

# Conference Video Recordings

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## Friday 20th May 2022

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Rosemary Lucy Hill and Molly Megson (University of Huddersfield and University of Leeds)

**The cyborg in the audience: Audience experiences of livestreamed gigs**  
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Michelle Phillips and Amanda Krause (Royal Northern College of Music and James Cook University, Australia)

**The post COVID-audience: Attitudes and behaviours around live and streamed performance**  
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Erinne Paisley (University of Amsterdam)

**It's All the Rave!: The Twitchification of Raves and Its Implications for Musicking Forms of Sociality**  
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Jiaxi Hou (The University of Tokyo)

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Pablo Infante-Amate (University of Jaén, Spain)

**Online Music Circulation and Infrastructures of Social Control**  
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Riccardo Pronzato and Massimiliano Raffa (IULM University)

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Chair: Marilou Polymeropoulou

Karina Moritzen (Universidade Federal Fluminense and Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg)

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Edward Katrak Spencer (University of Birmingham & University of Oxford)

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Jabari Evans (University of South Carolina)

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Jasmine A. Henry (William Paterson University)

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Paxton Haven (The University of Texas at Austin)

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Genevieve Allotey-Pappoe (Princeton University)

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Mike Levine (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

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## Abstracts

### Session 1a: Live music on the internet

Rosemary Lucy Hill and Molly Megson (University of Huddersfield and University of Leeds)

#### **The cyborg in the audience: Audience experiences of livestreamed gigs**

The shift to livestreaming of live music events opens up the opportunity to pay fresh attention to the embodied value of live music for audiences, whilst also considering the embodied experience of the digital. This paper will take a cyborgian phenomenological approach to audience embodiment in the context of in-person and livestreamed gigs. Live music has depended on the twin concepts of here and now. Being in the room with other audience members and the musicians is important, as are activities such as clapping, dancing and singing. Attention has been paid to digital entwinings in the form of audience members' social media activities, but not to the new forms of embodied engagement that come with livestreaming. Livestreamed music events have enabled audiences to maintain their relationships with musicians, and moreover, provided access to live music for those for whom it was previously inaccessible due to, for example, disability, financial constraints or fear. Livestreamed gigs may lack the element of 'being in the room', but they may enable new modes of embodied activity and digital embodiment. To investigate these questions of embodiment and access, the paper will report on an audience survey designed to understand the different embodied practices and sensations that audience members experience when attending in-person and livestreamed gigs, alongside examining the types of technologies used and the enablers/barriers to participation. Attending a livestreamed gig is a different embodied experience to attending an in-person gig: it may also involve clapping, dancing and singing, but also crouching over a laptop, peering at a phone screen, or cleaning a kitchen. Thus, thinking about the embodied practices involved in live music can enable new perspectives on the body at the screen, on digital embodiment; meanwhile insights from digital engagement with livestreamed gigs can help us to understand the meanings of in-person live music participation for the body in the room.

Michelle Phillips and Amanda Krause (Royal Northern College of Music and James Cook University, Australia)

#### **The post COVID-audience: Attitudes and behaviours around live and streamed performance**

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced audiences to new ways of engaging with artistic performance in an online environment (Rendell, 2020, terms this 'pandemic media'). Building on existing research regarding concepts such as liveness and immersion in music performance, this talk will present new survey research regarding audience perceptions and preferences in relation to live vs streamed music performance. This research, which underlines the live music experience as a social one, and demonstrates the vital role that sharing musical spaces plays in social bonding and group coherence, examines questions such as the following: (1) What do listeners perceive to be the main differences between live and online attendance at music performance? (2) To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how likely audiences are to still access online events when live music resumes, and what might the underlying reasons be for this (including, for example, technology, social experience, immersion, climate change-related considerations, and accessibility and inclusion)? (3) To what extent do listeners' attitudes towards streamed performance depend on their home listening and viewing devices, and the quality of these? In the post-pandemic world in which accessing streamed music performance has become much more common, there is an urgent need to better understand how the essential elements of a live performance can be matched, in terms of level of liveness, sound quality, and enjoyment, in an online setting.

Erinne Paisley (University of Amsterdam)

#### **It's All the Rave!: The Twitchification of Raves and Its Implications for Musicking Forms of Sociality**

Livestream raves, involving electronic dance music (EDM) performances streamed to at-home viewers, have rapidly grown in popularity during the Covid-19 pandemic (Palamar and Acosta 2020). In particular, this form of musicking has been progressively platformized onto Twitch (2020; Partin 2020; Sjöblom et al. 2019). This live-gaming website's for-profit structure creates a collision of motivations when used for grassroots raves that, in contradiction, have historically involved anti-capitalism as a forefront motivation and resulting mentality (Moloney 2019). This contradiction raises the questions: What does the Twitchification of rave-culture mean for its anti-capitalist roots, and what are the implications for musicking forms of sociality? To answer, I apply both an affordance and content analysis to two Twitch rave channels: Insomniac and Arius. Through this analysis, I argue, first, that the Twitchification of raves creates a hierarchy between the artist and viewer that furthers the historical shift of raves away from an anti-capitalist ethos. This is achieved, notably, through the structure of the platform's chat affordance which encourages a sense of temporality for users, directing attention onto the artist. Secondly, this paper argues that end-users are able to create desired forms of intimacy by participating in "platform switching" (Wu and Ward 2020) - where end-users use multiple platforms simultaneously, and at different times. This contributes to wider discussions on how online musicking events are able to mimic the sociality and resulting sense of community that naturally occurs at, and through, their offline equivalents.

## Session 1b: YouTube musicking practices

Varun Chandrasekhar (Washington University in Saint Louis)

### **Lyric Videos: Creating a Persona**

YouTube is a hub for musical listening. YouTube is a visual medium. There is an inherent tension between these two statements. While undoubtedly music videos have had a significant impact on American culture (Tannenbaum and Marks 2012), there has been a dearth of scholarship on equally popular lyric videos (Rufi 2018). Given the abstract nature of lyric videos, producers of lyric videos can shape an exact congruency between image and music in a way that music videos cannot mimic. If this is the case, a system must be made to analyze common tropes in lyric videos. Through selected close readings, I will create four analytic categories (text size, font, color, and background) that significantly affect our hermeneutic readings of lyric videos. I will support my readings by incorporating literature on music videos (Sterbenz 2017, LaFrance and Burns 2016), lyrics (Frith 1998, Griffiths 2003), and semiotic multimedia (Barthes 1978, Cook 2001) to describe how each of these artistic properties combine to create a unified aesthetic product. I argue that these videos help construct the performed identity of musicians. Finally, I conclude with a close reading of the lyric video for Halsey's "Ashley." By analyzing the interaction between my four categories, I demonstrate how the lyric video's chaotic presentation of Halsey's journal suggests a manic writer. In my reading, the video asks us to assign Halsey agency as the writer, and that through this, the video attempts to increase the listener's sympathy for Halsey.

Joana Freitas (CESEM - NOVA FCSH)

### **Musicking roleplay: On video game music videos and sharing half-real experiences online**

Just like Christopher Small questions the verb "to music" to expand musical practices and its meaning to the global process of communication with its multiple agents, both video games and music share the verb "to play". Additionally, one must play a video game for its narrative to exist, as well as to, in most cases, listen to the music that accompanies it. However, either from CDs or Spotify, music from almost any audiovisual product is accessible, transporting it from the original context to a changeable one. Parallel to the current videoludification of society and the close influence of video games in other audiovisual formats, this media's musical dimension plays a major role in this process of interactivity and immersion with a virtual narrative, which can, also, operate away from the original context.

In this sense, video game music covers are a noteworthy presence on YouTube and its online communities, promoting users' creative flow and participation, and extending the life of a digital narrative beyond its playability. Notwithstanding the well-familiar formula of cover videos, this paper aims to examine video game music video covers, a present but overlooked content in this circuit. Taking place in real life, artists dressed as the main characters from specific video games play both music and the games' elements to portray a video game music video. By creating an "authentic" aesthetic of the virtuality presented in the game's narrative, these videos roleplay music and engage with the listener to relate to their own experience of gameplay, thus simulating a shared half-real performance between users.

Sylvain Martet (Artenso)

### **Circulation of user-appropriated music content on YouTube**

YouTube is now a significant player of the music market, confirming that music plays an important role in its business plan. Unlike its competitors such as Spotify, Apple Music or Deezer, a large part of what is listened to on YouTube is not put online and managed directly by the rights holders but by users with diverse profiles and motivations. This paper aims to explore two main research questions: What forms does music content take on YouTube? What role do users play in the circulation of music on YouTube? This work is based on the study of a corpus of the first 10 relevant results by number of views for YouTube versions of every song that received the Song of the Year Award at the Association Québécoise de l'Industrie du Disque (ADISQ) galas from 1979 to 2019 (= 409 videos). By anchoring the analysis in practices, this paper highlights the technical, social and cultural dimensions of music sharing while at the same time developing the understanding of YouTube's position in the music industries. This paper aims to show that the publication of videos is partly a matter of sharing the mediated object as a means of expression. The sharing of musical tastes and recommendations by users appears as an essential process that accompanies the circulation of music.

## Session 2a: Internet music vs the state

Jiaxi Hou (The University of Tokyo)

### **Hanmai: An Alternative Rap from the Chinese Lumpen Internet**

Various disadvantaged social groups in China including rural residents, migrant workers, and urban poor now gain access to the Internet with affordable smart phones and greatly increase their online visibility. New platforms are particularly designed to satisfy these previously unimagined users' (Burrell, 2011; Oreglia, 2013) demands for representation and interaction and thus

gradually generate a “lumpen” space in Chinese digital sphere. Literally referring to “shouting at/with a microphone”, hanmai is a participatory rapping culture that often triggers denunciations among the general audience. Though sharing similarities with global hip-hop rapping in both its themes and format, hanmai is regarded more as an indigenous and alternative self-expression among its creators and fans, combining both traditional Chinese vocal performance and their contemporary frustrations and aspirations. Using digital ethnography and critical techno-cultural discourse analysis (Brock, 2020), this study investigates (1) how hanmai rap videos are created and distributed on lumpen platforms such as Kuaishou and YY which intentionally attract socio-economic disadvantaged users; (2) the specific yearnings and bitterness they express with hanmai lyrics and the user-generated music videos; (3) the impacts of hanmai for being perceived as “vulgar” among wider audience and “harmful” by state authorities. Temporary findings to these questions suggest that as a participatory online musical performance, hanmai blurs the boundaries among the diversified disadvantaged social groups and generates a shared sense of class belonging. Such a collectiveness rather than hanmai’s content is inconsistent with the public imagination. Class differences and the meaning of lumpen Internet are essentialized amid the public opprobrium and state surveillance targeting on hanmai.

Pablo Infante-Amate (University of Jaén, Spain)

### **Online Music Circulation and Infrastructures of Social Control**

According to data from the World Bank, the percentage of internet users in Equatorial Guinea has increased over 1200% in the last decade. The use of smartphones, in particular, has grown exponentially in the last five years, becoming one of the privileged means for music storage, circulation, and consumption. The picture apparently resembles that of other African countries where the introduction of the internet and the widespread use of mobile phones have led to deep transformations in the music business. Yet an ethnographic approach to music circulation in Equatorial Guinea reveals that these rough numbers do not reflect the many challenges Equatoguinean users face to access and use the internet, largely due to the tight control of media infrastructures by the long-standing authoritarian state.

Drawing on 12 months of fieldwork in Equatorial Guinea, this paper addresses the impact of new means of digital circulation and how it affects and is affected by the prevailing social relations of patronage within which music is embedded. The paper explores how musicians and fans adapt creatively to circulate music online amid outstandingly high prices and arbitrary bans and blockages, and how they are often forced to move back and forth between old and new technologies and channels of circulation to circumvent state censorship. Ultimately, the paper offers a cautionary note to music scholars about the perils of taking internet access for granted, and it argues that online music circulation emerges as both a space of alternative possibility and a mechanism of social control.

Dina Farouk Abou Zeid (Ain Shams University and IAEMS, Egypt)

### **New genre of songs in Egypt**

Mahraganat is a new genre of music in Egypt with Arabic and Western music besides strange lyrics. This genre is influencing and being influenced by cultural, social, economic, political and technological changes. It has started in slums in Cairo and has gone viral among Egyptians especially the youth even between high and middle social classes. Mahraganat is considered a new phenomenon that needs to be studied. So, the researcher conducted a survey of 100 Egyptian university students from rich districts in Cairo. The results show that Mahraganat is an example of the shift from univore taste to omnivore taste among youth from high social classes. Also, mass media and new media have been playing an important role in its widespread and popularity.

## **Session 2b: Communities and subcultures**

Henry Morgan (Cardiff University)

### **‘H8/R8/Recc’: Chartposting, album artwork and self-representation in online music subcultures**

This presentation investigates visual self-representation practices that link users’ identities to their music consumption and taste through the strategic use of album artwork. Connections are drawn between one such practice, ‘chartposting’, and the concept of ‘not-selfies’ – self-representational images displaying something other than the bodies of their subject (Tiidenberg & Whelan 2017). The process of platformisation is central to this analysis (Poell et al. 2019), as chartposting and its related practices are innovative in their use of platform affordances but entirely dependent on them for survival. The annual Spotify Wrapped phenomenon is seen as an attempt by a digital platform to repackage subcultural practices for a wider audience, combining elements of chartposting with Spotify’s ‘algotorial’ strategy to sell curated musical identities to their customers (Bonini & Gandini 2019).

In musical subcultures, the conspicuous consumption, rating, and recommendation of music are commonly employed in the exchange of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995). These activities display the unfixed, discursive nature of identity, conveying detailed information about an individual’s sense of self, cultural literacies, and status. From this, communities of music fans often develop informal canons that are understood as emergent from their collective tastes, helping to describe internal hierarchies and affinities while also defining the group’s relationship with broader musical discourses such as genre and politics. Grounded

in online ethnography and interviews with members of a large music discussion community on Facebook, this presentation demonstrates ongoing changes in the relationship between subcultural practice and musical identity in an increasingly platform-dominated social media landscape.

Jessica Blaise Ward (Leeds Arts University)

### **Metalheads in the Online Synthwave Community**

Synthwave is a 21st century style of music practiced predominantly online ('the synthwave community' or 'scene'), home to a diversity of international creators of artists, musicians, producers and performers. Darksynth, one of synthwave's most popular subgenres, incorporates musical elements from horror film soundtracks and metal styles, and has often acted as an entryway from the metal community to the online synthwave community. Taking musical influence from the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (Weinstein, 2000) in particular, darksynth reflects metal's subcultural affiliations of masculinity. As a result, darksynth's dominant narrative has formed around this trait, limiting the representation and visibility of female or non-male artists due to their perceived inauthenticity. Through musicological analysis, I compare darksynth music by male and female (and non-male) artists, as well as presenting interview data by darksynth artists who operate within the subgenre. My enquiry illustrates practices by an online music community, who negotiate issues of gender representation alongside the forming of music subgenres.

John Moore (University of Liverpool)

### **The new language of music theory in the digital age**

Music theory is in a state of crisis. From the Schenkergate scandal of 2020; to Philip Tagg's calls for the urgent reform of western theoretical terminology which he views as woefully inadequate and decidedly ethnocentric, to say that music theory has faced some significant challenges in the last decade is somewhat of an understatement. Terminologically challenged from within; and often abstrusely presented—and therefore misunderstood by many—from without, the issues facing the discipline are exacerbated, propagated, mediated, and obfuscated by the world wide web and the digital age. This paper focusses on music theory videos on YouTube and looks more broadly at the Music Theory Digital ecosystem (MTDE) that has emerged over the last decade. Looking at several popular YouTube channels whose primary focus is on music theory I will examine aspects their content, production, and epistemology, shedding a brief light on music theory's contemporary existence on the public stage of the internet. Our exploration will help to show the exact nature, size and shape of the YMT community and will also prompt discussions of how music theoretical knowledge is codified, taught, and disseminated in the digital age as well as how institutions can/should best adapt to this ever changing landscape.

## **Session 3a: Producing for music distribution platforms**

Riccardo Pronzato and Massimiliano Raffa (IULM University)

### **When music is platform-optimised: Investigating the relationship between music producers and streaming platforms**

For some years now, the platformization of cultural production and consumption has been a continuing concern not only for social scientists but also for popular music scholars, as commercial streaming platforms have become the main gatekeepers of music consumption. Researchers have shown an increased interest in how cultural goods and user practices may be affected by the widespread diffusion and embeddedness in people's everyday lives of these systems, though mainly focusing on reception rather than music production.

Historically, music producers have not been indifferent to the technologies used to produce, record and disseminate their works. In fact, since the beginning of the 20th century, there has always been a tendency of music makers to adapt their artistic contents and practices to the technical devices in widespread use, thus internalizing the then-current mediascape in their creative work. Nevertheless, there is no previous empirical study that investigates whether cultural producers adjust their phonographic products in order to fit the imagined affordances and logics of music streaming platforms.

This contribution will show the preliminary results of a qualitative research, based on 15 in-depth interviews with midstream and mainstream record producers, aimed at investigating i) how cultural production practices, industrial logics and music producers' perceptions of streaming platforms intersect, ii) if and how music products are optimised to perform on music streaming platforms, iii) which platform logics and affordances are taken into account by cultural creators during their creative work.

Claudia Lubao (University of St Andrews, Scotland)

### **Distributing music through digital platforms in developing countries: The case of Bongo Flewa music in Tanzania**

The burgeoning popular music scene in Tanzania is largely neglected from existing studies and offers a rich site for enquiry, particularly regarding issues of digital distribution and dissemination. In 2021 Tanzania had a population of 60.61 million: 35.6% of Tanzanian population live in urban centres whereas the remaining 64.4% live in rural areas; in January 2021, there were 15.15 million internet users; that's only 25% of the entire population. To either distribute or access music (stream, download or

view) on digital platforms, one must have a smartphone/laptop, internet, an online account (that many do not have knowledge of) and sometimes even bank account details: 0.5% of the population have a credit card in Tanzania and even fewer use them in purchases.

I am a Tanzanian musician known as Chemical. Chemical's artistry is almost entirely digitally created and enshrined: though I have performed many live concerts, my artistry is ineluctably connected to everything digital, or everything which is the great world wide web. I write, record and perform songs in the Bongo Flewa genre, a style that grew from internet musicking and is still largely created for internet audiences. In this paper I will highlight three enquiries of my research: i) the dissemination of digital music in a country with limited digital infrastructure and usage, and the way this influences musical style, format, and production ii) the issues of monetizing popular music in Tanzania and iii) the dialect between Bongo Flewa as a cipher of – and influence on – Tanzanian Youth.

Zachary Diaz (University of Bristol)

### **Type Beats and The Commodification of “Signature Sounds” in Hip-Hop Production**

As social media and music platforms on the internet have grown exponentially in the past several decades, so too have the ways in which musicians market themselves and their music. This is especially the case with music producers within the genres of hip-hop, R&B, and EDM, as how and where they share their productions can lead to collaborations with other artists as well as the possibility of a career in music production. One major way that producers have marketed themselves is through the concept of “type beats”, in which the producer creates a short beat or demo that sounds similar to the production stylings of more well-known producers in order to associate themselves with a more familiar artist. Using Simon Zagorski-Thomas's concept of a music producer's “signature sound”, this presentation will explore the meanings and characteristics of several producers whose stylings have become popular in the creation of type beats by online hip-hop production communities. By looking at the characteristics of the “signature sounds” of three producers: J Dilla, The Weeknd, and Kaytranada, as well as several respective type beats created by amateur producers on YouTube, we will observe how similar they are to their more popular counterparts and how effective it is in creating an audience for these amateur producers. This presentation will also discuss the discourse surrounding the ethics of type beats and how these forms of musical borrowing can create issues of authenticity, appropriation, and commodification.

### **Session 3b: Alternatives to major music streaming platforms**

Mick Vierbergen (Hong Kong Baptist University)

#### **Decentralisation and Neoliberalisation: Artist, Audience, and Agency in the Blockchain-Based Music Platform Audius**

This paper examines how the blockchain-based music streaming platform Audius offers a decentralised alternative to centralised platforms like Spotify, taking the practice of releasing a single on Audius as the object of research. The main research inquiry is how Audius mediates the interaction between artist and audience. While it shows that blockchain technology offers new and creative ways of interaction, this paper argues that ‘decentralisation’ reproduces existing inequalities and thrives on a neoliberal ideology that imposes a financial logic in everyday musicking practices. This paper identifies two neoliberal tendencies in particular: the tokenisation of governance and the financialisation of fandom.

Following Nelson's model for Practice as Research (PaR), this study consists of a research project that gathers practical knowledge through the release, and a complementary writing which reflects on the practice and places it within an artistic and academic context. The research project is documented through screenshots and the streamable single on Audius and is a collaboration with friend and fellow musician Calvin Rodgers.

This research builds on José van Dijck's model to analyse platforms as “techno-cultural constructs” and “socioeconomic structures,” drawing on Actor-Network-Theory and Political Economy (The Culture 28). The concepts of ‘user/usage,’ ‘technology,’ and ‘content’ guide my practice, while I reflect on the ‘ownership,’ ‘business model,’ and ‘governance’ of the platform. Using the practical approach of the ‘walkthrough method’ by Light et al., I guide the reader through the practice of releasing a single on Audius, taking special consideration of the affordances that Audius creates and for whom.

Liz Pelly

#### **Library Music: In the age of streaming, public libraries offer small-scale alternatives for local archiving**

In recent years, public libraries around the world have operated local digital music streaming services, imagining these collections not just as library-run alternatives to Big Streaming, but as true “digital public spaces.” These include projects like Tracks Music Library in Durham, NC and Capital City Records in Edmonton, Alberta, among many others—online spaces that music communities and librarians build together, inviting members of local music scenes to collaborate on curation and programming.

These projects offer compelling alternatives to corporate streaming. Public library streaming services at times offer payments to local musicians greater than those of the standard platforms, but more importantly, they offer local listeners free

access to local music, and communities opportunities to truly participate in helping to shape the digital tools that they rely on. They offer music platforms that are not only publicly owned, but publicly governed. At their best, like other public library services, these projects help to foster connections among neighbors. Further, library-run music streaming projects offer a significant form of local archiving during an era where corporate services are amassing unparalleled power and influence over music history. They help to establish a sense of place and local identity in a digital culture that feels increasingly placeless.

This presentation brings together perspectives from over a dozen musicians and librarians involved in public library streaming programs, building on research and reporting published in 2021 at the [Pioneer Works Broadcast](#).

Alexander Astruc (King's College London)

### **The Digital Dance Ecosystem: Internet Musicking, Commuality and Countering Hegemony in the UK's Dance Music Community**

Drawing on ethnographic methods, this paper examines the digital, cultural ecosystem which exists at the intersection of online radio stations, DJ/producer-oriented social media communities and the music sales website Bandcamp, specifically focusing on the UK's dance music community. It considers the key approaches and practices that flourish within this ecosystem and the ways in which they counter the corporate hegemony which dominates contemporary musical distribution and consumption. The gift economy which exists within this ecosystem, whereby tracks are gifted between producers and DJs, will be crucial in uncovering new forms of commuality. The analysis of this new form of internet musicking will be related to a rich history of UK dance music, from soundsystem culture through to the pirate radio stations of the 1990s, and explore how historic practices of commuality in dance music culture have been transposed onto the digital sphere. Particular attention is given to the increased significance of this ecosystem due to COVID-19, with many of its participants resorting to alternate and distinctly digital forms of musicking in response to the closure of their usual musical spaces.

## **Session 4a: Creating, learning, and collaborating on music using internet technologies**

Martin K. Koszolkó (University of Newcastle)

### **Contemporary Internet-based music creation: Reflections from the inaugural Collaborative Music Contest**

2021 marked the first iteration of the Collaborative Music Contest. This virtual event has been organized by the School of Music Collaboration, judged by a panel of industry professionals and included prizes sponsored by several music technology companies. The aims of the contest included stimulating the creation of new collaborative material created with online music software platforms and uncovering how contemporary musicians use the Internet to develop and produce original music with remotely located participants. The event has attracted submissions from over a hundred musicians located in multiple countries across Australasia, Europe and North America.

In this paper, I analyse the outcomes of the contest and highlight a range of collaborative and stylistic approaches implemented by participating music makers. These outcomes demonstrate a range of ways in which musicians choose to engage with remote music collaboration tools and showcase sonic and stylistic differences that can often be attributed to the choice of specific software platform.

The Collaborative Music Contest demonstrates that online tools play a critical role in facilitating activities such as collaborative songwriting and music production, particularly in the era of Covid-19 lockdowns and physical isolation. Collaborative software platforms represent a growing element of the music technology market and the ability to use them effectively belongs now to a critical toolset of contemporary music makers. Through the analysis of the creative practices of contest participants, I highlight how platformization impacts on experiences of online music production and global participation in music culture.

Nicola McAteer (York St John University)

### **'We're NOT all in this together': Navigating contested values in community music since the pandemic**

As a practice community music has its roots in community cultural development, with emphasis on people, places, participation, inclusivity and diversity. The shift to online music making meant the pandemic fundamentally changed how most community musicians previously worked, consequently offering a direct challenge to its central principles. Community music developments within 'internet musicking' since the onset of the pandemic have been dependent on who, where and how they are experienced therefore creating opportunity for some and exclusion for others. Such inequalities of digital community music making can be viewed through lenses of global digital trends such as the gender divide, the rural-urban divide, poverty as well as the concerning risks of global north-south disparities. The covid-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated a myriad of crises of inequality and injustice which continue to thrive. By connecting to the conference themes through otherness, identity and digital equity I shall share how community music making since the pandemic has stimulated contested values towards practice. I shall introduce how my methodology of participatory action research through the lens of a feminist intersectionality can be used to explore the depth and complexity through a multiplicity of perspectives within community music. My hope is that this framework

can offer insights into how community music developments might position themselves within societal structural inequalities exposed through the global pandemic. In turn, this could offer deeper understanding of how community music practice as an action of social justice might develop in the years to follow.

Jerelle Austin, Christopher Dobbs, and Daniel Walzer (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis)

### **Towards an Equitable, Collaborative, and Sustainable Model of Techno-Musicking in Undergraduate Music Technology Programs**

In the late 1990s, musicologist Christopher Small coined the phrase “musicking”, broadly describing music as an active and fluid process—embracing performing, listening, composing, and engaging with others. Perhaps the most crucial part of Small’s (1998) theory of musicking is that it removed the boundaries between performer, composer, and listener in favor of an integrated and holistic model. Such a model required an open-ended understanding of the musical practice and its stakeholders, including composers, producers, listeners, and learners.

Technology influences how we experience musicking, as well. Thanks to the internet and broader bandwidths, musicians stream performances online, produce albums from a distance and assemble virtual ensembles through crowdsourcing. What musicking possibilities occur if the technology is the instrument? What is the relationship between the creator and the listener? In university settings, where budding music producers learn their craft, how do educators move beyond merely “teaching the technology”?

The timing is right for educators to advocate for a new model of technology-mediated musicking, or techno-musicking, that positions music technology as a means for advancing communities of practice and belonging. Using teacher inquiry, narrative research, and the philosophy of technology as theoretical models, we report on recent efforts to advance Small’s theories in an undergraduate music technology program online, on stage, and in the classroom. The presentation concludes with suggestions on how educators might cultivate similar pedagogical methods to broaden participation and inclusion in university settings.

## **Session 4b: Spotify, genre, and data**

Maurizio Corbella and Alessandro Gandini (University of Milan)

### **Genre tags and 'genre playlists': Tracking Spotify's agency on musical genres**

Spotify currently draws on almost 6,000 different genre tags associated with individual artists. In spite of this impressive taxonomy, the only way for users to navigate genres on the platform is by browsing playlists characterised by a combination of curatorial, users-created and algorithmic-based content. These playlists variously promise insights into genre and subgenre strands of music production and encourage listening paths for exploring them. This raises the question of how deeply playlists can commodify the perception of musical genres and to what extent their agency may be affected by the over- or under-codification of specific genres in Spotify’s mediated topography. Inasmuch as genres are discursive constructs negotiated by social actors drawing on musical and cultural codes, conventions and patterns of consumption, platforms participate in these relational networks both as actors and as media, informing and shaping the agency of the other existing entities.

Drawing on the software SpotiGeM Hub, which was specifically conceived by the authors for querying the Spotify API to collect playlist features and metadata according to digital methods principles, our paper aims to disentangle the relation between genre metadata and 'genre playlists', in order to examine Spotify’s role as a modeler and gatekeeper of genre notions in the current musical scenario. To this end, we will discuss our findings regarding the analysis of two contrasting sets of playlists, one clustered around historicised genre tags (e.g. ‘alternative rock’, ‘new wave’), and the other referred to neologisms introduced or boosted by Spotify itself (e.g. ‘bedroom pop’, ‘escape room’).

Mads Krogh (Aarhus University)

### **Streaming genre: Abstraction and singularization in digital music distribution**

With the development of streaming platforms has followed a systematic and extensive accumulation of music categories. At present, Spotify wields a catalogue of around 5700 genres whereas sites such as Bandcamp and SoundCloud administer tag-based selections by the 100,000s. This abundance coincides with and, in some respects, contrasts the increased individualization of the so-called contextual turn in automated music recommendation (Prey 2018). Taking these developments as a starting point, this presentation aims to discuss the role of genre in digitized music distribution. Looking particularly at Spotify, it suggests that uses of genre for services aimed at both listeners and third-party collaborators (e.g., advertisers) depend on a dynamic – both scalable and reversible – sense of abstraction enacted to a large part through computerized processes (e.g., MIR) in tandem with promotional efforts. This enactment seeks to mediate between a logic of generality and one of singularization (as according to German sociologist Andreas Reckwitz 2020). The increased scope, acceleration and dynamicity of such abstraction, championed by streaming platforms, but also engaged in by other actors in the networked connections of

musical life, is a mark of genre formation in digital times. Exploring this adds to scene- and community-based ideas about genre as developed, particularly, in popular music studies.

Morgan Bimm (York University, Toronto)

### **Spotify (Un)Wrapped: Audio Auras, Musical Memes, and Critical Streaming Cultures**

In an ever-evolving landscape of streaming platforms, one of the features that Spotify invokes year after year to attract new subscribers and maintain its current user base is Spotify Wrapped. In a series of aesthetically pleasing slides, users can view their listening data from the previous year, including top artists, time spent listening, and — new for 2021 — their musical ‘aura.’ This kind of data visualization has always been subject to criticism on the basis of privacy concerns and even more basic cultural anxieties about taste — writer Olivia Harrison (2020) has referred to her Spotify Wrapped as “a badge of dishonour, a scarlet letter exposing just how deeply uncool and unadventurous [she is].” In recent years, however, the social media ritual of sharing one’s Spotify Wrapped has also become an opportunity for conversation and critique of Spotify’s problematic royalties structure, affective surveillance, and other troubling aspects of the platform (Luckerson 2019; Sisario 2021; Sparks 2021). There is a vibrant and expeditious remix culture that sees each year’s Wrapped graphics turned into memes; in 2021, the bar chart that Spotify used to show users’ top genres was reworked to simply read SPOTIFY SHOULD PAY ARTISTS MORE. Drawing on scholarship that understands memes as sites of cultural possibility and social media as a space wherein audiences’ explore and develop critical media literacy (Ringrose and Lawrence 2018; Wiggins 2019), this presentation argues that Spotify Wrapped posts and memes offer valuable online spaces for music fans to (re)consider their engagement with imperfect streaming cultures.

## **Session 5a: Net-native music and nostalgia**

Paula Harper (University of Chicago)

### **Never Gonna Give You Up: Digital Afterlives, Memetic Aesthetics, and the Dynamic Perseverance of the Rickroll**

A cascade of drum hits. Synth chords, rising and falling. Then - if you’ve stuck around long enough - a reverberant baritone begins to croon: “We’re no strangers to love/you know the rules, and so do I.”

If you’re encountering this evocative musical text - regardless of medium, format, or stance - you’ve been Rickrolled.

In this paper, I analyze the “Rickroll” phenomenon as a synecdoche for the afterlives of pop culture artifacts in digital archives—how digital storage and circulation allow for performances of decontextualized history as humor, and how users work playfully with platform functionalities to enact surprise, annoyance, or unexpected recognition for other users. This presentation investigates afterlives in two ways: one, the way in which digital platforms act as both archive and playground, offering up texts productive of both nostalgia and pleasurable confusion. I analyze the audiovisual aesthetics of the “Never Gonna Give You Up” song and video as amenable to memetic remix and viral circulation; I suggest how these aesthetics are indicative of broader internet humor aesthetics that celebrate and elevate convergences of novelty and nostalgia. Second, I consider the afterlives of the Rickroll itself, and the evolution of humor, discourse, and even digital historiography around the phenomenon over more than a decade of its mediated existence. Shifting engagement with the Rickroll is indicative of both platform changes and changes in internet memetic and viral practice, and its myriad adaptations suggest the expansiveness of music and musicality in internet musicking and humor practices.

Lucy March (Temple University)

### **“I Consume, Therefore I Am”: Mallsoft, Nostalgia And Capitalist Anxiety**

Among the many net-native music genres that have emerged since the 2010s is the cultural phenomenon known as vaporwave. Vaporwave is frequently positioned by scholars and critics as an ironic critique of capitalism, given how its paratexts employ mashups of images from 1980s and 90s consumer culture. One particular subgenre within this subgenre, known as mallsoft, creates a sense of ambivalence around capitalism by employing images of empty and spotless malls, samples from smooth jazz and Muzak, the sounds of PA announcements and the ambient chatter of shoppers accompanied by an eerie echo effect. Such elements evoke the feeling that the listener is wandering around a shopping mall, grocery store, or other consumerist paradise, albeit in a somewhat discomfiting fashion.

Despite the amount of scholarly attention that has already been paid to vaporwave, few analyses have taken a close look at a vaporwave subgenre, nor has “the music itself” taken center stage. Through a musicological examination of mallsoft, this project reveals how the genre’s producers employ nostalgic elements to craft the subgenre’s aesthetic, as Paul Ballam-Cross (2021) recently argued, while also using sonic elements to point toward a collective anxiety about the impact of capitalism on our lives. Specifically, this paper will employ a case study of the 猫 シ Corp album Palm Mall Mars, and its predecessor Palm Mall, as well as interviews with the artist to explore these themes. In doing so, this project will point to a larger trend of capitalist anxiety prevalent in net-native music genres.

Anita Jóri (Berlin University of the Arts)

### **“Obscure girl of Italo” – On the Language Use of the Facebook Group ITALO DISCO MANIACS**

The theoretical and methodological framework of this presentation is my model of the discourse community of electronic dance music (Jóri, 2022), which looks at EDM communities from the perspective of their discursive activities online and analyses how collective and individual identities are expressed by using language.

To introduce this framework, this presentation focuses on the closed Facebook Group ITALO DISCO MANIACS and its language use. The group discusses topics on the electronic dance music genre Italo disco, especially the “rediscovering” phenomenon of ‘forgotten’ music by posting YouTube videos, but also via news, articles, pictures of cover art works.

I am going to present the results of my analysis with the help of computer-mediated discourse analysis (Herring, 2004). We will see how the group members identify Italo disco music with human characteristics. The adjectives and emojis they use for describing their favourite songs have sexual characters, and they are mainly related to female figures. This phenomenon goes back to the history of disco culture and will also be critically explained from a gender studies perspective.

Furthermore, other phenomena such as the frequency of nostalgia- and past-related expressions; the importance of Italian language in terms of authenticity; and the discussions on the A or B sides of the records (vocal vs. instrumental version) will also be highlighted.

## **Session 5b: Hyperpop as culture and community**

Karina Moritzen (Universidade Federal Fluminense and Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg)

### **Exploring Virtual Music Scenes: Hyperpop, Minecraft and In-game Concerts**

Online games, beyond their initial recreational function, are also places of social interaction, performance, and audience. Videogame’s mediatic potential has even led to claims that it could be “the new MTV,” where the most current musical trends would be created. Independent event organizer OpenPit has, since 2018, organized music festivals in Massively Multi-player Online Game (MMO) Minecraft that attract gamers, forming a constant audience in what I identify as a virtual music scene. The events frequently feature artists associated with hyperpop in their lineups, including, among others, 100 geecs, Charli XCX and Umru. Although OpenPit has been inactive since late 2020, other collectives such as Avenue Concerts continue the format and sociabilities still flourish around Discord servers, culminating in collective interaction during music festivals based in Minecraft servers mostly featuring underground hyperpop artists. This paper intends to investigate the sociabilities that spawn around music performances inside Minecraft by analyzing several journalistic ethnographic accounts of such events published on online media, as well as virtual ethnography conducted inside the Discord servers of event producers and inside the music festivals in Minecraft. The hypothesis defended here is that the independent music festivals in Minecraft gather people that meet through avatars in events that have happened periodically over the last three years; such frequency allows for the forming of interpersonal relations that would qualify it as a virtual music scene.

Edward Katrak Spencer (University of Birmingham and University of Oxford)

### **Backtrolling Brostep? On the (sub)cultural politics of dubstep memes in the oeuvre of Dorian Electra and other hyperpop artists**

Dubstep is a net-native music genre that arose in the UK before gaining transatlantic notoriety in the early 2010s with the entrance of a US producer called Skrillex. Online, the North American version of dubstep quickly became associated with the pejorative term ‘brostep’, a label used as a shorthand to lament the genre’s notionally androcentric sonic signatures and its perceived following of macho frat bros, young male gamers, and misogynistic internet trolls (teenage boys). Hyperpop is a trending net-native music genre that became associated with LGBTQ+ empowerment around the turn of 2020. Along with other hyperpop acts, the nonbinary artist Dorian Electra uses textual and timbral dubstep memes in tracks such as Sorry Bro (I Love You) – Brostep Remix. Is this a straightforward case of musical backtrolling (which trolls the trolls of yesteryear), or is the relationship between the two genres more complicated than that?

In order to consider this question, the paper begins by revisiting the initial ‘brostep’ moment from the early 2010s. The central case study is the music video for Experts by Skism (2012) and its associated YouTube comments section, which is explored using Rieder’s (2015) data tools in conjunction with Gephi software. The paper then analyses online affirmations and critiques of Dorian Electra’s perceived backtrolling in order to dwell upon issues of (sub)cultural politics and gendered musical essentialism. The paper ends by considering the recent collaboration between Skrillex and hyperpop figurehead Dylan Brady with reference to the attention economy and the perverse logics of platform capitalism.

Lily Shababi (UCLA)

### **Visualizing Digital Music Listening Spaces through 100 geecs’ “Official Audio Stream” YouTube Videos**

In 2019, the hyperpop duo 100 geecs released their debut album titled “1000 geecs” and the internet exploded with a wide range of visceral reactions to their highly processed vocals, surrealist lyricism, and queer aesthetics. The album’s hit track “money

machine” has 62,546,265 streams on Spotify, serving as evidence that the duo’s commercial success has brought more listeners to the genre’s maximalist electronic sound world.

Streaming services such as Spotify and video-centric social media platforms such as YouTube create digital music listening spaces where users can listen and react to music. More specifically, YouTube’s subgenre of “Official Audio Stream” videos provides users with a platform to simultaneously listen to music, leave comments, and to respond to other comments. Through collecting YouTube comments from 100 geecs audio-only videos as data, I aim to conceptualize YouTube comment sections as a digital music listening space where users develop their relationships with music.

Music theorist Eamonn Bell’s research using time-coded YouTube comments and Brian Kane’s writing on different cultural practices of music listening support this paper’s focus on social media’s expansion of the ways that listeners engage with music. This paper will utilize data visualizations, such as word clouds, in order to investigate the different receptions of 100 geecs’ music. Combining digital humanities methodologies and recent music scholarship, this paper aims to imagine YouTube comment sections as a communal space where listeners engage with 100 geecs’ music in personal and transgressive ways.

## **Session 6a: DIY, independent, and major label artists**

Jabari Evans (University of South Carolina)

### **Clout(chasing): Exploring Digital Strategies of Black Youth in Chicago DIY Hip-Hop**

Prior literature has suggested that it is through popular music that the social, professional and technological aspirations of Black youth often come together. Nowhere is this more evident than in the context of Hip-Hop music, where Black youth inventiveness with digital tools is celebrated and valued far more than any other genre of media entertainment. Though many scholars have theorized on the the communication of Black youth in digital spaces, academic work has generally not sought artist perspectives of how their platformed creation might be connected to relational labor. Using observation and interviews with artists, artist managers and entrepreneurs, I examine relational practices of Hip-Hop youth on social media. We describe their work on social media toward acquiring “clout”- a digital form of influence that allows emerging musicians to leverage digital tools in building social and professional status, amplify authenticity, cultivate connections with fans, connect to friends and other cultural producers. In this study, I detail examples of three relational strategies that respondents utilized to acquire clout: a) Corraling b) Capping and, c) Co-Signing. To conclude, I argue Chicago’s Hip-Hop scene provides an example of why formal institutions and researchers need to rethink how race, class, gender and geography influence the digital interactions of young people and how their social practices add significantly to the understanding of the counterpublics arising from globalizing social media.

Jasmine A. Henry (William Paterson University)

### **“If I Back It Up”: Viral Circulations & Representations of Contemporary Black Independent Music-Makers**

In February 2020, Black queer Jersey Club music producer Cookiee Kawaii’s 90-second song “Vibe” unexpectedly went viral, garnering millions of social media views and inspiring the popular “If I Back It Up, Is It Fat Enough” TikTok dance challenge. Despite the song’s virality, Kawaii has remained relatively unknown and undercompensated for her work. While several critics have attributed this lack of credit to TikTok’s racially-biased algorithms, I argue that the discrepancy between the song’s viral circulation and Kawaii’s recognition reveals the nuanced racial tensions and cultural politics contemporary Black independent music-makers must navigate as they engage with do-it-yourself (DIY) methods of online music dissemination and promotion.

Drawing from critical race and viral musiking theories, I trace and analyze the viral circulation of “Vibe” in relation to Kawaii’s continuing efforts to disseminate the song, earn recognition for her work, and build a sustainable independent music career. I draw upon in-depth interviews with Kawaii as well as audio/video analyses of “Vibe” and its many permutations to show how the song exists within a complex web of racial tensions reinforced by formal and vigilante online cultural gatekeepers and appropriators. Most importantly, I narrate Kawaii’s relentless fight for recognition and proper compensation while helping other Black independent club music-makers find success in the commercial music industry. By investigating what happens when a local, Black club music genre engages with contemporary Internet culture, I demonstrate how virality often runs counter to long-term Black independent music infrastructure-building, creative, and self-representation values and goals.

Paxton Haven (The University of Texas at Austin)

### **Hypermediated Logics of Digital Music Production Practice through Strategies of Artist-Branding: Charli XCX’s How I’m Feeling Now**

On April 6th, 2020, Charli announced on Zoom that she will be producing an entirely new album due to the isolation measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In making visible the variety of creative labor that goes into producing an album, from songwriting, producing and mixing, to album artwork, to music video direction, to coordination of social channels, to photoshoots for popular press articles, and even to stage design for livestream performance, the five-week, highly documented process of How I’m Feeling Now constructs a peek into production culture of a major label artist. Without immediate access to label executives, managers, creative directors and branding executives at various DSPs, Charli capitalized on her industry position as

the mainstream innovator of a particular underground pop scene to tease at the boundaries of participatory music making through digital collaboration with her cohort of fellow artists. I examine the construction of a transparent, yet complexly hypermediated, production process as a strategy of artist-branding through a discursive analysis of Charli and her team's use of DIY aesthetics, collaborative practices, and rhetoric of digitally enabled creativity. These frameworks, used by Charli herself to describe the ambitions of the broader album project, reveals key tensions inherent to the strategic utilization of DIY aesthetics and rhetoric of participatory connectivity, or internet musicking, within the various forms of promotion for this major-label funded album.

## **Session 6b: Virality on music media platforms**

Genevieve Allotey-Pappoe (Princeton University)

### **Afrobeats Music Goes Global: The Significance of Social Media Virality in the Digital Era**

It is undisputable that the internet and social media have transformed the way people interact globally, but it was not until 2020 that we saw the power of social media in sustaining and shaping human interaction, public discourse, and cultural production. Due to the COVID19 lockdown, social media became a site for interaction as various people took to social media to share, curate, promote and market music in various ways. From Instagram live concerts to TikTok challenges, music became an important factor in human interaction as it was and could only be carried out online during the lockdown in many countries. This, in turn, birthed new forms of promoting and marketing music. In this paper, I focus on Afrobeats, a West African music genre that has taken the world by storm with songs such as Essence by Wizkid featuring Tems and Love Nwantiti by Ckay used in various several Instagram reels and TikTok videos. Musicians now understand virality as a marketing tool for their music and no longer depend on being discovered by ethnomusicologists and industry personnel as was once the case for World Music artists of the 80s. Social media has modified the modes of marketing in the global music industry and these platforms are on-hand sites for music promotion and discovery. This virality marketing system has added a new factor to the circulation of African music and interactions surrounding the music. My paper highlights the mechanisms and effects of social media on the Nigerian music industry.

Mike Levine (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

### **“Exchanging Cuba for 1 Million YouTube Views”: Piracy, Virality, and “Patria y Vida”**

In Cuba as in much of the world, virality is the biggest event of the past year. For reparteros—Black Cuban residents from outlying districts across Havana—virality cuts in two directions. As a biological threat, the viral spread of COVID-19 disrupts their community through damaging health consequences and a widespread but false narrative that reparteros are responsible for the disease’s circulation. As a means to share content, digital virality allows music and messages from their community to circulate beyond the regions where they live. The intersection of these two events— COVID-19 and digital virality—has sparked a challenge to Cuba’s political and technological boundaries. Utilizing interviews, physical and digital ethnographies, and theories of sonic virality, I argue that repartero artists and music fans, threatened by the effects of COVID-19, recuperate community through the viral movement of digital music across borders. Domestically, pirate digital networks like el paquete semanal and Zapyra circulate controversial Cuban music through USB sticks traded informally from one person to another, while applications like TikTok and YouTube disseminate music in neighboring but politically distant Miami. In particular, the ability of the politically subversive song “Patria y Vida” to cross this international boundary allows Cubans in both Havana and Miami to join in an expression of shared aural protest. I use this example to demonstrate how Black Cuban artists, fans, and their music cross boundaries through digital virality, remaking an underground song into a rare instance of transnational solidarity.

Gummo Clare (University of Leeds)

### **Agency, Ambivalence and AutoPlay: the life and afterlife of Kokoroko's 'Abusey Junction'**

Music “virality” is conventionally framed as both providing financial enrichment for artists (e.g. Arditi 2020), while causing musical impoverishment by incentivizing bland, viral-friendly ‘streambait’ aesthetics (Pelly, 2018; Morris 2020). But contemporary work has called for a more nuanced understanding of streaming’s effect on popular music that embraces ‘more dialectics, more contradiction, more situated critique’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2021: 16). Answering this call, our paper traces the trajectory of one unexpected “viral hit”: ‘Abusey Junction’ by Kokoroko. Using interviews with scene constituents (n=30), we identify three interpretations.

First, its virality is curated randomness: the song’s rapid, unpredicted circulation stemmed from an interplay between the opaque and seemingly automated activity of music recommendation algorithms, most significantly on YouTube, and key interventions by human music industry intermediaries. Second, liveness can reclaim the control lost in virality, evident in Kokoroko’s refusal to perform ‘Abusey Junction’ when touring internationally on the back of the song’s success. Third, viral

songs “feel” viral-prone for London jazz musicians, indicating a rich vernacular understanding of viral aesthetics that goes beyond prevailing assumptions about ‘streambait’.

The three arguments complicate analyses of virality as straightforwardly desirable for cultural producers (e.g. Arditi 2020; Rambarran 2021; Waugh 2020; Bishop 2020). We argue instead that virality is a new terrain of contestation for age-old tensions between artistic autonomy, commercial success and authenticity (Strachan 2017); and that for London jazz musicians, live performance assumes greater importance as a means for musicians to reclaim agency when subject to the vicissitudes of unexpected viral success.