

Happy Camping: The Topp Twins perform Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Vanessa Knights and Tony Biddle write that “conceptualizations of the national ... have been somewhat sidelined ... in a world increasingly dominated by the processes of globalization, deterritorialization, transmigration and forms of cultural hybridity” (1). As a multicultural postcolonial settler society, Aotearoa/New Zealand has a troubled relationship with “national identity”. Tony Mitchell argues for homologies between landscape and music, using a psycho-geographical theoretical framework, while Nabeel Zuberi suggests that the emphasis on local identity is too prescriptive, especially given the ways it functions in public and institutional discourse. And clearly multiculturalism in NZ problematises any representation of unitary identity; rather it becomes a question of mapping multiple identifications.

Cultural production, in this case popular entertainment, is ambivalently placed in relation to national discourses, both forming and responding to them. Popular entertainers may identify with minority groups that are excluded from the national hegemonic. Arguably performers identifying with minority positions are particularly aware of the performativity of identity. The Topp Twins, two lesbian singers, entertainers, cowgirls and good blokes to boot ... are a cultural institution in New Zealand. The paper explores how the Topp Twins negotiate identifications around the national in their performances, especially in terms of gender and ethnicity, for example in the recent documentary *Untouchable Girls*, and how reading the Topp Twins feeds back into the NZ musical identity debate.

Gender

National identity

Aotearoa/New Zealand

Postcolonial (settler) culture

Performance