
THE NEW AGE OF ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC AND CLUB CULTURE

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In the time since *The New Age of Electronic Dance Music and Club Culture* was written, everything has changed for Berlin's nightlife and the world's clubbing landscape. Yet the ideas articulated in this edited volume still stand up to, and illuminate, the changes to clubbing brought by the pandemic and point to important considerations as clubs begin to contemplate emerging from shutdowns.

Anita Jóri and Martin Lücke's volume emerged from a conference in June 2017 held at Berghain in Berlin, which brought together academics with industry professionals. The breadth of discussions in this volume is a testament to the extraordinary cross-disciplinary work being undertaken to enhance and challenge our understandings both of Berlin as a clubbing metropole and the wider electronic music industry. The project is inspired, in Jóri and Lücke's words, by the belief that "scholars and practitioners should work more closely with each other in order to create a common language amongst them, thereby aligning research and practical fields" (2). The range of different written styles, personal reflections and academic insights is one of the strengths of the book, as are the many chapters that demonstrate the potential for analysing unconventional sources of knowledge on dance music to improve our understanding of the face-to-face and virtual networks around electronic music. Contributors analyse online communities (YouTube and Facebook), work by activist collectives, bookshop bestseller lists and even techno music created live without recorded sound. This powerful case for drawing on different kinds of expertise shows how work on electronic music can contribute a great deal to similar trends across humanities scholarship today.

The volume's introduction describes the background to the conference and outlines the content of the articles. It avoids broader statements about the book's contribution to existing scholarship, which rather undersells the important insights its authors and editors bring to the field both individually and collectively. Some of the volume's authors, too, could signal more clearly the potential reach of their ideas and methodologies and their significance for wider scholarly debates. This leaves readers to draw connections and trends between articles ourselves, but in some ways this approach is welcome, given that the authors and editors could not have foreseen the changes to the club industry so soon after the essays went to press.

One such connection is the closure or repurposing of clubs as physical spaces and the increase in virtual clubbing and musical communities. Botond Vitos's proposed project on how music fans might use audio media to recreate club experiences in their personal spheres, for example, will have gained in salience over the course of the pandemic. Jóri's own contribution on Facebook groups for collectors of the Roland TB-303 Bass Line explores computer-mediated discourse analysis methods that will be of interest for scholars now researching the online club communities that have flourished during the pandemic, such as Club Quarantine, United We Stream and Keep Hush. Some reflection on the conference's own setting at Berghain would be interesting in this respect, given that the club's physical space has been given over to art exhibitions since March 2020, with other Berlin clubs like the KitKatClub even operating as test centres during the pandemic.

The concern around gentrification and closures in Berlin—a live issue since the earliest years of the twenty-first century—also takes on new urgency in 2021. Of particular interest here are Lukas Drevendstedt's piece on changes and gentrification in Berlin and Kata Katz's article about the closure of Echo Books. Drevendstedt and Katz both show that clubs and electronic music depend on a complex and “sensitive ecosystem” and call for recognition of the components that make up these musical worlds (10). Further investigation is needed into musicians' and nightclub proprietors' creativity in the face of extreme, often prohibitive pressures caused by Berlin's rapid gentrification. These insights have acquired new international significance since the pandemic, with scholarship of this sort having an important role to play as clubs continue to respond to the hardships of 2020 and 2021.

The volume's focus on Berlin is interesting and justified: the city plays such an important role in the world's electronic music scenes, both as a symbolic centre and in terms of the opportunities it offers to DJs, producers, club promoters and clubbers. The best contributions are those that “provincialise” Berlin – to use Dipesh Chakrabarty's term – not just as a place but an *idea* that means different things and is mobilised in different ways depending on context, both within and outside the city (2000: 3–6). Such articles locate Berlin scenes in their specific environment and resist the urge to extrapolate to other contexts, which can be tempting given Berlin's symbolic weight in electronic music culture. Benedikt Brilmayer's history of electronic musical instruments, for example, situates important developments in Berlin alongside significant innovations that came to Berlin more belatedly. This work is a reminder that the city's symbolic importance for clubbers is a relatively new development, historically speaking, but that it has nonetheless been a centre for musical developments over many years. Ewa Mazierska's article analyses the symbolic, economic and stylistic importance of Berlin for “musickers” (a neologism by Christopher Small encompassing musicians, other industry professionals, clubbers and fans (1998)) in Vienna and cities in the West of Poland. These local scenes demonstrate how Berlin's prestige in other European contexts is shifting and contingent. In fact, a strength of the volume is its differentiated focus specifically on Austrian electronic music (Bianca Ludewig, Mazierska, Josef Schaubruch), a context often overlooked in studies of club culture.

The volume is most clearly aligned with current scholarship on electronic music where it turns its attention to diversity and social justice in club scenes. Ludewig's article serves as a good introduction to this topic in Berlin and Austria, ranging widely from her feminist collective work with female:pressure and Meetup Berlin, through discussions of racism and whiteness in the telling of techno history in Germany. Patrick Valiquet addresses the industry's gendered assumptions and hierarchies—both implicit and explicit—in his analysis of Darsha Hewitt's YouTube pedagogy. Katz asks just how radical the crowds are at Berlin's many protest parties, a question that has gained relevance given some of the Berlin scene's responses to 2020's Black Lives Matter protests (Kirn 2020). Reflecting on these articles, I found myself asking similar questions of material from elsewhere in the volume: Jóri's examples suggesting further possible conclusions about how masculinity works in online communities around electronic music, and Lücke raising the question of how quantitative surveys might contribute insights around gender, race and class to understanding the social component of club scenes. It would be interesting to reflect on how the articles in this volume fit alongside work on other genres of electronic music in Germany and Austria. I think, for example, of research on hip-hop in the German context (e.g. El-Tayeb 2003; Weheliye 2009; Saied 2012), on Germany's reggae and dancehall scenes (Aikins 2005; Pfleiderer 2018) or on Eurodance (Thom 2016), which allow a more expansive definition of 'electronic dance music cultures'.

The New Age of Electronic Dance Music and Club Culture will be welcomed by students and scholars in many disciplines working on Berlin, Austria, electronic music and popular music, social media, and many topics besides. Individual articles will no doubt find a home on course reading lists: Ludewig's already features on my own course on German Popular Music and articles like Lücke's and Brilmayer's function as potentially useful reference works for statistics and historical information around electronic music in Berlin. The book is meticulously referenced, and its bibliographies provide a wealth of further reading. Taken as a whole, the volume provides insights into many of the ongoing questions guiding current scholarly debates, and even as those debates shift in response to the pandemic, these essays suggest where our future enquiries might go.

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