort include but are not limited to: the music concert, the art museum, the university, the corporation, the internet and finance capitalism. Each of these examples involve a fiercely creative management of assets by speculative investment. Like any good commodity, art's use value becomes more and more vague as its exchange value develops based on the precarity of the labor performed and the monetized value of the creation produced. Art's use value is turned on its head in exchange for imperial eminence, and imperialism's modus operandi is piggybacked by artistic gesture. Art's quaint characteristics of action and contemplation—of singularity and autonomy—act in a process of reciprocal mimesis with imperial strategy and tactics. Conquest through and through.

Now, this ballyhoo of positive endorsement by waging the compliment "they killed it" suggests a peculiar satisfaction in knowing that "it" was killed. Boasting such a quietus raises epistemological questions about the subjective nature of this praise versus the finitude and impartialness of death. Justification aside, it would help to pull away the veil and identify who exactly it is that was slain by the band...

It is the other. That is, it is all that which the self who projects the compliment out towards the band doesn't feel a pressing need to compliment. When "they killed it," they killed competition, defeated all musical rivals who present a trace of opposition or deviation, liquidated any politico-aesthetic difference, wiped out stylistic mélange, annihilated egalitarianism, and destroyed the notion of art and life as one and the same. They merged art and imperialism in the crusade to play a good set. They ruled.

You can see that the violence and geopolitical complicity of this flattering remark lies in the complimenter's devote loyalty to the band. This acclaim is much like any other form of patriotism, whereby the devoted (fans/citizens) are choreographed and gerrymandered to uphold the interests of the performer (transcendence/hegemony) who has, to a noted degree of allegorical significance, "set the stage."

Freud's theory of group life posits that the death drive is manifested outwards, whereby one group repurposes their own inner death drive as being felt about and inflicted upon another group. This externalized aggression is the self retreating to an infantile state of inward eros and outward destructiveness. The band is up in arms at each performance over proving their validity and authenticity by at once being transcendently self-aware from song to song, and dialectically opposed to the other acts on the bill. Freud argued that this instinct to inflict death upon the other is, although primal, a very inorganic state of being.

Still, what glory can the band yield in the death of its own kin? Maybe the other's death could be better interpreted as a rebirth, since if it weren't for the transmigration of other music's soul then how could the band successively "kill it" at their next show, let alone ramshackle every scene they may encounter during their upcoming tour pilgrimage? How could a defense contractor keep the shop doors open without an assured future demand to supply?

So, next time your friend mentions that a band they recently saw "rules" or "slays the beast," do feel empowered to cease corroboration, and elucidate a bit on the finer points of this imprudent yet befitting compliment. Better yet, "they were really something else!"