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Psyculture in Bristol: Careers, Projects, and Strategies in Digital Music-Making

Christopher Charles

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol
in accordance with the requirements for award of
the degree of Ph. D. in the Faculty of Arts.

79,104 Words

Abstract

This thesis looks at the careers of psychedelic trance or 'psytrance' musicians in the city of Bristol, UK. Looking at the various *projects* and *strategies* enacted by a small group of interviewee-correspondents, I demonstrate the ways in which these contribute to a musical participant's overall career, creating and foreclosing opportunities for further musical engagement. The activities of different participants are also shown to interlock, forming the local, translocal and virtual aspects of the scene. Crucially, I do not divide these activities into 'amateur' and 'professional' status, but rather look at the multitude of approaches available to participants, many of which are aimed at building the scene rather than making immediate profit. Throughout, conventional notions of cultural value and hierarchy building on Pierre Bourdieu's 'capital', 'field' and 'habitus' (and Sarah Thornton's related notion of 'subcultural capital') are challenged by way of Actor-Network Theory and a wider musical network ontology which stresses the importance of 'boundary' objects and concepts which can belong to more than one network. This, I suggest, allows us to more fully appreciate diversity within musical systems, a point which I demonstrate through analysis of music by local producers. Musical and technological detail are also given, drawing on my own experience as a producer, performer and learner of psytrance music.

The seven chapters of the thesis deal with event promotion, DJ and live-electronic performance, the use of internet platforms and services, genre and internet tags, genre and music production, and creation of resources for self-directed learning. Together, these build up a picture of a modern-day career in digital music-making.

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My boyfriend Matthew Sansom, who was there at the start of the thesis and was still there four years later, and who knows more about psybient music than I ever will.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE:.....

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Introduction and Literature Review

The present thesis looks at the musical activities of psychedelic trance or 'psytrance' musicians in Bristol. Whereas previous literature has depicted popular music careers as a linear progression, I demonstrate that modern careers take place on a multi-dimensional plane on which a variety of participation activities are possible. Looking at individual and idiosyncratic musical projects undertaken by psytrance musicians, I show how human, material, and conceptual resources are combined and recombined by participants to create musical networks of varying extent and purpose. This is demonstrated by way of an examination of event organisation and performance (Chapters 2 and 3), the internet and virtual resources (Chapter 4), musical genre (Chapters 5 and 6), and learning and teaching (Chapter 7).

Psytrance is one among a number of musical styles associated with contemporary psychedelic culture or 'psyculture'. I will refer to this wider musical field as 'psychedelic electronic dance music', or 'PEDM', a term which encompasses psytrance and a range of similar musics which are played at psytrance events. (This acronym is not widely used, but its meaning may be easily understood by scene participants and others who are knowledgeable about electronic dance music.) Psyculture has been addressed by several writers who have focused on the translocal, nomadic nature of the culture and the associated activities of travelling, music festivals, and the ritualised consumption of psychedelic drugs (see section 0.3). However, the practical aspects of PEDM as a form of music-making have yet to be addressed, and urban PEDM scenes in cities such as Bristol are largely absent from the literature.

The following literature review is divided into three parts. The first deals with amateur and professional music-making, musical careers, and music as a leisure activity. The second looks at the social and organisational properties of electronic dance music (or 'EDM'), finding it conducive to strategic and project-based musical activity. The third part looks at psytrance and psyculture, placing these in the context of Bristol, where my research was conducted.

0.1 Literature Review Part 1 – Musical Careers, Grassroots Music-Making, and Underground Musical Cultures

As a study of musical careers in a particular urban location, this thesis is conceived as a digital-era response to Ruth Finnegan's ([1989] 2007) study of amateur music-making in Milton Keynes and Sara Cohen's (1991) study of rock music culture in Liverpool. Although similar studies have been conducted more recently (e.g. Berger, 1999; Cottrell, 2004; Madrid, 2008), these two are still often cited together as exemplary accounts of music-making in a local context (e.g. in Hodkinson, 2002; Webb, 2004; Whiteley, 2004; Bennett, 2001; 2016). Cohen's book in particular has become a key text for the study of local music scenes and the early stages of popular music careers. The young rock musicians who appear in the study are aspirational: they seek fame and fortune through the international music industry, and aim to escape the confines of Liverpool to reach a national or international audience.

Cohen likens this to climbing a ladder:

Each move away from the band's original locality marked another rung on the ladder: from music-making within a close circle of friends and relatives; to performing in front of strangers outside the locality; to London, the record industry, and contact, through recordings and the media, with a nationwide audience. In order to pass from one rung to another, bands had to negotiate the 'sharks' and confront certain 'gatekeepers' such as journalists and disc jockeys who could publicize them to a wider audience, and A&R personnel who could get them a record contract. Each stage or rung might also involve a change in attitude of the bands; members towards music and music-making, representing a gradual transition from music performed largely for self-indulgence in a live, social context, to music and band as commodities to be bartered over and sold to a mass audience.

(Cohen, 1991, p.132)

The career trajectories of these musicians are linear: if they do not succeed on this ladder, and fail to escape the confines of the local scene, then there are few other options for further musical participation and they are likely to quit. The vaunted concept of 'The Deal' (namely a record deal with

a major label) is a key element of Cohen's account, as are the many musicians who didn't 'make it' (p.131) and whose musical careers were foreshortened by their failure to obtain a recording contract.¹

Similar studies of rock and heavy metal music have been conducted in urban locations around the world (e.g. Fornäs et al. 1995; Berger, 1999; Baulch, 2007). These tell a similar story: within the framework of late-20th century international rock music industry, young bands learn to conceive of their music 'not merely as a process' but 'as an independent product to be described and marketed' (Fornäs et al., 1995, p.107). No matter where they are based, they are subject to a linear narrative with regards to success and attainment. Even within the relatively self-contained and independent world of heavy metal, in which participants attempt to gain 'mastery of the resources of cultural production' (Baulch, 2007, p.13) through DIY methods, musical careers are understood in terms of a general progression towards a full-time career in composition and performance, culminating in the creation and distribution of musical records at an international level. If these goals are not met then metal musicians will typically give up 'by their mid-30s' (Miller, 2016, p.1).

These studies also reveal social inequalities which arise as a result of the 'ladder' and 'gatekeeper' model, notably the relative difficulty that girls and women experience in trying to enact popular music careers. In rock music, this is largely due to the same-sex nature of the social networks which sustain music-making at both amateur and professional levels. Here, women have often been expected to take supporting roles, such as backing singer, band manager, or promoter, rather than central composition or performance roles (see in particular Cohen, 1991; Fornäs et al., 1995). In combination with the linear nature of rock music careers and the selective pressure of industry gatekeepers, this has often served to exclude women from popular music careers (with the exception of vocal

¹ Stahl (2015) writes that 'The recording contract is the holy grail of music makers in a variety of genres and markets' (p.143).

performance). Although this issue is particularly acute in rock music, it is present to some degree in all popular music cultures, including electronic musics (see 0.2).

Striking contrasts are presented by studies of Western classical music, such as Born's study of IRCAM in Paris (1995) or Cottrell's study of classical musicians in London (2004). Here, musicians follow a prescribed and linear route through various academic qualifications, starting from a young age, which give them access to various kinds of musical work later in life, including performance, composition, arranging and teaching. Considerable resources are made available by the state in the form of subsidies or funding for large-scale projects, reducing the need to turn music into a commercial product or seek contractual arrangements. However, these resources are difficult to access, and even once secured they do not guarantee further musical or financial success. The market also provides opportunities and a source of income, although this is often seen as an unwelcome intrusion on musical practice. For example, musicians may take on commercial projects (e.g. recording for adverts) which conflict with their aesthetic sensibilities. Teaching presents another trajectory altogether to that of the professional performer or composer; however, this does not have much prestige in circles where 'musician' connotes a full-time performing or composing career. Thus, although they have more options and more support than rock musicians, classical musicians must 'resolve the conflicts between, on the one hand, what they conceive of as their art, and on the other, the financial vicissitudes of an insecure profession' (Cottrell, 2004, p.75).

The studies listed so far depict two different kinds of musical *career*, a term which I will use to describe sustained and committed musical practice of any kind. In Western societies, musical careers are typically understood in terms of a 'professional' and 'amateur' binary. As evidenced by the studies of rock music listed above, the popular music industry has historically reinforced this state of affairs, allowing a few to pursue professional musicianship whilst the rest are discouraged and/or burdened with debt due to contractual obligations. Thus, as noted by Stahl (2015, paraphrasing Mike Jones),

‘the primary product of the recording industry is *failure*’ (p.136).² Classical and jazz music, too, make a strong distinction between amateur and professional musicianship and have mechanisms in place (such as exams and competitions) to formalise the progression from one to the other. Like the gatekeepers in the popular music industry, these perform a selective function, determining which participants are able to pursue a musical career. Some writers argue that this has led to lessened musical participation among adults in Western societies and to distorted perceptions of music’s value as work and as a leisure activity (Blacking, 1973; Keil, 2005; McPherson et al., 2012).

When musical communities are examined at the local level, however, the amateur/professional binary is not as clear. Finnegan (2007) looks at amateur musicians in the English town of Milton Keynes in the early-to-mid 1980s, observing multiple musical ‘worlds’ (after Becker, 1982)³ overlapping and coexisting within the town – classical music, brass bands, folk music, musical theatre, jazz, country and western, and rock and pop. Looking at she describes these as ‘pathways’, ‘a series of known and regular routes which people chose – or were led into – and which they both kept open and extended through their actions’ (p.305). Each provides participants with opportunities for meaningful musical participation and personal development without necessarily drawing them away from the locality or leading to a professional career. Indeed, Finnegan struggles to identify a clear divide between amateur and professional musicianship in this environment, finding instead ‘a complex continuum with many different possible variations’ (p.14). These kinds of musical careers, by Finnegan’s account, are not goal-oriented but rather cyclical, drawing participants to the same locations and activities year after year.

² Frith (2001) states that ‘the vast majority of the music industry’s products are, in economic terms, failures – fail to cover their costs. Such losses are more than covered by the size of the returns on successes but an industry in which more than 90 per cent of product is loss-making is obviously organised in a peculiar way: failure is the norm’ (p.33).

³ Becker defines an ‘art world’ as ‘the network of people whose cooperative activity, organised via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for’ (Becker, 1982, p.x)

A key concept which arises in Finnegan's studies is that of 'grassroots' music-making. Although never explicitly defined, it is evidently related to amateur and local musical activity, and self-reliant musicians who operate with little support from outside sources.⁴ Here, I suggest that 'grassroots music-making' can be defined as musical activity which is not directly supported by the state or by the market. 'The state', in this context, refers any form of public subsidy for music-making, as well as the educational infrastructure of schools, universities, colleges and private teachers which perpetuate classical, jazz and, more recently, rock music culture in Western societies; 'the market' refers to the international record industry, which conceives of performers and their output as a product to be sold, and which funds musical activity through contractual arrangements. These definitions are problematic, notably the latter in suggesting that there is a singular 'music industry' from which other kinds of commercial musical activity deviate (see Williamson & Cloonan, 2007). However, conceiving the term 'grassroots' in this manner has several advantages. Firstly, it draws attention to amateur and local music-making but does not exclude professional practice organized according to similar principles. Secondly, it opens up a discussion about the resources and infrastructure necessary for musical activity to take place, and where these come from.

A related concept, 'underground' musical culture, has been explored in the academic literature. This is associated with certain kinds of electronic dance music (Fikentscher, 2000; Madrid, 2008) and heavy metal (Kahn-Harris, 2007; Baulch, 2007), although the term has been applied to a wide range of musical genres and practices. These cultures are positioned at the fringes or entirely outside of the international music industry and state-recognised musical culture of Western societies; such music is not normally broadcast on the radio or TV, nor taught in schools, colleges, and universities, but instead circulates within tightly-knit communities which are understood by participants as being distinct from a perceived musical 'mainstream'. These underground communities often have their own 'unorthodox

⁴ Finnegan defines the object of her study as 'grass-roots music-making as it is practiced by amateur musicians in a local context (2007, p.3); Cohen (1991) looks at 'the grass roots of the industry – the countless, as yet unknown bands struggling for success at a local level[...]' (p.6).

conduits or media' (Fikentscher, 2000, p.10) for the distribution of music and other cultural materials, including record labels, radio stations, magazines or 'zines', and websites (see also: Baulch, 2007). In theory, this means that underground musicians do not need the support of the market to enact a musical career to its fullest potential and are thus liberated from the linear model associated with the popular music industry. Furthermore, underground cultures are often 'translocal' (Kruse, 1993), existing as a web or social network tying together disparate geographic locations, and are thus capable of freeing participants from the constraints of local music-making resources and opportunities. For example, looking at punk rock music in Bali, Baulch (2007) identifies 'a considerable extension of control by scene participants over the processes of cultural production' (p.121) stemming from the genre's self-reliant organisational properties, despite the island's relative isolation and lack of musical resources.

The concepts of 'grassroots' and 'underground' are clearly related. In order to link the two, I suggest that whereas almost all 'mainstream' musical cultures have grassroots foundations at the amateur level (including classical, jazz and rock music, as observed by Finnegan), underground cultures are distinguished by a grassroots mode of cultural production at the professional end of the spectrum. In other words, there is a greater continuity between amateur and professional music-making practice in underground cultures which distinguishes them from their mainstream counterparts. Throughout the thesis, I will use the term 'grassroots or underground' to refer to this nexus of self-reliant practices, in which participants provide vital services for each other rather than seeking validation or assistance from the international music industry or other 'supercultural' (Slobin, 1993) sources.⁵

⁵ A similar term is 'DIY', which 'encompasses a general commitment to making things happen outside normal institutional channels[...]' (Haenfler, 2015, p.284). However, DIY has strong historical associations with punk rock culture (ibid.); furthermore, it suggests a degree of individualism which is not necessarily a characteristic of today's electronic musical cultures. For similar reasons, I have avoided using the terms 'independent' and 'alternative', which have complicated relationships with rock music and music industry genre categories (Negus, 1999; Holt, 2007).

A key issue affecting all types of musical career is the relative sustainability of different kinds of musical activity as participants age. The stylistic and technological characteristics of a musical culture may play a role in this. Looking at heavy metal and folk musicians in Toronto, Miller (2016) notes that the former make 'original, technically complex, and heavily rehearsed music' whereas the latter 'foreground simpler music played collectively' (p.2); 'Because of these less demanding stylistic conventions and opportunities for casual music-making, folk musicians can make less intense commitments to their music careers, which renders these careers more sustainable over time' (ibid.). She describes this difference in terms of a '*stepping stone* model, where local musicians move steadily toward a professional career', and '*sustainable semi-professionalism*, where individuals create music on a long-term basis without seeking a professional music career' (p.3). It is not clear that musical cultures are as internally homogeneous in this respect as Miller suggests; however, her observation that musical or technical factors may have a direct relationship with the sustainability of musical activity is important and deserves further consideration. Her 'stepping stone' metaphor also suggests that musical activity is not continuous but, rather, *discrete* – it is composed of individual decisions, actions, successes and failures. I suggest that this is just as applicable to sustained semi-professionalism as to careers which have a defined trajectory.

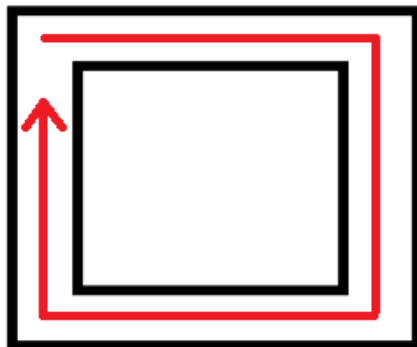
Amateur/ _____ Professional/

Local

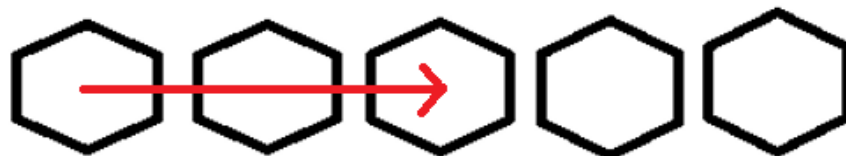
Translocal



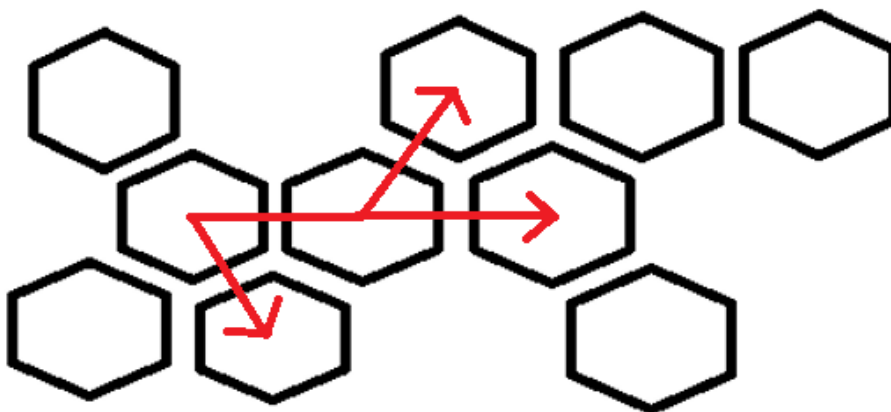
Cohen's 'Ladder'



Finnegan's 'Pathway'



Miller's 'Stepping Stones'



A multi-dimensional or 'strategic' musical career

Figure 0.1 – Four models for popular music careers.

The studies examined thus far depict musical participation as a journey or route, either towards professional musicianship or through a prescribed set of local music-making institutions and practices, using metaphors such as a ladder (Cohen, 1991), a pathway (Finnegan, 2007) and stepping stones (Miller, 2016). My suggestion in this thesis is that today's popular music careers do not necessarily follow these linear routes, but rather take place on a multi-dimensional surface on which a variety of operations are possible (Figure 0.1). For grassroots or underground musicians in particular, 'The Deal' (Cohen, 1991) no longer performs the same central role in how popular musicians make sense of their activities. Whilst classical and jazz musicians have long had access to a 'portfolio' career – that is, a career with multiple elements, such as composing, performing, recording, and teaching – musicians in other genres are now able to engage with their chosen culture in similarly complex and multi-faceted ways. The reasons for this development are primarily technological: advances in digital technology have allowed musicians to produce and distribute music from home and have facilitated other kinds of supporting activity, including event promotion, starting a record label or booking agency, creating album artwork, or providing an audio mastering service.

Unlike the historical popular music industry, this digital music environment is conducive to popular music-making as an amateur activity. The 'Web 2.0' paradigm, in particular, has normalised the generation and sharing of content on social media platforms and placed the amateur musician in the spotlight (see Chapter 4). This creates issues for those who do wish to make a living from music: for each full-time musician there are numerous individuals 'voluntarily using their free time to engage in activities that are generally undertaken as part of the employment obligations of professionals in the creative industries' (Moir, 2017, p.234). Musicians have devised new ways of making money in this environment, such as crowd-funding and advertising revenue. However, these do not necessarily provide a signifying 'break' between amateur and professional musicianship, and often defy interpretation in terms of a linear pathway or route. How, then, are popular music careers organized?

A useful perspective is provided by the recent literature on music-making and leisure.⁶ Robert Stebbins, whose work has been particularly influential in this field (Hallam et al., 2017; Smith, 2017), distinguishes ‘serious leisure’, which he defines as ‘the systematic pursuit of and amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity’ (Stebbins, 2017, p.350), from ‘casual’ and ‘project-based’ leisure, which are defined by short-term projects and goals. The latter category is useful in that it encourages us to understand musical participation as being composed of discrete actions and developments without having to understand these in terms of a linear route towards professionalism.

Responding to Stebbins’ idea of the ‘project’ and Miller’s ‘stepping stones’, the present thesis will look at the different *projects* and *strategies* which make up a musical career in the 21st century. These terms are similar but separable: I suggest that ‘project’ refers to an activity which is directed towards the realisation of a particular goal or the creation of a product, whereas ‘strategy’ may be defined as a continuous activity or general way of doing things.⁷ (By using ‘strategy’ in this way, I avoid the difficulties associated with the term ‘role’ identified by Stebbins.)⁸ Many aspects of music-making fall into both categories: as such, I will use both terms throughout the thesis, identifying the relationships between long-term and short-term goals, products, and general ways of interacting with a music scene. This discussion is not limited to composition and performance but incorporates a wide range of activities including event promotion and music distribution, and other idiosyncratic activities which do not fall into any of these categories. I demonstrate that a modern musical career is the sum of

⁶ Stebbins (2017) defines leisure as ‘uncoerced, contextually framed activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, using their abilities and resources, actually do in wither a satisfying or a fulfilling way’ (p.351).

⁷ In his study of music firms and the international music industry, Wikström (2009) defines a strategy as ‘a formalized set of rules for making decisions’ (p.34).

⁸ ‘Sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists tend to see social relations in terms of roles, and, as a result, overlook activities whether aligned with a role or not. Meanwhile, certain important parts of life consist of engaging in activities not recognized as roles’ (Stebbins, 2017, p.352).

these discrete activities, and that a music 'scene' (Straw, 1991) arises from many individuals enacting projects and strategies which overlap and interact in complex ways.

Breaking musical participation down into its constituent components in this way is useful not only for theorising music-making as a leisure activity, but also as a profession. Even the most advanced forms of professional music-making are project-based, the key difference being that such projects are characterized by a higher degree of monetization. A key advantage of this approach is therefore that it can encompass both amateur and professional musicianship. In the following chapters I will look at the activities of some musicians who are full-time professionals, others who are amateurs, and others still who make a partial living from music. Their musical projects may be different in scale or degree of monetization but are not necessarily different in kind – each contributes to a musical career and to the wider music scene of which it is a part.

0.2 Literature Review Part 2 – Electronic Dance Music

Electronic dance music ('EDM') is a style of popular music which emerged in the USA in the early 1980s and spread throughout the world in the following two decades (Brewster & Broughton, 2007; Reynolds, 2013). Characterised by the extensive use of digital technology, EDM is produced, distributed, and performed in ways which differ radically from previous kinds of popular music. The normative 'types' of musician in EDM cultures – the producer, who composes the music using a computer and various synthesizers and samplers, and the DJ, who performs it by playing a sequence of pre-recorded tracks – have a very different approach to musical participation, and a very different kind of musical career by comparison with other musical cultures such as rock, heavy metal, classical or jazz music. This has implications for musical career types and trajectories, for the relationship between amateur and professional musicianship, and for the kinds of projects and strategies which participants enact and the ways in which these interlock to form a music scene.

The most comprehensive accounts of the history and development of EDM have come from journalists rather than academics, notably Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton (2007) and Simon Reynolds (2013). The former give a pan-generic history of the DJ, who they depict as a cultural innovator responsible for enormous changes in musical practice throughout the 20th century. EDM forms the culmination of this history, a musical form 'envisaged, created and produced by the DJ' (p.401) that, through innovations such as the 12" single and the bedroom studio, actively defied the standards and modes of production favoured by the popular music industry. Looking in particular the acid house⁹ movement of the late 1980s, the authors emphasise the independent and participatory nature of the culture, which succeeded in wresting control of cultural production from the music industry where other genre cultures, such as punk rock, had failed: 'Where punk proclaimed an anyone-can-do-it philosophy, house actually delivered on the promise' (p.440). However, the authors note that many of the principles which underpinned the organisation of EDM were derived from previous musical cultures. In the UK, previous DJ-based musical cultures such as northern soul and rare groove¹⁰ 'provided the structures needed to run large-scale underground events – unlicensed venues, clued-up sound systems and an event-hungry population' (p.418) as well as 'an effective communications network' (ibid.) of pirate radio stations and magazines which helped broadcast the music to a wide audience. EDM must therefore be understood in terms of a wider set of DJ-oriented musical practices which shifted power away from the international music industry and gave greater autonomy to musicians, fans, and various intermediaries operating at a grassroots level.

⁹ Acid house is a kind of electronic dance music which combines a four-to-the-floor beat generated by a drum machine (often the Roland TR808) with the sound of a Roland TB303 bass synthesizer. The TB303 is often extensively manipulated, notably by way of filter resonance, to produce a 'squelching' sound. Acid house was especially popular in the UK from around 1987-1992. See Reynolds (2013); Butler (2006).

¹⁰ Northern soul was a music and dance movement in the North of England in the 1960s and '70s which focused on soul records by black musicians – notably obscure ones which *were*'t produced by large labels such as Motown – imported from America. Rare groove was a later, similar movement throughout the UK which involved the discovery and dissemination of rare funk, soul and jazz records, largely by way of radio. See Brewster & Broughton (2007).

A recurring theme in the literature on EDM is the entrepreneurial character of participants and the activities which sustain dance music scenes. Simon Reynolds (2013), for example, describes the UK acid house 'mega-raves' of the early 1990s in particular as 'anarcho-capitalist' (p.74) in spirit. Although the UK rave movement outwardly encouraged community, emotional warmth, and interpersonal responsibility (the rallying cry was 'PLUR', standing for 'Peace, Love, Unity and Respect'), its organizational principles in many ways exemplified the economic individualism promoted by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. The 'crew', a group of individuals including promoters, performers, decorators, and sound engineers who work together to put on a rave, emerged as a central organisational concept at this time, giving shape to the social aspects of EDM participation. These crews often made considerable sums of money through the sale of tickets, alcohol, and drugs: their musical activity was not just leisure, but a kind of underground vocation capable of providing an income. The subsequent demise of illegal rave culture following the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994¹¹ did little to dampen this entrepreneurial drive. Even as it embraced the legal nightclub environment, 'rave culture became a highly organised leisure system, and an enormously lucrative economic infrastructure' (p.82).

Perhaps due to its historical period and its brevity, the initial outdoor rave movement in the UK did not receive much attention from scholars. However, several ethnographic studies of EDM culture were subsequently conducted in the context of the nightclub environment (Thornton, 1995; Malbon, 1999; Pini, 2001). These focused on the consumption of dance music culture rather than its production. Sarah Thornton's *Club Cultures* (1995) is the most famous example, a UK study which gives an account of 'the attitudes and ideals of the youthful insiders whose social lives revolve around clubs and raves' (p.2). Thornton theorises 'subcultural capital' (a variant of Pierre Bourdieu's 'cultural capital' – see 1.2) as an explanatory mechanism for the exclusivity of underground dance music scenes. She describes

¹¹ This act gave police the power to shut down outdoor gatherings of 100 persons or more featuring music 'wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats'. See: Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. s.63(1)(b)

this as the 'fashionable haircuts and well-assembled record collections', the use of slang, and the general state of being 'in the know' which distinguishes a club-going subcultural crowd from their mainstream peers' (p.11). Thornton suggests that cultural production, too, can be explained in such terms: 'DJs, club organizers, clothes designers, music and style journalists and various record industry professionals all make a living from their subcultural capital' (p.12). Thornton's study has been highly influential, and the concept of subcultural capital has made its way into numerous studies of EDM and other kinds of music (e.g. Reynolds, 2013; Zeiner-Henriksen, 2014; Park, 2015).

More recently, scholars have specifically at musicians and music-making in EDM cultures. Taking an ethnomusicological approach, Mark Butler (2006) elucidates the roles the producer and the DJ whilst identifying modes of participation (such as remixing and the 'live PA') which blur this composer/performer distinction. Butler emphasises the participatory nature of EDM culture, noting that 'a considerable percentage of the audience at a given EDM event will have some experience with DJing or production' (p.48). He ascribes this 'high degree of participation' (ibid.) to the solo nature of musical practice in EDM (as opposed to the ensemble nature of rock band performance), to the inexpensive and accessible nature of the technology involved, and to the abstract (i.e. instrumental) nature of the music which allows it to cross linguistic boundaries. However, there is little discussion of musical careers or the relationship between amateur and professional musicianship in EDM cultures.

A number of ethnographic studies of EDM production and performance have emerged more recently. Reitsamer (2011), looking at techno and drum 'n' bass musicians in Vienna, challenges the discourse of authenticity and artistic integrity associated with underground or 'DIY' cultures by way of Bourdieu's field theory (see 1.2), finding that 'the distinctions between the subfield of restricted cultural production and the subfield of mass production that Bourdieu drew according to the opposition between art and money do not hold for electronic dance music scenes' (p.40). Like Reynolds, Reitsamer views EDM culture as a product of late-twentieth century capitalism, noting that 'changing relations between culture and society, and between art and money, associated with

neoliberal economics and post-Fordist models of industry increasingly force cultural producers to adopt an entrepreneurial position' (p.29). She depicts the DJs in her study as individual productive nodes strategically engaged with local and translocal music-making infrastructure – several of her interviewees use the term 'Me Inc.', indicating a self-employed individual with a personal brand. However, numerous other actors provide support for their musical activities, including local authorities and businesses in Vienna. Reitsamer's DJs are thus viewed as both individual producers and members of a wider social network which extends beyond the techno scene itself.

The high number of women in Reitsamer's study suggest that EDM culture is in some ways more balanced than other popular music cultures in terms of gender representation. Indeed, the solitary and technologically-mediated nature of EDM production and performance means that women should in theory be less constrained by the kind of male-only peer networks which characterise other popular music styles. However, music-making in EDM is still a heavily male-dominated activity, especially in terms of composition: Farrugia (2012) states that 'even today relatively few women produce EDM despite the availability of affordable computer technology' (p.6) (see also: Farrugia, 2010; Gavanas & Reitsamer, 2013; Gadir, 2017). She ascribes this to the fact that 'the technical demands and the boys' club mentality of the studio make this space particularly difficult for women to access' (p.138). This suggests that technological and musical factors alone do not empower women to make music; rather, it is the wider social network within which determines technology's democratizing potential.

A contrasting account is given in Madrid's (2008) study of Nor-tec music (a kind of EDM which samples north Mexican *banda* and *Norteño* music) in Tijuana, Mexico. The DJs and producers in his study form a collective and act together for the realisation of a combined musical project, although they possess individual performing identities and have projects of their own. The idea of 'strategy' appears frequently and in various contexts: Madrid describes the Nor-tec genre itself as 'a strategy based on the social signification of an aesthetic idea' (p.10) and details the 'distribution strategies' (p.88) by which the music is broadcast to a local and global audience. This double meaning for 'strategy' – as an

aesthetic or musical process as well as the practical process by which music is made, performed, and distributed – suggests that the resources deployed by musicians may have complex combinations of material, aesthetic, and semiotic properties. For example, the local environ in Madrid’s study (i.e. Tijuana and the north of Mexico) is conceived both as a network of material resources and as a semantic/affective resource which may be deployed within the wider field of the international music industry. This requires an ontology of musical culture which allows material and abstract/semiotic components to interact on the same level and allows some objects to occupy both positions. This idea will be developed further in Chapter 1.

The tensions explored in this section between individual musician and collective, and between the different kinds of resources which comprise a musical network, demonstrate the necessity for a theory of musical sociality which can account for the multidimensional, entrepreneurial careers of musicians in the digital era. I suggest that ‘project’ and ‘strategy’ are the most appropriate theoretical lenses for this purpose, and better-suited to helping us understand today’s musical careers and the complex networks within which they take place. EDM cultures in particular allow for diverse means of participation and a wide range of creative projects which may be undertaken with little assistance from outside sources. It is here, I suggest, that the possibilities inherent in contemporary musical life may be most clearly observed.

0.3 Psytrance and Psyculture

0.3.1 What is Psytrance?

Psytrance (or ‘psychedelic trance’) is a kind of EDM which emerged in the mid-1990s and early 2000s. Today, it is a global culture supported by a worldwide network of musicians, fans, promotional crews, and record labels. Large psytrance festivals are held around the world and urban psytrance scenes

have emerged in major cities. For dedicated participants, psytrance culture (or 'psyculture') is a total aesthetic encompassing music, visual art, fashion, philosophy, and spirituality.

As a musical genre, psytrance was preceded by 'Goa trance', a style of music and accompanying cultural movement associated with the region of Goa, India (St. John, 2010; 2012). Hippies and other travellers from the West had settled there in 1970s after the decline of the hippie counterculture in America and Europe. These 'expressive expatriates' (D'Andrea, 2007) led a simple lifestyle blending spirituality and hedonism, often funded by the making, buying and selling of hippie-related goods (clothing, jewellery, drugs), or the provision of services such as alternative therapies. Their preferred music was the psychedelic rock of the Grateful Dead, The Beatles, Pink Floyd, and other groups associated with the countercultural movement, which were played at full moon parties held on the beaches of Goa. Psychoactive substances were consumed at these parties, including cannabis, LSD, and magic mushrooms, giving the events an otherworldly or spiritual dimension.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the travellers in Goa developed an interest in electronic music, notably the machinelike repetition of acts such as Kraftwerk (Rietveld, 2010). A small music scene emerged predicated on the copying and splicing the instrumental sections from electronic popular music onto tape, alongside Indian classical music and other forms of 'world music', to be played at beach parties. After EDM emerged in the early-to-mid 1980s it was rapidly adopted into the Goa music tradition, and the parties developed a structure not unlike the raves which were emerging in the UK and Europe around the same time. Goa Gil, a noted DJ and founding member of the scene, later described this emergent practice as 're-defining the ancient tribal ritual for the 21st century' (McAteer, 2002).

Electronic music producers in countries such as Germany and the UK took notice of this growing music scene and began writing music tailored specifically for Goa parties. In the early 1990s the term 'Goa trance' emerged, denoting a relatively stable musical style predicated on the use of a four-to-the-floor electronic beat, Phrygian and Phrygian major scales (possibly in imitation of Indian classical modality)

articulated through arpeggiation of the Roland TB303 and SH101 synthesizers, and the use of spoken-word samples on themes of science fiction, conspiracy theories, spirituality, and psychedelic drugs. By the mid-1990s, Goa trance was a commercially-successful musical style, one among a collection of EDM genres which emerged in the wake of the rave movement. In the UK, this emergence was marked by the broadcast of Paul Oakenfold's two-hour *Goa Mix* on the BBC Radio 1's 'Essential Mix' on December 18th, 1994.¹² Soon afterwards, Goa trance became available in record stores across the UK and Europe. Much of this music was made in Germany and England; however, Goa trance was being produced all around the world, with notable scenes emerging in Finland, Russia and Israel (Aittoniemi, 2012; Engel et al., 2011; Anchor/Unitone, 2011).

From 1997 onwards, partly as a reaction to this commercial success, and partly as an indication of changes in the musical style, 'psytrance' began to replace 'Goa trance' as the preferred genre term for this kind of music. The scene in Goa had become somewhat commercial by this point, conflicting with the underground aesthetic of the subculture, and many of the original travellers had moved to other locations such as Koh Pa Ngan in Thailand. Local scenes also began to emerge in Europe (notably Germany, Finland and the UK), Russia, and Israel. After 2000, the music became significantly more diverse: sub-styles such as 'full-on psytrance', 'dark psytrance' and 'psychill' emerged and quickly spread across the world. Rather than fragmenting, the scene embraced a musical plurality, with parties and festivals expanding the number of stages to account for a wider stylistic range. The 'full-moon party' format gave way to large festivals lasting for several days. At the same time, urban club nights (already a significant part of early Goa trance and psytrance culture, although underappreciated in historic accounts) became more popular.

¹² Oakenfold was only peripherally associated with the Goa trance movement – much of the music he selected was written by 'genuine' Goa trance artists, whilst the rest was taken from soundtracks to science fiction films. (It was thus a fairly authentic reproduction of early Goa music, which incorporated electronic music from a range of sources.) Nonetheless, the *Goa Mix* was enormously popular and brought the genre to a wide audience.

Unlike other EDM styles, including its predecessor Goa trance, psytrance music has never had much popular appeal. As such, it has been allowed to develop in a highly idiosyncratic manner with little input or coercion from the international record industry. Psytrance music is maligned by the popular press, if it is mentioned at all; by members of other EDM scenes it is treated with derision, suspicion, and occasional fascination (see Bowes, 2012; Martin, 2012). Although it is viewed by participants, critics and academics alike as a descendant of the countercultural movement of the 1960s, psytrance lacks the political edge of this previous incarnation (Elliott, 2010).¹³ The 'transformational' elements of psytrance are focused on the individual; there is little in the way of organised social or political action. Participants from other underground music scenes thus often decry psytrance for being apolitical, guilty of cultural appropriation, or entirely mindless. However, there is also a degree of fascination from outsiders – a belief that psytrance is, despite its flaws, in some ways more authentic to the subcultural spirit of the original rave movement than other forms of dance music. Attending a psytrance event for the first time, one writer for *Vice* (a music magazine for a well-heeled urban dance music audience) comes to the conclusion that 'Psytrance deserves its place in our cultural landscape because it remains one of the few subcultures that trendy Stoke Newington dads just won't get' (Martin, 2012).

Within psytrance itself, there is a tension between a rational, scientific worldview and more intuitive, spiritual beliefs and practices (St. John, 2012). For adherents of the former (a category which, in my experience, includes most psytrance producers), psytrance is largely understood as an extension of modern-day 'geek culture', being a heavily computer-based music scene incorporating imagery from

¹³ Graham St. John is more convinced of the political and ecological potential of psytrance. For example, looking at the Portuguese psytrance festival Boom, he states that such events should 'be understood in the context of commitments (spiritual, political, cultural) arising in response to an ecological crisis, with responses consistent with the broader perception that an ecological consciousness is an ethical responsibility[...] These, and many other event-organisations, illustrate that dance practice is integrated with broader movement concerns, an understanding which suggests that the dance "tribe" is rather more proactive than Maffesoli's acquiescent tribalism' (St. John, 2009).

science fiction and fantasy. One indication of this is the frequent use of audio samples from cult films, video games, and TV shows in psytrance music. For the latter, the more spiritually inclined participants, psytrance culture is a means of attaining 're-enchantment' with the world in the face of today's increasingly secular societies (Partridge, 2004; St. John, 2009).¹⁴ This is often expressed through the incorporation of religious practices and symbols (for example, the 'Om'), and occasionally through anti-scientific rhetoric and practices such as alternative therapies. Although this divide rarely leads to direct conflict within the scene, participants argue about the relative merits of the scientific and spiritual worldview in relation to subjects such as ecology, nutrition, and mental health. What is remarkable about psyculture is that, rather than fragmenting, it holds these contradictory elements within itself – indeed, much of the scene's creativity arises where the two conflicting viewpoints meet. St. John (2012) uses the hybrid terms '*spiritechnics*', '*technoshamanic*' and '*occulture*' (p.101) to describe this cultural melting pot in which religion, popular culture, technology and magic are brought together to create a novel cultural form.

Despite its origins in Goa, psyculture is considered a global subculture and is not associated with any particular location. Substantial local scenes exist in countries as diverse as Israel, South Africa, Brazil, Japan, Russia, Australia and the UK. It has been described as a 'white' subculture (Saldanha, 2007), although, as the previous list would suggest, it is more associated with affluent regions of the world than with white ethnicity. (I suggest that psyculture normally pertains to the socially or economically dominant cultural or ethnic group in a given area – e.g. white British in the UK.) However, psyculture is also found in some relatively marginalised areas, notably South America and Eastern Europe. The internet has made it possible for participants from these regions to interact with the scene and organise translocal events across national boundaries. For example, the largest and most spectacular psytrance festivals in Europe are held in Portugal (Boom), Hungary (Ozora), and Croatia (Mo:Dem),

¹⁴ Science fiction and re-enchantment are not necessarily mutually exclusive: St. John (2013) notes that in psyculture the figure of the extraterrestrial alien 'is adopted within psycho-cultural arts as a vehicle of re-enchantment' (p.58).

countries which are not otherwise noted for exporting music. At the same time, local networks continue to play an important role, forming the base upon which the wider scene is founded.

Psyculture is largely an underground musical culture, characterised by grassroots modes of cultural production at all points on the amateur-professional spectrum. The music itself is mostly published by way of record labels which operate independently of the major record labels and distributors. Today, these are often internet-based 'net labels' owned by an individual or small group. In addition, some producers choose to self-release their music, bypassing labels altogether. The organisation of events is similarly underground: with origins in the outdoor rave culture of the late 1980s and early 1990s as well as the hippie scene in Goa, psyculture holds the 'free party' – an illegal party held in an outdoor location (see 2.4; Brewster & Broughton, 2007) – as a cultural ideal. However, today legal multi-day festivals and inner-city nightclub events are quite normative and more frequent than free parties. These are organised by psytrance 'crews' (Chapter 2) who operate independently from venues – these nights are expensive to put on, and appeal only to a niche audience, and so they are not considered commercially viable.

Alongside the music, psyculture has developed a colourful visual aesthetic characterised by fluorescent colours and intricate patterns. Parties are heavily decorated, and participants wear colourful clothing and body paint. An identifiable 'psy fashion' has developed over time consisting of clothing designed for scene participants by independent designers (Bartovicova, 2011). In addition to the event crews mentioned earlier, there are 'décor crews' who specialise in the elaborate visual installations which are used to decorate events (see Chapter 2). Drawing, painting and writing poetry are other popular ways of participating in psyculture, as are 'circus skills' such as contact juggling, poi, and staff. These other forms of creativity are sometimes monetized, leading to semi-professional or even professional careers. Although they do not feature heavily in the present thesis, they may equally be understood as forms of strategic participation which interact with musical careers to form the overall PEDM scene.

0.3.2 Psytrance Music

Psyculture is home to an elaborate system of musical styles united by their intricacy and their focus on 'trippy' synthesizer sounds. The most prominent style is psytrance, often simply referred to as 'trance' by participants, an energetic four-to-the-floor style.¹⁵ 'Psytrance' is also used as an umbrella to denote a range of related genres, many of which do not have the characteristics of trance music. (As noted in the introduction, I will use the acronym PEDM to refer to this wider generic field so as to avoid confusion.) Unlike most other EDM cultures, psyculture makes use of a wide range of tempi, often conceived in terms of a 'spectrum', which ranges from beatless ambient music to frantic, high-speed (200bpm+) avant-garde soundscapes. This diversity has given rise to a number of colourful genre terms: 'progressive', 'full-on', 'morning', 'dark', 'forest' and 'hi-tech', for example. The non-trance psy genres tend to be 'psychedelicised' (Lindop, 2010) versions of other dance music styles such as breakbeats ('psybreaks'), dub reggae ('psydub'), ambient ('psybient') and techno ('psychedelic techno' or 'techtrance'). There are many participants who do not enjoy psytrance music itself, but are fans of these other psychedelicised musical styles, and will attend psytrance events for the alternative stages where they are played.

Psytrance and related PEDM genres follow the general compositional and performative practices of EDM as outlined by Butler (2006). This means that the primary musical text is a recorded 'track', which

¹⁵ 'Psytrance' should not be confused with 'trance', which is another genre of music altogether. Psytrance scene participants refer to this other style by other names, such as 'pure trance', 'Ibiza trance', 'trance proper', or 'cheesy trance', whilst referring to their own music simply as 'trance' – this may cause some confusion for the uninitiated reader. The two cultures are distinct, although they have a shared history: in the early 1990s, both were part of a single subculture which developed in two locations in parallel, Goa and Ibiza (Brewster & Broughton, 2007, pp.367-370). Many 'hippy travellers' of the late 1970s and early 1980s travelled between these two locations. However, by the mid-1990s 'Goa trance' had emerged as a separate musical style, defining itself as an underground culture in opposition to a musical mainstream which increasingly viewed EDM as a commercially viable genre. Meanwhile, the style of trance associated with Ibiza embraced the mainstream, and became one of the most successful popular music genres of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Trance does not have the same 'trippy' sound design elements as psytrance, focusing instead on melody and harmony, and often has sung vocals. It does not normally use the KBBB pattern.

is a collage of synthesized and sampled sounds arranged sequentially; tracks are assembled by a producer using a computer and various software and hardware. These are normally performed by a DJ, although performances may also take the form of a 'live set' in which a producer plays their own music using a mixture of playback and live instrumentation (Butler, 2014). Psy culture has made emphatic use of digital technology over analogue alternatives: in the 1980s and 1990s, Digital Audio Tape (DAT) was the preferred format, being easily transportable and resistant to environmental stress. Today, tracks are published in a digital format such as WAV or FLAC, or on CD, and these are also used as the performance medium. Vinyl has not been widely used in Goa trance or psytrance culture due to its size, weight, and tendency to warp on exposure to heat – however, many commercial releases were made on vinyl in the 1990s and early 2000s, and some performers did use this format for performance.

Even in today's digital environment, the album is the preferred release format for psytrance music rather than the single. A large single-author album is referred to as an LP; a smaller album is called an EP; a collection of tracks by different authors is called a VA ('Various Artists'). These terms refer to pre-digital modes of music distribution – their usefulness is a matter of debate within the scene. (With reference to the opening literature review, I suggest that these primarily constitute a form of 'project' for producers, giving structure to their compositional activities by providing a creative goal.) The 'mix', a collection of tracks woven together by a DJ, is another important large-scale musical form. Today a mix may easily be recorded or assembled in the studio, copied and shared, giving it textual qualities akin to an album or compilation. Albums, mixes and individual tracks are shared on the internet by way of music platforms such as SoundCloud, YouTube and BandCamp, and sold from retailers such as JunoDownload, BeatPort and Amazon.

Even for EDM, psytrance is highly synthetic. It can be written entirely using digital synthesizers, although acoustic sounds (notably percussion and spoken-word samples) are often used as well.

Today, virtual instruments are more commonly used than hardware. These VST¹⁶ instruments or ‘plugins’ sound suitably digital in comparison with analogue hardware. The musical language of psytrance is primarily timbral: there is an emphasis on ‘trippy’ sound design which uses extensive modulation of pitch and timbre, and effects such as delay and reverb, to produce vibrant and complex soundscapes. High filter resonance is a normative way of creating these trippy sounds, a technique with origins in the use of the Roland TB303 (the ‘acid’ sound) in acid house. The modality and harmony, by contrast, is very simple, often completely static throughout a track and varying only between tracks in a mix. Rhythmic interest is found in the relationship between the steady four-to-the-floor beat and the syncopated lead, percussion and FX sounds, as in house and techno (Butler, 2006).

One characteristic which distinguishes psytrance from closely related styles, such as techno and trance, is a particular patterning of the low-frequency elements: a kick on every crotchet beat, with three bass notes articulating semiquavers in between (Figure 0.2). I will refer to this as the ‘psytrance bass pattern’, or by an abbreviation commonly used by producers, ‘KBBB’ (‘kick bass bass bass’). This straight-sixteenths pattern emerged as psytrance began to replace Goa trance in the late 1990s (Aittoniemi, 2012). It is a source of contention in the psytrance scene, with many participants feeling that it has become a cliché. However, others enjoy its energetic quality, musical flexibility and effectiveness as a sonic signifier of their culture. Although some PEDM genres do not use the KBBB pattern, there is little indication that the culture as a whole is moving away from this basic musical unit.

¹⁶ VST stands for ‘Virtual Studio Technology’, a software interface designed by the German company Steinberg. Despite being a proprietary specification, VST has entered everyday language and is not always associated with Steinberg. It is most often used as a noun to refer to any software music plugin that uses this protocol, e.g. Lennardigital’s Sylenth1.



Figure 0.2 - The psytrance bass line or 'KBBB'.

Chapters 5 and 6 look more extensively at genre in PEDM, focusing on the subgenres of 'forest psytrance' and 'psydub'. Here, more details will be given on genre terms, synthetic timbres, and other musical characteristics which contribute to the genre spectrum in psyculture.

0.3.3 Psyculture and Music-making

PEDM and psyculture is particularly well-suited to a study of project-oriented musical careers as outlined in the introduction. It is an underground music culture characterised by grassroots modes of cultural production: participants are highly self-reliant and employ DIY methods for the composition, distribution and performance of music. These tend to be enacted on a relatively small scale and have a direct outcome for the parties involved, making them easy for the researcher to trace and describe. The numerous other ways that participants engage with psyculture besides music (such as creating decorations, drawing or painting, or making clothes) provide a wider backdrop of cultural activity which intersects with, compliments and supports musical careers. Participants often attempt to make money from these activities, although it is very difficult to make a living this way. Looking at New Age travellers and other 'expressive expatriates' in Ibiza and Goa, D'Andrea (2007) notes that 'they have accepted the instabilities and hardships that characterize alternative careers[...] insofar as they feel that they can actualize cherished values of autonomy, self-expression and experimentation' (p.8). I suggest that this holds true for psyculture participants living and working in Western countries today, who must contend with a higher cost of living and greater societal disapproval of those who do not follow conventional career pathways than their expatriate forebears.

Musically speaking, psyculture has developed in relative isolation other EDM cultures. As a result, the culture has a high degree of internal musical diversity, conceived by participants as a 'spectrum' of musical styles covering a wide range of tempi and moods (Lindop, 2010). Psyculture thus presents a good vantage point from which to assess Bourdieu's concepts of 'field' and 'capital', and 'habitus' which seek to explain such structures in terms of taste and the internalisation of cultural rules by individual agents. Aspects of Bourdieuan thought (typically by way of Sarah Thornton's 'subcultural capital') have already been applied to psyculture (e.g. by Lindop, 2010; Greener & Hollands, 2007, Ryan, 2010), resulting in statements which may be tested through an ethnographic study of the music-making process – these will be addressed throughout the thesis.

There is already a substantial body of academic and popular literature detailing the history and development of psyculture and PEDM (e.g. Saldanha, 2007; St. John, 2012). This means that a wealth of contextual information is available for a localised study. There is also a small amount of musicological literature on psytrance music itself (e.g. Aittoniemi, 2012), although more work needs to be done in this area. However, there is no ethnographic literature on PEDM as form of music-making, and there are no studies detailing the day-to-day lives of musicians from an ethnomusicological or 'arts worlds' perspective. Furthermore, the literature has depicted psyculture as an event culture focused on festivals and free parties (with the notable exception of Taylor, 2001). By contrast, I look at the careers of musicians in urban centres and the ways that psyculture has embraced licensed inner-city venues. Thus, alongside the wider literature on musical careers, I hope to make a contribution to the more specific literature on psyculture and psytrance events, which has neglected the role played by nightclubs and independent music venues.

0.3.4 Psyculture in Bristol

My study is set in Bristol, a medium-sized city in the South West of England. In the UK, Bristol is known for its rounded local dialect, the production of cider, graffiti and street art, a hot-air balloon festival, two large universities, and for music. Despite its relatively diminutive size, Bristol has established a reputation as a creative city and is home to a number of brands with international recognition, including the graffiti artist Banksy, Aardman Animations, and the BBC Natural History Unit.

Bristol is particularly known for electronic music. In the late-1980s and early 1990s a wave of local bands achieved international success, notably Massive Attack, Portishead and Tricky. These artists incorporated elements of dub reggae, post-punk and hip-hop; the resulting sound was known as ‘trip-hop’ and often featured sung vocals over brooding dub basslines and sampled breakbeats (Webb, 2004; Henning & Hyder, 2015). This ‘Bristol Sound’ gave the city a reputation for producing innovative electronic music, often featuring a melancholy atmosphere and an emphasis on bass. Later electronic acts from Bristol such as Roni Size & Reprazent and Kosheen were also understood to be part of the Bristol sound, although their music was not trip-hop *per se*.

By the turn of the millennium, the Bristol sound had begun to fade in popularity and the city had started to decline in musical prominence. London had continued to innovate in the late 1990s and early 2000s, producing electronic genres such as drum’n’bass, garage, dubstep and grime, and a younger generation of Bristol musicians turned to these musical styles for their creative endeavours.¹⁷ As such, at the start of my study, Bristol had not been a particular source of stylistically original electronic music for some time, but instead acted as a shared node between a number of translocal electronic musical cultures, each of which held it in high regard as a vibrant local scene. Its musical legacy largely remains in the form of some noted music venues (these will be examined in Chapter 2)

¹⁷ Notable Bristol producers incorporating London sounds include Joker, Pinch, TC and Peverelist.

and a general commitment, on the part of the city council and local population alike, to independent culture and local music-making (Aubrey et al., 2002).

Psytrance occupies a relatively marginal position within Bristol's musical ecosystem. The frequency of psytrance events, and the number of attendees, is smaller than that of other kinds of dance music such as drum 'n bass or garage. However, Bristol is home to a number of psytrance 'crews' (see Chapter 2) and one of the UK's biggest regular psytrance events, Tribe of Frog, which takes place every month from September to April. The following extract from Mushroom Magazine gives an overview of the UK psytrance scene outside of London:

Most of the major cities have at least one regular event but two cities with particularly vibrant psytrance scenes are Bristol and Liverpool. Both of these places have a strong counter culture movement that centers around art and music. Bristol is home to many prominent producers and street artists with its most notable psytrance event being Tribe of Frog. There is also a strong environmental movement here with several eco and permaculture projects in operation.

(Psionic Entity, 2015)

As noted in this extract, certain aspects of Bristol's local infrastructure are seen as compatible with the ideals of psyculture. There are vegetarian and vegan cafes, independent and volunteer-run music venues (such as the Arc Bar on Broad Street), allotments for growing food, a strong emphasis on independent retail, and various eco- and permaculture projects. Bristol's reputation within the psytrance scene stems partly from these local resources which facilitate the wider lifestyle associated with psyculture.

Outside of the psytrance scene, Bristol is known as a site of 'crusty' culture, of which psytrance fans are viewed as a subset. Since the early 1980s, the term crusty has served as a means of describing counterculturally-inclined youth engaged in punk, reggae and rave music scenes in Britain (Webb,

2004).¹⁸ These played a role in the development of psychculture: Saldanha (2007) identifies the UK crusty movement, ‘an unlikely convergence of punks, squatters, backpackers, goths, environmentalists and New Agers’, as contributing to the makeup of the psychedelic scene in 1980s Goa (p.39). Today, few people would specifically identify as crusties: the grouping is made externally according to a set of stereotypes including white ethnicity, dreadlocks, an affinity for reggae and rave music, vegetarianism, squatting, and left-wing political inclinations. These are not unique to psychculture – as such, although the two groupings are historically related, they must be understood as separate.

Another contributing factor in Bristol’s prominence within the psytrance scene is its relative affluent and educated population. The *Vice* article on psytrance mentioned previously describes psytrance fans as ‘those people with bongos and dreadlocks you occasionally see loitering around South Coast university towns’ (Martin, 2012). There are implications of a high socioeconomic status and a liberal worldview cultivated by state-supported educational institutions. Although Bristol is not situated on the south coast of England (the writer is thinking of Brighton, Southampton and Exeter), the city’s harbourside and the presence of two large universities might place it in a similar category. Bristol and psychculture alike are associated with the figure of the ‘trustafarian’, a wealthy young person who conforms to hippy or crusty stereotypes and spends most of the year travelling, financed either by a trust fund or parental income.¹⁹ Whether trustafarians actually exist in significant numbers is not clear. However, the perceived connection between the more affluent, highly-educated areas of the UK and today’s hippy- and counterculture-oriented music scenes is significant and will place much of the following discussion in context.

¹⁸ ‘Crusty: Noun, Informal. A young person who is homeless or travels constantly, has a shabby appearance, and rejects conventional values.’ (OED, Online edition)

¹⁹ ‘Trustafarian: Noun, informal. A wealthy young person who adopts an alternative lifestyle incorporating elements from non-Western cultures.’ (OED, Online Edition)

Bristol is thus a good location for a study of musical careers and psyculture. It has a strong musical history, but today is an otherwise 'typical' node in the UK's various musical cultures, albeit one with a heavy emphasis on independent and local cultural activity. There is a vibrant local psytrance scene in Bristol similar to that of other European cities such as Berlin or Amsterdam. Participants also have access, by way of proximity to London Heathrow and various other airports, the international festival scene as well. Here, they may enact a musical career to its fullest potential at both a local and translocal level.

0.4 Method

My study was conceived and executed in an ethnomusicological manner, with participant observation as my central research technique. This method was divided into three parts. The first was a series of interviews with local PEDM musicians focusing on their personal musical projects. In all, twenty musicians were approached and eleven were interviewed. These participants signed a consent form which was drafted in cooperation with the University of Bristol research ethics department (see Appendix). This small number of participants is in keeping with general ethnomusicological practice (Nettl, 2005, p.13) and the ethnographic studies of popular music listed in the opening literature review.²⁰ Interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to 3 hours and were guided by the specific interests and projects of the interviewee. This method, which might be referred to as a semi-structured or even 'unstructured' interview technique, helped to highlight the idiosyncratic aspects of each musical career and the specific set of resources used by each participant. Social media allowed me to keep in contact with my interviewees afterwards, to ask further questions, and to keep up with developments in the local scene. Two individuals in particular, Krosis and Globular, became close

²⁰ Butler (2006) lists ten informants; Schloss (2004) lists twelve; Cohen (1991) and Fornäs et al. (1995) worked with a similar number of young rock musicians.

friends and collaborators, and agreed to follow-up interviews. In anthropological terms these were my 'primary informants', and their activities will feature prominently in the thesis.

Secondly, I engaged with PEDM through composition and performance. My primary reason for doing this was to gain a technical understanding of how EDM is made and to attain some degree of 'bi-musicality' (Hood, 1960) or 'intermusability' (Baily, 2008). I started two musical projects of my own, Espertine and Geoglyph, in order to explore the contrasting genres of forest psytrance and psydub (see Chapters 5 and 6). Krosis and Globular became my musical mentors in this endeavour, helping me to produce music in these styles and eventually to perform in the local area. However, much of this work was solitary, involving long hours of teaching myself through online resources. (As noted in Chapter 7, there is not much in the way of a formal teaching tradition in EDM; this means that the traditional ethnomusicological method of 'learning from the masters' is not normally viable.) As such, this aspect of my research contributed primarily to my musical and technical understanding of PEDM rather than the social aspects of scene participation.

Through a stroke of luck, my music attracted the attention of a UK-based record label, Visionary Shamanics Records, and I was given the opportunity to publish some of my tracks online through their BandCamp page.²¹ This culminated in the publication of a four-track psydub EP, *Artifact*, in January 2016; I also published five tracks on various compilations with the same label, and one track on a UK-focused downtempo compilation which was put together by a DJ from London. This led to a number of performing opportunities: I played several times at Tribe of Frog between 2016 and 2018, and later, towards the end of my research, I became a resident DJ for a club night called Psychedelic Jelly (see 2.5.3). These experiences shaped my understanding of music production, distribution, and event organisation, and even provided a small amount of income which helped me to finish the thesis.

²¹ See Whitehead (2009) and Dubber (2011) for examples of studies which have used online publication as a research tool.

Thirdly, I kept a field diary between 2015 and 2018. This was primarily intended as a record of the various PEDM nights which I attended in Bristol, looking at various aspects of event organisation and performance practice. Later, as my own production and performance activities came to the fore, my field notes began to incorporate more details on my own musical experiences. This field diary was coded and cross-referenced with the transcribed interviews and notes from the existing literature according to the four main topics of the thesis – local event organisation and performance (Chapters 2 and 3), the internet and music distribution (Chapter 4), genre (Chapters 5 and 6) and teaching and learning (Chapter 7). The resulting data constituted the primary material from which the thesis was constructed.

Despite the use of composition and publication as a research tool, my method must be distinguished from ‘practice as research’ (Doğantan-Dack, 2015; Cook, 2015.) as there is no practical or musical component to the output of my study. Similarly, my study is not a ‘netnography’ (Kozinets, 2015); I have treated the internet as a resource used by musicians to realise particular projects or strategies rather than a privileged sphere of human sociality. In other words, this is a study of ‘musicians online’ rather than a study of an online musical community or a ‘virtual music scene’ (as offered by Lee & Peterson, 2004; Gosling, 2004).²² The significance of this distinction will become clearer in Chapters 4 and 5 which look at the ways musicians use and combine internet services to enact musical projects and strategies.

My study could be considered an example of ‘ethnomusicology at home’ (Nettl, 2005; Cooley & Barz, 2008). Such research does not normally conform to the insider/outsider distinction which has often

²² A key issue is the notion of the online world as a ‘virtual’ space and to what extent this is separate from the ‘real’ music-making world. Wood (2008) states that ‘even in the most “virtual” communities, Internet access is carried out by real people in a fixed place, during real time’ (p.17); Whiteley (2016) states that ‘questions surrounding the virtual and its relationship to the unvirtual (i.e., the real, the actual) remain an ongoing and tantalizing issue for debate’ (p.3).

characterised ethnomusicology as a discipline.²³ As a classical musician with no composing or performing experience in the PEDM tradition, I began my research with a relatively 'etic' perspective. However, my general profile in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and educational background, etc. was normative for a musician in this particular scene. (As a gay male my sexuality is somewhat unusual for a psytrance producer; however, in four years of fieldwork, no one ever commented on this, despite my frequently attending events with a same-sex partner.) My income, including my scholarship, teaching jobs, money from gigs, and parental support, was also similar to that of my participants. Thus, I was neither 'outsider' nor 'insider' at the start of my research; my time in 'the field' was not marked by a definite point of entry, nor exit. The boundaries between fieldwork and everyday life were thus 'blurred' (Stobart, 2008, p.14), as they are for many of today's ethnomusicologists, by lack of a clear distinction between self and other, between study and recreation.

In addition to the challenges of ethnomusicology at home, there are numerous attendant difficulties with conducting fieldwork in urban nightlife. These pertain to the sensitive nature of people's leisure-time identities and activities and the challenge for the researcher of balancing event attendance with academic commitments. Unfortunately, there is still little in the way of literature in on this topic.²⁴ Drawing on his own experiences in this area, Garcia (2013) emphasises trust and respect between participants and researcher as well as a respect for the 'vibe' of an event: 'There is a flow to every social gathering[...] and a music ethnographer should know how to follow that flow without interrupting it' (p.9). To this end, I deployed his technique of 'memory work' – that is, writing field

²³ Holt (2008) states that '[s]table distinctions of insider and outsider, Self and Other, emic and etic are no longer embedded in either musicological or ethnomusicological discourse' (p.63); Nettl (2005) notes that ethnomusicologists have been 'moving from being exclusively the students of musics with which they initially do not identify to stepping back and taking outsiders' roles in examining musical cultures that are in some sense their own' (p.186).

²⁴ Garcia (2013) notes that there is 'a near-total lack of explicitly pedagogical materials on EDMC-specific fieldwork, and even the descriptive or critical writing that takes such fieldwork as a central theme is scant and fragmented' (p.5).

notes after rather than during an event. In addition, respecting individual privacy, I have used my participants' artist identities throughout the thesis, rather than their real names; I have also avoided giving details which indicate where they live, as stipulated in my ethics agreement.

A key difficulty encountered in my research was recruiting female participants. Although there were several female DJs and producers of PEDM in Bristol, and various other women involved in the local scene, only one – DJ Snowdrop – agreed to give an interview. (Others expressed interest initially but then later withdrew; this was typical of the recruitment process as a whole, however, and did not reflect a particular reticence on the part of the women in question.) As such, the thesis cannot give an accurate assessment of the role of gender in EDM careers. However, the various projects and strategies enacted by Snowdrop highlight related issues and demonstrate where EDM's musical networks can be exclusive or inclusive of women (see Chapters 4, 5 and 7). The role of digital technology is given particular attention here.

Psyculture is closely associated with illegal drugs, notably psychedelics such as LSD, magic mushroom, and DMT. This presents an issue for the ethnomusicologist who, on the one hand, is obliged to present an accurate ethnographic account, and, on the other, must not incriminate their participants. To this end I have not included any details in this thesis about the use of illegal substances and have removed references to these topics from my interview transcripts, as stipulated in my ethics agreement with the University of Bristol and communicated to participants in the permission form (see Appendix). I do not feel that this detracts from the arguments presented here, which are primarily to do with music-making and musical careers. A number of writers have already looked at drugs in psyculture from a number of perspectives, from cultural significance (e.g. Vitos, 2011; St. John, 2012) to harm reduction (Ruane, 2015). These accounts may be consulted for further details on the matter.

0.5 Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the terminological and ontological challenge posed by today's musical systems, suggesting that a multiplicity of concepts is needed in order to understand them. (This contrasts with previous studies which have attempted to reduce the vocabulary used for musical systems to a single concept.) Three terms, 'subculture', 'scene' and 'tribe' are given closer attention with the suggestion that these might have mutually reinforcing meanings. This is followed by a discussion of Bourdieu's theory of 'field' in relation to Actor-Network theory and recent literature on musical networks. Field theory is found wanting in its ability to account for modern creative careers which take place in complex, overlapping cultural spaces and require the artist to engage with conflicting value systems. Actor-Network Theory is found to provide solutions to these issues, notably through the concept of a 'boundary object' which allows an actor (human, material or conceptual) to belong to more than one network.

Chapter 2 chapter looks at event promotion, an activity which has been crucially neglected in the literature on popular music-making. I look at the activities of three event crews, Tribe of Frog, Planet Shroom and Psychedelic Jelly, who put on regular events in Bristol. Each occupies a different position within the local PEDM scene and draws on a different, although occasionally overlapping, set of resources including local venues, performers and decorations. The continuity of these events depends on lasting relationships with local venues (boundary objects *par excellence*) – each relationship is, in its own way, reciprocal, requiring both parties to put in considerable effort to establish a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Chapter 3 looks at the performing careers which take place within the framework provided by PEDM event crews. Here, DJs and producers bring their musical skills, knowledge of the repertory and social connections in return for the performance opportunities offered by promoters. Certain kinds of semi-formal relationship such as residency (between a crew and a DJ) and affiliation (between a label and a DJ or producer) structure the flow of resources and the regulate interaction between individual and

collective. However, the live set, which is the ideal mode of performance for producers in psyculture, adds complications – producers must choose carefully which performing strategy to adopt.

Many of the most important resources which today's musicians draw on are internet-based. These virtual resources are numerous and perform a wide range of functions: the most important are large social networking and music distribution platforms, which are implicated in virtually every aspect of scene participation; however, other virtual resources with varying degrees of cultural specificity may also play an important role. In Chapter 4 I focus on some unique participation strategies with a strong virtual component, including a free music distribution service, an internet radio show, crowdfunding campaigns, an audio mastering service. Each involves the mobilization of numerous virtual resources, from internet platforms and file transfer services to software protocols and web development tools, and in turn enables a range of subsequent projects.

In Chapter 5, I looked at musical genre and the use of 'tags' on two internet services, Ektoplazm and SoundCloud, noting the combinatorial nature of genre in this environment. Here, generic terminology is accompanied by a wide range of descriptive terms and other information. Tagging systems do little to distinguish between these different types of musical description, instead allowing them to operate on equal terms, and to interact with other kinds of information such as artist identity and geographic location. This allows musical participants to use tags in creative and strategic ways.

Chapter 6 looks at genre in practice: the network of musical, semiotic and affective resources which surrounds particular genre concepts and the way that these are deployed by PEDM producers. This chapter looks at the genres 'forest psytrance' and 'psydub', and the related concepts of 'organic', 'technical', 'psychedelic' and 'dubby', in the music of Krosis and Globular respectively, demonstrating how these notions shape the way that these artists made music and help them to understand how their output fits within the stylistic spectrum of PEDM. Genre is also found to shape their engagement

with record labels and event crews, leading to relationships predicated on very particular combinations of conceptual resources.

Chapter 7 looks at learning and teaching in PEDM culture. Electronic dance musicians tend to be largely self-taught, although I suggest that this process is not always as informal as is commonly assumed. Rather, participants often draw on educational resources which help to structure the learning process. Today these largely take the form of video tutorials and written instructions which are distributed over the internet. In addition, some PEDM musicians arrange face-to-face lessons, with students willing to travel considerable distances to 'learn from the masters' in this way. In Chapter 7 I look at the way that psyculture participants in Bristol engage with the use and/or creation of these didactic resources, noting the ways that this interacts with and compliments other participation strategies.

0.6 Personae

The following are the individuals who agreed to be interviewed for my study. All of them lived in Bristol at some point during my research period, although this was not necessarily at the time of the interview itself. Excerpts from these interviews will be used throughout the thesis.

Krosis

Krosis is a producer and DJ who specialises in fast, dark forms of psytrance. He is in his mid-twenties and lives in a shared house in Easton, Bristol. He has released two albums under the name 'Krosis', *Profane Geometry* (2015) and *World Engine* (2015), both on the Bristol-based dark psytrance label Woo Dog Records. He also has a second alias, Final Form, which is used for very fast 'hi-tech' psytrance music (see Chapter 6). Final Form is associated with Brain Drill records, another Bristol-based label. Krosis balances his work as a musician with a full-time job, but still finds time to play at parties throughout the south of England and occasionally further afield. In 2015 he became a resident DJ at Tribe of Frog, Bristol's biggest regular psytrance event.

Krosis contacted me on the internet music platform SoundCloud in the summer of 2014, near the beginning of his production career. I subsequently recruited him as my first interviewee-participant. Over the next three years Krosis became a mentor, helping me to produce and perform forest psytrance, and to acquire my first gigs as a DJ.

Globular

Globular is a producer and performer of psydub music, a slower form of PEDM that borrows many of its musical characteristics from dub reggae. Although just turning thirty during my research, he is already a full-time professional musician who makes a living from production and performance. Like

Krosis, he lives in a large shared house in Easton with his girlfriend, brother and two other housemates, a whole room of which was dedicated to his studio. Globular releases his own music in physical and digital forms, distributing these and other merchandise from home. He does not release his music on a record label but instead via a collective called Shanti Planti which specialises in psydub music. Until the start of my research he had managed his own bookings; however, he signed to the agency Sofa Beats in 2014.

I contacted Globular in November 2014 and interviewed him shortly thereafter. Globular also became a mentor and collaborator over the following years, helping me to create and release my own psydub EP *Artifact* in 2016. I contributed flute parts to several of his tracks, including 'Tabula Rasa' from his 2016 album *Holobiont*; we also collaborated on two tracks, 'Life Sauce' in 2016 and 'The Observatory' in 2017.

Lurk

Lurk is a DJ and event promoter associated with the Bristol psytrance event Planet Shroom. His musical career began in Amsterdam in the 1990s, where he organised parties and played Goa trance music on vinyl. On moving to Bristol in the early 2000s, he became involved with Planet Shroom, booking artists and maintaining the event's internet presence. He has recently been working on a new internet music distribution platform, Infinite Sound, which was due to launch in 2017 but has been subject to delays. Lurk has a full-time job in insurance; however, in 2016 he found a job which allowed him to work from home, and subsequently moved away from Bristol with his family. He remains connected with the Bristol scene, however, frequently returning to organise and perform at Planet Shroom.

Colin and Steve OOOD

Colin and Steve are members of a four-piece live psytrance act, OOOD (standing for 'Out Of Our Depth'). OOOD began as a Goa trance act in the mid-1990s and continues to release music in a variety of psychedelic genres. All of the members have day jobs and other musical projects. Colin works as an audio mastering engineer, catering largely for independent psytrance producers but also for studios and record labels. OOOD's centre of operations is the 'StOOODio', the home studio where Colin does his mastering work. The members of OOOD also perform as solo DJs in different psychedelic genres including techno and Goa trance.

Nervasystem

Nervasystem is a producer and DJ of psytrance music. His first releases were made in the early-to-mid 1990s; however, between 2002 and 2013 he took a hiatus from the psytrance scene in order to focus on other musical projects. He owns and runs an all-analogue recording studio in Bristol, The Tape Rooms. During the 1990s, Nervasystem released music on some of the psytrance scene's most renowned labels, including Anjuna Records, Matsuri Productions and Phantasm Records. He also has his own record label, Voodoo Voltage, on which he has released some of his own albums.

Snowdrop

Snowdrop is a DJ specialising in psydub, psybass, and other kinds of 'downtempo' music. She performs regularly at club nights and festivals in England, including Tribe of Frog and Triplicity Festival. She hosts a monthly online radio show, New Moon Grooves, and is an active member of the internet forum psybient.org. She is currently studying for a PhD in sociology at the University of Warwick, looking at psyculture, visual arts and the divine feminine.

Tetrasound

Tetrasound is a psytrance DJ from Poland. He began performing techno music from vinyl in the early 2000s but discovered psyculture upon moving to Bristol in the mid-2000s. Subsequently, he has become a psytrance DJ, performing at events such as Tribe of Frog and later at festivals around the world. Tetrasound also runs a bathroom design and installation business which helps to fund his music-making activities. In 2016, he decided to leave Bristol and go travelling, returning only briefly in 2017 and 2018.

Fractal Forest

Fractal Forest is a young DJ who lives and works in Bristol. He is a founding member of the Bristol-based psychill and psydub event crew Psychedelic Jelly, who began putting on events in 2017. Forest also began to produce psydub around this time and released his first track in February 2018. He also has plans to make Psychedelic Jelly into a record label, beginning with a compilation featuring the crew's resident DJs and other local artists.

1 Chapter 1 Musical Systems and Musical Careers

1.1 Subculture, Scene, and the Ontology of Musical Systems

One of the primary challenges in studying today's musical careers is conceptualising the cultural spheres within which they take place. Ethnomusicologists have historically understood this as a geographical issue: that is, groups in distinct geographical areas have been understood as having relatively self-contained cultural and musical systems. However, in today's complex post-industrial societies, musical cultures overlap in elaborate ways. Musicians must negotiate a complex landscape of musical styles and social groupings if they are to successfully enact a musical career: a study of musical projects and strategies must therefore begin with an analysis of the ontological properties of today's musical communities, and the ways in which these relate to the production and consumption of culture, as understood both by academics and by participants themselves.

Scholars attempting to understand this situation have developed various terms for musical/cultural groupings in urban societies. These include 'subculture' (Hebdige, 1979; Hodkinson, 2002; Huq, 2006), 'art world' (Becker, 1982), 'music world' (Finnegan, 2007), 'proto-community' (Willis, 1990), 'scene' (Straw, 1991), 'interculture' (Slobin, 1993), 'neo-tribe' (Bennett, 1999), 'little culture' (McCracken, 1997; Taylor, 2001), and 'genre culture' (Williams, 2013). Each term presents a different narrative about how musical systems are formed and what holds them together. Central issues include the relationship between style and identity, between production and consumption, and between the material and non-material components of the system. Over the last twenty-five years, most writers have chosen and defended the use of a single concept (e.g. 'neo-tribe' in Bennett, 1999; 'subculture' in Hodkinson, 2002). However, following an analysis of several key terms, in this section I argue that a terminological multiplicity should be embraced. Furthermore, I suggest that these concepts should be understood not only as descriptive but also as formative of musical systems. These *ontological resources* are used in combination to create complex formations which don't neatly align with

normative historical models of human sociality (such as the community or nation state) and must allow for ambiguity, unclear boundaries, and change.

The oldest of the concepts listed above is 'subculture', an idea originally developed by American sociologists in the 1950s to describe delinquent and criminal behaviour amongst urban youth. This term was adopted by scholars in the UK who applied it to the cultural groupings which were emerging amongst British youth in the 1960s and '70s: mods, bikers, hippies, and punks (Hall, 1976; Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1979). These writers focused on consumption rather than production: they proposed that subcultural 'meaning' arose from an act of 'bricolage' (after Lévi Strauss, 1962) in which mass-produced items (including mass-produced popular musics such as rock 'n' roll) were imbued with significance through their use in particular contexts.²⁵ However, little attempt was made to theorise any aspect of cultural production, such as how the music was made, by whom, or the significance that music-making itself might hold for participants. Nonetheless, subcultural studies helped scholars to conceive of Western musical culture as a plurality²⁶ and highlighted various processes of differentiation by which its components maintain their separate identities – notably the opposition to 'mainstream' culture which characterised 20th-century youth subcultures.

Later writers sought to redress the balance by looking at the production of culture rather than consumption. Several of the writers featured in the opening literature review (e.g. Finnegan, 2007; Cohen, 1991; Madrid, 2008) built their work on Howard Becker's (1982) idea of an 'art world', which Becker describes as 'network of people whose cooperative activity, organised via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is

²⁵ Simon Frith (1996) suggests that this scholarly focus on consumption was a reaction to this 'pessimism' of Adorno and the Frankfurt school: 'The task[...] was to find forms of mass consumption that were not "passive" and types of mass consumers who were not stupefied, to provide a sociology of watching and reading and listening. If it is through consumption that contemporary culture is lived, then it is in the process of consumption that contemporary cultural value must be located' (p.13).

²⁶ Hebdige (1979) states that 'We have had to expand our definition of culture to cover all those expressive forms which give meaningful shape to group experience' (p.136).

noted for' (p.x). Becker draws attention to the production of culture rather than the cultural text or any aspect of consumption or reception, which were the respective focus of historical musicology and the sociology of popular music for much of the twentieth century. Challenging the prevalent notion of the individual artistic genius, Becker stresses the importance of the wider network responsible for the creation and distribution of works of art, including individuals whose output is not normally viewed as creative (such as instrument builders, curators and critics). Rather than viewing these as auxiliary roles, he states that 'every function in an art world can be taken seriously as art, and everything that even the most accepted artist does can become support work for someone else' (p.91). This idea has helped scholars to study creative careers which do not consist entirely of production or performance activities, and to more fully understand the complex chains of interactions which give rise to cultural networks.

From the 1990s onwards, popular music scholars have made various efforts to replace subculture and art world with other, more up-to-date concepts. The most notable is 'scene', which appears in several of the studies listed in the literature review (e.g. Berger, 1999; Baulch, 2007). Taken from everyday use by musicians and audiences, this term was adopted in the academic literature by Barry Shank and Will Straw (1991)²⁷ as an alternative to 'community', which 'presumes a population group whose composition is relatively stable[...] and whose involvement in music takes the form of an ongoing exploration of one or more musical idioms said to be rooted within a geographically specific historical heritage' (Straw, 1991, p.373). (This is the kind of geography-based musical community envisaged by 20th-century ethnomusicologists.) A scene, by contrast, is defined as 'a cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization' (ibid.).

²⁷ Straw credits the idea to an IASPM paper delivered by Barry Shank in 1988. Since this did not appear in print, Straw is often cited as the originator of 'scene' in academic writing.

Straw's use of the term 'space' is open to two contrasting interpretations. The first is geographic: 'scene' might describe a location in which several overlapping musical systems are present, such as Finnegan's (2007) Milton Keynes (Cohen, 1999; see also: Kruse, 2010; Stahl, 2004). However, scene also has a second meaning which is closer in meaning to 'art world' or 'subculture', referring to 'groups of people and organizations, situations and events involved with the production and consumption of particular music genres and styles' (Cohen, 1999, p.239). Kruse (1993) calls these formations 'trans-local' music scenes, highlighting the fact that they cross the borders traditionally associated with the city or nation state. (Some writers have also theorised 'virtual' music scenes predicated on digitally-mediated communication – see Lee & Peterson, 2004; Gosling, 2004. However, this idea makes less sense now that the internet has been integrated into every aspect of musical life. Indeed, today it would be hard to find a scene which isn't at least partly virtual.)

Some writers find this ambiguity advantageous: Straw suggests that scene 'can serve as a kind of floating signifier within other frameworks of analysis[...] in order to balance the tendency of these frameworks to produce overly-rigid models of cultural practice' (Janotti Jr., 2012, p. 4-5). Similarly, Stahl (2004) suggests that '[s]cene's elasticity enables a more nuanced analysis of the webs of connectivity that define musical practice in a manner that the more rigid category 'subculture' generally resists' (p.52). However, others have been more critical. Hesmondhalgh (2005) states that the 'fashionable' (p.29) idea of scene 'has been used for too long in too many different and imprecise ways' (p.30) to be useful for scholars. None of these writers are particularly interested in scene's origins as a plain-language term used by musicians; neither are they interested in the implications of this ambiguity for participants themselves or the kinds of ontological problems they might be trying to address. The fact that 'scene' can refer to a city, a country, the world, a webpage, or a group of people is understood as a scholarly issue rather than a result of real-world usage and adaptation.

Several other terms have emerged alongside 'scene', each suggesting a different generative principle for today's musical/social groupings. The most significant among these is Bennett's (1999) notion of

'neo-tribe'. Building on Maffesoli's (1996) writing on '*tribus*', Bennett states that 'those groupings which have traditionally been theorised as coherent subcultures are better understood as a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships' (1999, p.600). Looking at EDM culture in Newcastle, England, he observes that 'In consuming popular music the individual is free to choose not only between various musical styles and attendant visual images, but also how such choices are lived out and what they are made to stand for' (p.614). Although 'neo-tribe' has largely fallen out of use, this emphasis on fluidity and constructed rather than given identity has come to characterise the literature on musical participation, especially with regards to EDM cultures (e.g. Malbon, 1999; St. John, 2012).

Some writers have continued to develop the concept of subculture, notably Thornton (1995), Hodkinson (2002) and Huq (2006). Among these, Hodkinson (2002) has looked most closely at creative careers in relation to cultural formations. Hodkinson notes that previous subcultural theorists, such as McRobbie (1989) and Thornton (1995), have underestimated the importance of small-scale media and products in the construction of subcultures. In his study of UK Goth culture, he looks at the ways in which participants provide 'exclusive services for their fellow enthusiasts' (p.32) such as making clothes, putting on events, or writing and publishing music. This leads him to make a distinction between '*subcultural* forms of media and commerce – which operate mostly within the networks of a particular grouping – and external or *non-subcultural* products and services, produced by a larger-scale commercial interests for a broader consumer base' (p.33). Hodkinson thus incorporates cultural production and various forms of media into his account whilst maintaining the oppositional and selective practices which are associated with subcultural theory. It is not clear that production networks and media fall so neatly into 'mainstream' and 'subcultural' categories – Hodkinson admits that there is 'a considerable grey area between the two' (p.33) – but the term 'subcultural production' is nonetheless useful as a means of pinpointing media and distribution activity which caters for a niche audience. (This may be contrasted with the concepts of 'narrowcasting' and 'long tail' distribution,

which assume that niche audiences are catered for by large media producers and distributors see Anderson, 2006.)

Other writers have exploring the relationship between music and the social have focused on cultural materials rather than social groupings. Hesmondhalgh (2005), for example, dismisses subculture, scene and neo-tribe altogether, proposing instead that scholars use 'genre' as their principle unit of analysis. Building on the work of Toynbee (2000) and Middleton's (1990) writing on 'articulation', he suggests that genre 'has the potential to refer to specifically musical forms of affiliation' (p.32) and to register 'some of the ambivalence and complexity needed to understand the relationship between music and the social' (p.35). Rather than looking for social groupings emerging from productive or consumption practices, this approach suggests that we should look at how music and other concepts, such as community, political values, and other extra-musical concepts are articulated by participants in the act of music-making. This allows for a higher degree of flexibility than notions such as subculture or tribe, notably by allowing for 'rearticulation' – the process by which musical styles acquire significance when placed in a new cultural context.²⁸

Focusing on genre in this way has several advantages with regards to the study of musical careers. Firstly, it allows for the fact that musicians apprehend a multiplicity of musical styles alongside the ones in which they operate. Musicians today develop tastes and competencies in relation to a variety of musics which inform their music-making activities in different ways. The musicians featured in this study, for example, appreciate a wide range of musical genres, from psytrance to techno and other forms of EDM, rock music, reggae, jazz and classical music, and explain their musical practices with

²⁸ 'The apparent coherence of most musical styles, and of the relationship they have with the societies in which they exist, is not 'natural' but contrived; it is the product of cultural work. Particularly in complex, internally differentiated societies, musical styles are assemblages of elements from a variety of sources, each with a variety of histories and connotations, and these assemblages can, in appropriate circumstances, be prised open and the elements rearticulated in different contexts.' (Middleton, 1990, p.16; Cited in Hesmondhalgh, 2005.)

reference to this wider cultural field. Psyculture itself, understood as a kind of scene or subculture, is thus an inadequate reference point from which to understand the musical careers of its participants.

Secondly, 'genre' allows for the multiple chains of production which co-exist in large, internally diverse musical cultures. For example, musicians in psyculture ally themselves with one or more specific subgenres of PEDM among a wide range, which is understood by participants as a 'spectrum'. Their tastes, competencies and creative projects are specific to these subgenres, and sometimes conflict with those of participants operating in related styles (see Chapters 5 and 6). Musical careers in psyculture are therefore more fully understood in terms of these genres than in terms of the subculture as a whole. However, the limitations of genre are revealed here: it must be accompanied by a theory explaining how and why large, internally diverse music cultures hold together rather than dissolving into their constituent chains of production and distribution. (Other examples besides PEDM include classical music and heavy metal.) Furthermore, viewing genre in terms of articulation raises questions about what drives musicians and other cultural producers to use particular combinations of materials in the realisation of particular projects. As demonstrated in this thesis, genre plays a key role in the interaction between producers, performers, record labels and event crews in psyculture, who use it not only to articulate social and musical concepts but also to facilitate shared participation strategies. Again, the wider social and material framework must be taken into consideration alongside genre itself.

The concepts given so far are thus individually insufficient: each highlights a particular aspect of musical culture whilst leaving others unexamined and unexplained. Understanding popular music cultures solely in terms of consumption ('subculture'), production ('art world'), space ('scene'), emotional interaction ('tribe'), or musical style ('genre') gives an incomplete picture, necessitating the use of further concepts to fill in the gaps. Whereas previous scholars have treated this terminological multiplicity as a problem to be solved, I suggest that it should be understood as a fundamental property of modern musical life. The complexity of today's cultural landscape is such that multiple

theoretical tools are needed to engage with it; these tools are used not only by scholars, but also by participants, to make sense of music's social worlds. Viewed in this light, concepts such as 'scene', 'subculture' and 'tribe' may be understood as *ontological resources* which participants draw on to create meaningful forms of group experience. (This approach may be understood as a kind of ethnomethodology, although understanding these concepts as 'resources' rather than 'methods' allows for their integration into wider framework encompassing the cultural, material and virtual elements of a musical system.)²⁹ These are not just a way of describing a musical culture: it is the everyday use of such concepts which brings musical/social formations into existence in the first place. This approach helps us to appreciate the value of polysemic terminology: Straw describes scene as a 'floating signifier' (Janotti Jr., 2012, p. 4-5); today's musical cultures may be understood as a 'floating signified', lacking a fixed form until held in place by a particular analysis.

Crucially, despite the efforts of scholars to exchange one term for another, these concepts are not interchangeable. Each of the today's widely-used terms – these are scene, subculture, and tribe – performs a separate function in its everyday use. For example, scene and subculture appear to have complementary meanings in modern-day EDM cultures: scene normally refers to the material parts of a musical system, including people, cities, venues and websites, whereas subculture tends to refer to the conceptual components the system, such as musical styles, fashions in clothing, and political views. Scene is synchronic, dealing with immediate relationships between contemporaneous elements; subculture is diachronic, implying continuity over time. ('The Bristol psytrance scene in 2018' makes sense but 'the Bristol psytrance subculture in 2018' does not.) The use of such terms often differs from their literal meaning. For example, the prefix 'sub-' in subculture implies a hierarchy

²⁹ Garfinkel (1984) defines ethnomethodology as 'the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life' (p.11).

of cultures; however, the everyday use of the term by musical participants is closer to Slobin's (1993) 'interculture', implying a 'crosscutting trend' (p.12) rather than an embedded subsection.

'Tribe' is also an important concept. Whilst it has been used in both academic writing (e.g. Bennett, 1999) and in everyday musical life, these developments have taken place separately, and there is little evidence that scholars and musical participants have influenced each other with regards to its meaning. I would suggest that, where 'tribe' has been employed by musical communities as a self-descriptor, it is used primarily as a denoting a stable grouping of people who return to the same geographic sites periodically. (This contrasts with Bennett's definition of 'neo-tribe' which emphasises fluidity.) A prominent example in the present thesis is the club night Tribe of Frog, which has a large contingent of associated individuals including crew members, resident DJs, and regular audience members who attend a monthly event. In psyculture, 'tribe' is used to describe and affirm the shared affinity and the personal and emotional bonds of participants who return to the same festival sites year after year (St. John, 2009; 2012). These formations are sometimes referred to as 'psytribes'.³⁰

Some of the other concepts explored in the opening literature review might also be thought of as ontological resources. 'Underground' is one example: like 'independent' and 'DIY', this is a concept used by musical participants to understand and to justify certain types of music-making behaviour and musical sociality.³¹ The literature on independent music cultures contains numerous instances where these ideas are used to rationalize and justify particular courses of action (e.g. Madrid, 2008; Kaitajärvi, 2016). In deploying these concepts, participants commit themselves to the use of certain resources, such as independent venues and music retailers, rather than more profitable alternatives. The

³⁰ St. John (2012) writes that 'Initially buoyed by post-Soviet and Cyber Age optimism, and transiting through post-9/11 paranoia, psytrance has evolved over two decades and has been translated in dozens of nations where *psytribes* have adopted the architectonic of psychedelic trance under a variety of local conditions. [...] '[E]vent crews, production houses, entire scenes adopt the "tribal" identifier as an expression of their desire to *be together*[.]' (p.7).

³¹ Montano (2011) writes that 'The terms "mainstream" and "underground" are used extensively within EDM as part of the way participants ideologically construct and make sense of the scenes and culture in which they are involved' (p.74).

appropriation of these concepts for commercial reasons (for example, when major record labels use the term 'independent' to describe certain kinds of mainstream rock music) poses a real ontological threat to cultures which use them as central organisational principles. Later in the thesis, social media services will be examined as a particular source of anxiety within today's underground music cultures – these resources cannot be easily categorised as either 'underground' or 'mainstream', and often serve to blur the boundaries between cultural groups (see Chapter 4).

'Genre' is also an ontological resource, albeit one which is used to organise cultural materials rather than social groupings or patterns of behaviour: it is one way among several of understanding the differences between types or kinds of music. Other conceptual resources in this category include 'style', 'language', 'system', and 'idiom', each of which explains musical difference according to different criteria (Moore, 2001; Fabbri, 1999). Again, scholars often try to defend the use of a particular concept; however, in everyday life they are used in combination to describe complex formations which are not reducible to a single framework. (Genre terms themselves, I will argue, are better conceived as 'taxonomic resources' which help with the organisation of cultural experience – this will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6.)

In this section it has been argued that the social concepts associated with contemporary musical cultures are not merely descriptive terms for use by scholars, but rather active ingredients in contemporary musical life. Their advanced semiotic properties, such as ambiguity and polysemy, allow them to address complex, overlapping cultural worlds. However, each concept on its own cannot perform the entire function of delineating a musical culture: rather, they must be used in combination, and their complementary meanings reflect this usage. A useful analogy is provided by Ann Swidler (1986), who describes culture 'as a "tool kit" of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problem' (p.273). Participants use a multiplicity of tools to comprehend, engage with, and shape modern musical cultures: instead of

searching for a one-size-fits-all concept, it is better to look at the specific ontological problems encountered by participants and means used to address them.

1.2 Fields and Networks; Projects and Strategies

Whereas the previous section looked at the ontological challenges posed by modern musical communities, this section looks at the various resources which make up a musical/cultural network and the ways in which these are brought together in participants' musical projects and strategies. Ontological questions are again raised; however, here they are examined by way of existing theories of cultural value and the dichotomy of 'inside' and 'outside' which has characterised previous writing on underground music and youth cultures. Addressing these issues, a network or assemblage approach is proposed which allows for complexity, ambiguity and change in cultural systems.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu is of particular importance to the study of cultural resources, notably his writing on 'cultural capital', 'habitus' and 'field' (Bourdieu, 1979, 1986, 1992). These ideas have been adapted to underground popular music-making by way of Sarah Thornton's (1995) 'subcultural capital', which has been further developed in relation to musical careers (e.g. Reitsamer, 2011; Threadgold, 2015). From a cultural production perspective, cultural capital explains how musicians access, mobilise and exchange various resources in the course of a musical career. For example, a professional DJ may exchange their musical knowledge and technical skill for performance opportunities and money (see Introduction, 0.2). Their tastes and proclivities take the form of a 'habitus', a 'durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations' (Bourdieu, 1992, p.57) which allows them to make musical and behavioural decisions at a pre-conscious level. This is the 'hipness' or 'coolness' which allows certain individuals to access certain social spaces and mobilise the resources held there.

Cultural capital is a key part of Bourdieu's theory of 'field', although field theory itself has received less attention in the study of music (Prior, 2008; Regev, 2015). Thompson (1991) offers a concise definition of field as 'a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or "capital"' (p.14; cited in Hesmondhalgh, 2006).³² Bourdieu developed field theory to explain power relations between a dominant social structure and emergent cultural forms, such as avant-garde movements, which struggle for recognition as art. This field is structured along various axes corresponding with different kinds of capital – economic, cultural and symbolic – which are recognised within certain social spheres and thus allow for the mobilization of various resources in turn. Following Thornton, some writers have interpreted underground music scenes as being similar to avant-garde movements, notably in valuing non-commercial creative endeavours and possessing internal rules which are opaque to outsiders. Reitsamer (2011) takes this approach when she describes the drum 'n' bass and techno scenes in Vienna as 'subfields of restricted cultural production' (p.29).³³

Field theory is thus potentially useful in helping us to understand musical careers which take place in a restricted, competitive space, with participants vying for various resources including money, audience attention and performance opportunities. In the case of underground music scenes, subcultural capital is the principle structuring the field, being the 'conscious and mutually agreed set of standards' (Hodkinson, 2002, p.81) by which participants recognise and evaluate creative

³² Building on Thompson's definition, Hesmondhalgh (2006) state that: 'By identifying key fields within a particular social space, Bourdieu is able to theorize interconnections between different areas of endeavour, and the degree to which they are autonomous of each other' (p.212).

³³ Jensen (2006) and Threadgold (2015) both find that the application of 'cultural capital' to subcultures (as in Thornton's 'subcultural capital') obscures the hierarchical relationship between the subculture and the dominant culture of which it is a part – in other words, that in emphasising the 'horizontal' relationships between competing notions of 'hip' and 'cool' that we lose sight of the 'vertical' relationships between sub- and super-cultures which actually bestow power and influence on participants. Threadgold (2015) argues that subcultural capital must be turned into cultural capital before it can become economic capital: 'The reason for this is that the forms of subcultural capital may have to be taken out of the subculture itself to be used to create a career and it is only forms of cultural capital that are advantageous attributions in more 'legitimate' fields' (p.56).

contributions. However, there are a number of issues with this approach which arise from the conflict between Bourdieu's 'habitus' and the complex reality of modern creative careers. Bernard Lahire (2010), writing about literature, highlights two of these issues. The first is amateur and semi-professional careers in which the artist spends considerable time 'out of the field'. Lahire observes that 'Unlike those people who experience their profession as a central and permanent part of their personality, writers who, for economic reasons, work a "day job" have a cultural and "personal" foot in literature and a material (and sometimes also "personal") foot outside of literatures (the second foot freeing the first from market constraints)' (p.445). This makes it difficult to conceptualise grassroots or underground cultural activities in terms of an opposition between economic and cultural capital. Even from a young age, musicians must come to terms with the financial realities of musicianship and formulate ways of supporting this activity: looking at teenage rock musicians in Sweden, Fornäs et al. (1995) identify 'a double strategy – vocational education and dreams of being musicians' (p.75).

The second is the range of activities which make up a creative career and the ways in which these may conflict. Lahire writes about the 'double life' led by writers in France 'whereby some writers may simultaneously produce personal works of literature and other works, for example, "mass-market" literature or even practical literature, to make money' (p.445). This cannot be easily accounted for by a theory of habitus, for in this case the writer is working within two conflicting value systems. The same can be said of audiences who appreciate many different kinds of culture: Peterson (1992) identifies the emergence of the cultural 'omnivore' whose wide taste encompasses popular and high art culture, for whom diversity and inclusivity are markers of elite cultural status. I suggest that today's musical audiences similarly appreciate underground and mainstream cultural products, evaluating each according to its associated aesthetic values and logic of authenticity.

Building on Lahire, I further suggest that field theory also fails to account for the wide set of resources necessary for cultural participation, especially those which belong to more than one field. There are

numerous objects, both material and abstract, which belong to more than one cultural system. These disrupt the boundaries necessary for a distinct and stable field to exist. Field theory also fails to account for internal diversity within a given field, and fields which admit conflicting forms of habitus.³⁴ Psyculture is one example, containing within itself discursive conflicts between science and spirituality, nature and technology, and a spectrum of musical styles with differing attributes and conflicting aesthetic criteria (see section 0.3.1; Lindop, 2010; Rietveld, 2010; St. John, 2012).³⁵ Here, we may expect to see a similarly wide variety of *doxa* and *illusio* motivating participation. However, Bourdieu's theory does not allow for such multiplicity.

More recently, musical systems have been conceived as networks, an approach which provides solutions to these issues with field theory (Prior, 2008; Bottero & Crossley, 2011; Butler, 2014). The most significant approach for the purposes of the present study is Actor-Network Theory or 'ANT' (Latour, 2005; Michaels, 2017). ANT stresses the heterogeneity of the elements which make up a social network, and of the connections between them.³⁶ Famously, this means that non-human 'actants' must also be taken into account and may even be understood as acting within the network (although this aspect of the theory is often overstated).³⁷ A key concept is the 'boundary object' – these are

³⁴ Swidler (1986) states that 'all real cultures contain diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories and guides to action' (p.277).

³⁵ Rietveld (2010) identifies 'discursive tensions in the psytrance scene' which are 'rooted in its genealogy, which embraces psychedelic New Age notions of "love, peace and unity", as well as punk's aggressive stance of resistance, combined with carefree dancefloor hedonism' (p.84).

³⁶ ANT may be contrasted with another approach to the sociology of networks, Social Network Analysis (SNA), which has been applied to the study of music (Bottero & Crossley, 2011; Crossley et al., 2015). SNA research uses mathematical modelling to analyse the various characteristics of a network, such as density and types of core-periphery structure. However, this process involves limiting the types of actor and the types of social connection under analysis; ANT scholars believe that such limitations create distorted perceptions of the network – it is necessary take into account heterogeneous relationships between actors and actants (Latour, 2005; Michael, 2017). For this reason, I find the SNA method to be incompatible with the aims of the present study. However, I will cite authors who have employed this technique in order to test their conclusions within the more theoretically robust framework provided by ANT.

³⁷ Latour (2005) states that 'ANT is no, I repeat is not, the establishment of some absurd "symmetry between humans and non-humans"' (p.76)

items which are integrated into different networks, often playing different roles in the meaning-making processes of each (Star & Griesemer, 1989).³⁸ Musical systems contain many such objects, including musicians, cities, music venues, internet services³⁹, and the ontological resources identified in the previous section. These do not belong exclusively to one community, but are shared between many, each making different use of the affordances that they have to offer. This presents issues with for notions of cultural exclusivity and autonomy by suggesting that certain elements are simultaneously internal and external to a social network. For the analysis of creative careers this is advantageous, however, as it allows for (including humans and non-humans) to be part of more than one network, more than one 'game'.

A second key concept in ANT is 'flatness': a lack of intrinsic hierarchy between the elements of the system. Michaels (2017) states that, according to ANT, 'the "social" is not organised into micro, meso and macro layers or spatially arranged into the local and the global' but rather "'flat", made up of a single layer of associations amongst human and non-human entities. However the layer itself can be "topologically" contorted in all sorts of ways' (p.4). Musical networks can be thought of as 'flat', but at times they are pulled into shapes which are hierarchical – for example, when musical participants use concepts such as 'underground' and 'subculture' to justify collective participation strategies, thus placing their activities and any actors enrolled in them in a particular relationship with the wider infrastructure of cultural production. Horizontal differentiation between musical cultures (as between, for example, different genres of underground dance music) also emerge as a result of

³⁸ 'Boundary objects are objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. [...] These objects may be abstract or concrete. They have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation. The creation and management of boundary objects is a key process in developing and maintaining coherence across intersecting social worlds.' (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p.393)

³⁹ Threadgold (2015) states that 'the circulation of subcultural capital after 'Web 2.0' maintains a binary between creating exclusive subcultural networks (distinction) and the ever-present possibility of 'going viral'' (p.56). The status of internet resources as boundary objects is discussed in Chapter 4.

operations occurring on this flat plane: these divisions are, as Middleton (1990) puts it, 'not natural, but contrived' (p.16).

The concepts of boundary objects and flatness serve to eliminate the coordinates which, in field theory, determine where different parts of a cultural field lie in relation to each other.⁴⁰ Instead, positions are determined by relationships between the various actors in the network. This means that the underlying 'map' on which the different positions are distributed is no longer needed; rather, the mapping process is conducted by actors themselves through the interlocking strategies by which they deploy resources and enrol each other in different projects. Michaels (2017) writes that 'For Bourdieu there seems to be a 'behind' that animates agents[...] For ANT, this 'behind' is anathema. Whatever forms it takes – norms, institutions, fields, or society as a whole – it is necessarily something to be enacted[...] (p.80).

The world of contemporary board games provides a metaphor. If a field is like a game of chess or draughts, with a board providing a set of positions which pieces may fill, then networks are like dominoes, or modern games such as *Carcassonne* or *Hive* (Figure 1.1), in which the board is constructed by the players as they make their moves. There is not a finite set of fixed positions to be fought for; rather, positions appear within the system as a result of the actions of the players, the value of which is determined by relationships with other pieces on the table. Some may be more influential than others, but this changes over time as the board shifts *around* the existing pieces. (These kinds of changes, for example when a new musical style becomes more fashionable than an older one, are not accounted for by field theory.) This analogy also helps us to understand the complex interactions between different cultural networks. It is as if there are multiple games happening at the same table, interconnected and overlapping, with positions and pieces being shared between them. Players may play multiple games simultaneously and the strategic decisions they make may have

⁴⁰ A diagram of the field and its coordinates is given in Bourdieu (1996, p.124) and reproduced in Hesmondhalgh (2006).

consequences within multiple networks. This addresses the earlier issues pointed out by Lahire (2010), who asks 'whether the same individuals can occupy different positions within the literary game, whether they can come from the sector of large-scale production and vice versa, or whether they can simultaneously produce works belonging to different sectors of the universe in question' (p.445).



Figure 1.1 - Carcassonne and Hive, two modern 'board' games without a board.

This networked approach necessitates a different way of understanding the 'rules' of a cultural system. In field theory, these rules appear as part of the habitus which guide the actions of the individual human agent, which is understood as an internalized and pre-conscious disposition arising from cultural, material and historical conditioning. The collective *habitus* of a social or cultural group allows them to recognise creative contributions which follow the cultural rules and to exclude those which do not. This theory has issues, however: as Lahire (2010) points out, it does not help us to understand creative careers in complex, multidimensional cultural spaces with multiple sets of overlapping and often conflicting rules. Nor, as pointed out by Toynbee (2000), can it easily account for musical creativity, which involves going beyond the comfort zone of the habitus to explore the wider 'space of possibles' (p.46) offered by the cultural environment.⁴¹

The difference between the approach suggested here and field theory is that the rules of a cultural system are understood not just in terms of the predispositions of its participants, but also in terms of the prevailing circumstances and relationships between the elements of a cultural system at a given point in time. To give an analogy: let us imagine that a techno DJ buys an underground album on vinyl in an independent record store. Later, she plays the new record at a techno event in an abandoned warehouse. Her choice of music, format, store, and event are considered 'cool' in the particular subculture of which she is a member. In field theory, her taste in music and her choice of format and record shop are determined by her habitus, and her activities are judged by other participants (DJs, fans, event promoters) according to the same interpretive scheme. By demonstrating her embodied knowledge in this way she gains subcultural capital, which gives her access to further resources and opportunities for participation (contacts, gigs, equipment, records, money, etc.).

⁴¹ Building on Bourdieu, Toynbee (2000) states that 'The music maker identifies (hears) creative possibles according to a) the perceptual schema of her/his habitus and b) its point of intersection with the creative field' (p.40). This leads him to describe creativity in terms of a 'circle' (ibid.) surrounding the cultural producer, which includes voices that are 'more or less hard to hear' (p.52) depending on their distance from the creative individual.

However, in the network approach suggested above, the wider set of decisions made by actors within the musical network are taken into account. Each strategy – opening an underground record store, releasing an album on vinyl rather than CD, using an illegal venue rather than a legal one – creates and forecloses opportunities for subsequent action. The DJ is both enabled and constrained by these decisions: it is the strategies previously enacted by other participants which determine what she can and cannot do in this cultural arena. Changes may occur in this system – the record store closes; the record producer releases their next album in a digital format; the event promoters decide to use a legal venue for their next party. In this case, the DJ must adapt her strategic approach to this new landscape, and others in turn must adapt to her new position and tailor their own strategies accordingly.

Thus far, cultural rules have been understood largely in terms of material resources (records, record stores, venues, etc.) and the norms determining how these are used. However, a similar approach may also be applied to the non-material aspects of the cultural system, notably those pertaining to musical sound. To this end, it is useful to understand the conceptual or abstract elements of a musical system not as ‘rules’ to be followed, but instead as resources which are deployed strategically in the creation of a text. Here we return to Swidler’s (1986) idea of a culture as a ‘toolbox’ and Middleton’s idea of musical style as an ‘assemblage’. Cultural texts themselves may be viewed as ‘networks or relational events’ (Korsyn, 1999, p.56) assembled from various components.⁴² This helps to explain diversity within cultural systems by allowing for a multiplicity of internal resources from which participants may choose as they create and consume. It also allows for hybridity and intertextual practices, such as sampling, in which elements are borrowed from other systems to create new cultural forms (Schloss, 2004; Williams, 2013). Chapter 6 demonstrates this approach as applied to

⁴² Butler (2014), challenging the ‘work concept’ inherited from the Western classical tradition, describes the musical texts in EDM cultures as a ‘distributed objects’ consisting of ‘networks or constellations of related entities’ (p.59). This allows him to discuss samples, tracks, DJ sets and live sets within the same theoretical framework, and to demonstrate how musical and technological resources are combined and recombined to form complex assemblages.

EDM production by looking at the work of two musicians, one who writes several kinds of psytrance music with differing aesthetic criteria ('technical' vs. 'organic' sounds, for example), the other operating in a hybrid genre that brings together elements of psytrance and dub reggae. These producers are seen to draw from a wide pool of cultural resources including musical techniques, genre concepts and terms, visual tropes, and so on, to form complex cultural texts. This kind of creativity cannot be easily interpreted in terms of 'intensification' or 'transgression' within a stable generic field, as suggested by Toynbee (2000).⁴³ Rather, it is better understood in terms of the combination and re-combination of various of the resources internal to psyculture, the borrowing of resources from other genre cultures, and the creation of new resources with particular combinatorial properties.

Focusing on 'resources' rather than 'rules' leaves open the question of how and why selective pressures emerge in cultural systems. In field theory these arise from the constraints of the collective habitus; however, in the network approach outlined here, these arise as a result of whether participants in a given network correspond in their aims, make competing or non-competing use of the same resources, and provide opportunities for each other through their actions. In terms of EDM culture, I suggest that many of the selective pressures present are a result of creative strategies which collate the output of multiple artists, necessitating the agreed use of certain musical and technical resources such as genre characteristics. Examples from this thesis include putting on a club night (Chapter 2) and assembling a compilation album (Chapter 6). These create opportunities for musicians to participate in a given musical culture; however, they also provide constraints on how this participation takes place, and which resources can be used in the process. Crucially, the criteria for inclusion are not fixed in advance by the culture as a whole (as Hodgkinson suggests when writing about subcultural capital) but rather may change from project to project. Collaborative activities are thus, I

⁴³ Toynbee (2000) defines 'intensification' as 'the selection and intense development of limited aspects of a generic matrix' (p.xiii); building on the writing of Franco Fabbri, he defines transgression as 'contradicting expectations about generic form' (p.135).

suggest, largely responsible for the circumference of ‘distributed creative possibles’ (Toynbee, 2000, p.40) surrounding individual cultural producers.⁴⁴

Although the resources used in musical participation have been thus far divided into ‘material’ and ‘conceptual’ categories, musical participation is never limited to either realm. Rather, the resulting assemblages have both material and conceptual components. For example, writing and releasing an album involves the mobilization of musical concepts, recording technology, instruments, musicians, artwork, words (track names, album title), distribution channels, and genre concepts to help the final product reach its audience. Similarly, the organization of a live music event by a promotional crew involves the mobilization of a music venue, performers, decorations, sound system, lighting, and the musical and cultural concepts which are used in the programming of the event. These assemblages have unique properties according to where, when and how they are assembled. (Looking at punk rock, Haenfler states that ‘how people *do* punk, the *strategies* by which they construct punk, depend upon their social surroundings’: 2015, p.292.)

A final issue with field theory is revealed in this thesis: musical projects and strategies are always *risky* – their outcome is never guaranteed. An event might run under-capacity; an album might not sell enough copies to cover its costs. These occurrences may have serious consequences for the participants involved and their ability to continue participating. This makes such interactions difficult to understand in terms of (sub)cultural capital: as an economic theory which posits that cultural and symbolic knowledge and property has a real-world exchange value (this aspect of Bourdieu’s theory is often overlooked by scholars of culture – see Fine, 2001; Threadgold, 2015)⁴⁵ cultural capital fails to

⁴⁴ Toynbee’s (2000) notion of ‘social authorship’ also aims to address the collective nature of musical creativity. However, it is based on a stable field rather than a shifting network of interlocking projects, and thus brings with it many of the previously-outlined issues with field theory, notably a difficulty in dealing with stylistic change.

⁴⁵ Threadgold (2015) states that subcultural capital ‘is still very useful for understanding and describing notions of authenticity, coolness and distinction within subcultural fields. But, to maintain the reproduction emphasis of Bourdieu’s work, these things need to be transferable or parlayed into supporting an economically sustainable career to be considered cultural capital’ (p.54).

account for the uncertainty which surrounds instances of cultural participation. This is never a direct exchange but always takes the form of an action with unknown consequences, performed in an arena which is constantly changing.

The risks and rewards of musical participation appear to hinge on the outcome of individual projects and strategies. However, participants also enact long-term strategies and commitments, enduring occasional misfortune for the realisation of longstanding goals. The normative roles associated with a given musical tradition (e.g. DJ, producer, event promoter, or label owner in EDM culture) might be considered examples of such strategies, although other, more idiosyncratic activities also fall into this category. These 'roles' are never truly continuous but rather consist of a chain of discrete actions (i.e. individual performances, releases, events) which build on previous iterations. This may be understood in terms of an accumulation of resources – for example, a DJ accumulates musical knowledge, performing experience, equipment, and records as they perform at successive events.

In order for discrete instances of musical participation to become long-term strategies, durable relationships must be forged between participants in a given music scene, often with an element of recursion built into them. Two normative examples of such relationships in EDM culture will be explored in Chapter 3, 'residence' and 'affiliation', which refer to the relationships between a DJ and a club night or record label respectively (3.2). These serve to structure the flow of resources, including music, performance opportunities, and money, between the individual and the group. This creates continuity within an otherwise fragmentary environment, offering structure in musical careers which may otherwise lack in shape or direction.

More widely, groups such as event crews and net labels are important focal points for musical participation. These may be understood as long-term strategies enacted by groups of participants, who pool their resources towards the realisation of a project or series of projects. (It is this pooling of resources which justifies the continued existence of record labels in the internet era.) Other,

innovative structures have also begun to emerge from the use of digital communication and internet platforms, such as the Shanti Planti collective detailed in Chapter 4. As demonstrated in the following chapters, a music scene emerges where these large-scale strategies interact and interlock, forming a relatively stable structure with properties similar to Bourdieu's 'field'. However, change is always close at hand: the properties of the field evolve over time as these groups emerge and disappear, and the optimal strategies for engagement change accordingly.

1.3 Conclusion

The various issues examined in this chapter have been united by a common theme of 'resources'. The first part of the chapter looked at the conceptual resources (such as 'scene', 'subculture', 'tribe' and 'underground') which are used by scholars and participants to describe musical/social formations. Rather than passive descriptions, I suggest that these are an important part of the conceptual 'toolbox' (Swidler, 1986) which participants use to enact musical careers. Given the different kinds of work that these concepts do, I suggest that scholars embrace a terminological multiplicity rather searching for a single, all-encompassing term. This helps us to better understand the complexity of today's musical cultures and the challenges faced by musicians in trying to understand the cultural arena within which they are operating.

The second part of the chapter looked at value, resources and strategies in musical systems, comparing accounts based on field theory (Thornton, 1995; Reitsamer, 2011) with recent network-based perspectives (Korsyn, 1999; Butler, 2014). Drawing on Actor-Network theory and the writing of Swidler and Middleton, I suggest that musical systems are composed of material and conceptual resources which are brought together by participants, through their strategic activities, into assemblages of varying size and stability. Any of these resources may act as a 'boundary object' (Star & Griesemer, 1989) which is shared between networks. Examples in this thesis include music venues

(Chapters 2 and 3), internet music platforms (Chapters 4 and 5), and musical devices (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). This approach helps to address some of the issues posed by field theory, notably the dichotomy of 'inside' and 'outside' (cool/uncool; commercial/avant-garde; subcultural/mainstream) which is difficult to reconcile with the complex, overlapping nature of today's musical cultures.

Unlike Bourdieu's fields, musical networks are in a constant state of change. However, stable structures do arise where participants gather their resources to enact large-scale strategies, such as the creation of a record label or event crew. I have suggested that it is in the interactions between individual and group projects that the rules of a musical system may be found: here, the compatibility of musical strategies is tested, the shared resources negotiated and exchanged. Thus I have suggested that collaborative projects are responsible for many of the selective pressures in today's music scenes. This means that today's musical careers cannot be easily accounted for by a theory of subcultural capital, which depends on a stable field 'behind' such interactions – this issue will be addressed throughout the following chapters.

2 Chapter 2 Promotion and Performance

This chapter looks at event promotion, an activity which has until recently been neglected in the study of local music-making (Webster, 2011; Frith et al., 2013). Here participants bring together various resources including local music-making infrastructure, performers, and various material resources to realise a specific vision for a musical event. The challenges are many and the financial risks are high. Many events are one-off occurrences, although some can become regular fixtures if the promoters are willing to continue with this activity and to forming lasting relationship with local venues. In turn, performing opportunities are created for musicians, a resource which is essential for the careers of DJs and producers – this will be examined more closely in the following chapter.

2.1 Bristol Music Venues and Cultural Heritage

In this opening section I look at Bristol's night-life and venues in order to contextualise the activities of the city's PEDM promoters and performers. Although Bristol's musical infrastructure is fairly well-documented (Aubrey et al., 2002, Webb, 2004; Webster, 2011), existing accounts have focused on the historical developments surrounding the 'Bristol sound' of the early 1990s, notably the Dug-Out nightclub which is viewed as a crucial element in Bristol's cultural heritage (Henning & Hyder, 2015). The key venues which underpinned the UDM scenes from 2000 onwards are largely absent from this literature, although these too have a long history of supporting and nurturing diverse music scenes in the city.

As noted in the introduction, Bristol experienced a rise and fall in musical significance during the 1990s and early 2000s. A number of electronic acts from the Bristol (e.g. Massive Attack, Portishead, Tricky, and Roni Size) gained worldwide fame in the early-to-mid 1990s, and the city became known as a centre for genres such as trip-hop (the 'Bristol sound'), drum 'n' bass, and dub reggae (see 0.3.4;

Webb, 2004; Henning & Hyder, 2015). However, in recent years Bristol has been largely eclipsed by London in terms of genre innovation and famous performers in electronic music. One possible reason for this is that the city's live music infrastructure is not particularly well-developed. Bristol lacks an arena for large-scale popular music performances, unlike nearby cities such as Cardiff, Bournemouth and Exeter; due to the large number of musical participants in the city, the demand for smaller performance spaces is high, and it is often difficult to find affordable venues to put on events. The number of live music venues is also dwindling due to residential developments in the city centre (Pollock, 2015; Edwards, 2018). Webb (2004) thus identifies a 'lack of infrastructure' for music-making in Bristol which he attributes, in part, to the City Council, which 'has yet to develop a coherent strategy to support or fund popular music in the city' (p.71). There may be historical reasons for this: Aubrey et al. (2002) state that, due to the relative strength of the Bristol economy in the post-war era, it was late in forming a 'cultural strategy' (ibid.) for the development of the entertainment sector in the face of an emergent youth culture. This contrasts with large northern cities such as Liverpool, which actively encouraged their cultural sectors as a means of countering post-industrial decline (Cohen, 2007).

Despite these issues, Bristol still acts as an important node in various translocal music scenes, including psyculture and other UDM cultures. These are catered for by the city's 'alternative' music venues which, according to Aubrey et al. (2002), are positioned in the 'fringe' areas of the city due to 'the lack of financial strength of the consumers or for reasons of self-preservation' (p.78). The authors contrast these venues with 'large corporate super clubs' and 'middle ground clubs' which occupy the city centre (p.77.). However, the boundary between what is considered 'centre' and 'fringe' may have shifted somewhat in the years since their study was conducted – many areas which were once considered 'rough' are now increasingly populated by students and young professionals. The alternative venues in which PEDM events took place during my research period were considered

relatively central, with the exception of one major venue which was situated in Easton (Figure 2.1). (In this map, the 'centre' of Bristol is the orange area between Basement 45 and Lakota.)

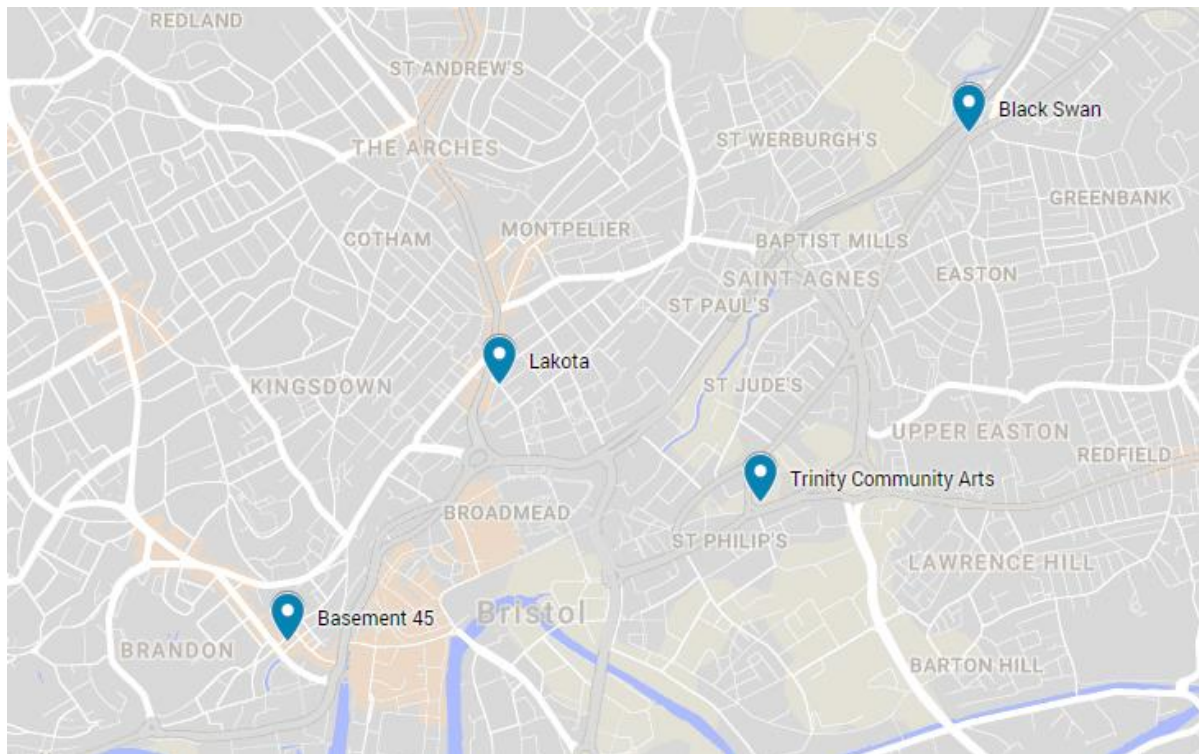


Figure 2.1 - A map of Bristol showing the locations of four independent venues. (Map data: Google, 2018.)

Bristol's African-Caribbean musical heritage has provided much of the framework for the city's underground music-making. Several prominent alternative venues are located in areas with strong African-Caribbean communities, such as Easton and St. Paul's (Figure 2.1). These venues have complex histories of usage and ownership, often changing hands between community and private enterprise: these changes speak of the relationships between these communities, the authorities, and other elements of the city, which have not always been harmonious.⁴⁶ Thus, interpreting 'alternative' venues

⁴⁶ Ken Pryce's ([1979] 1986) autoethnographic account of African-Caribbean culture in Bristol in the early 1970s provides an indication of the cultural tensions in areas such as Stokes Croft and Easton. He singles out St. Paul's (in which the venue Lakota is located today) as an 'Area of Disrepute' (p.25), regarded as a 'place of vice and shame' with a high potential for trouble' (p.26) by residents of Bristol. Contrary to the cosmopolitan

in Bristol as opposite to 'large corporate' or 'mainstream' venues is difficult: they are also implicated in processes of gentrification and exclusion, and the difficult question of which resources belong to which communities.

African Caribbean musical culture in Bristol has provided not only material infrastructure, but also many of the conceptual resources on which today's underground music scenes are founded. For example, in the 1970s and early 1980s, reggae music was played at illegal 'shebeens' or 'blues' (unlicensed house parties) which took place in St. Paul's and Easton. These events established a party format in which the host(s) provides a space for the party, audio equipment, and alcoholic drinks, the sale of which covers the costs of the event; this event format would later be borrowed by rave crews in the UK (Reynolds, 2013; Brewster & Broughton, 2007). Similarly, the event 'crews' which put on raves and, more recently, events in licensed nightclubs in the UK were modelled on the reggae 'sound system' (Veal, 2007; Henriques, 2010).⁴⁷ Thus, whilst St. John (2013) suggests that 'psytrance shares a largely unrecognised *psychedelic* aesthetic heritage with Afrodiasporic musics' (p.57, original emphasis), I suggest that there is a wider debt here extending beyond musical resources (semantic/affective devices) to include material resources (venues) and conceptual-organisational resources (event formats, social formations) which have underpinned rave and post-rave cultures in the UK.

Bristol's countercultural communities have also played a key role in the development of EDM culture in the city. These include the wide range of aesthetics, affiliations and practices often referred to as 'crusty' – hippies, goths, punks, squatters, new age travellers, and other travelling communities – which played a key role in the rave movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Webb, 2004;

image later projected by St Paul's festival, Pryce found the area deeply divided by social aspirations with many residents seeking to escape. 'The lack of community in St Paul's is often not apparent to strangers visiting the area for the first time, especially students and intellectuals with their tendency to romanticize the deviant and the exotic' (p.29).

⁴⁷ '[T]he Jamaican influence was what made British music distinct, and it was sound system traditions that led to Britain finally developing dance music styles it could call its own' (Brewster & Broughton, 2007, p.130).

Reynolds, 2013). This gives Bristol a particular connection with the Goa traveller movement which had a similar composition in terms of subcultural affiliation (Saldanha, 2007, p.39). Squatting sites were of greater centrality to the rave scene in these early days; as such, the earliest PEDM events in the city took place in these areas, rather than the city's music venues. Nervasystem describes the scene, noting that Bristol residents were among the Goa travellers of the early 1990s:

N: What happened was a lot of people came back from Goa in these kind of seminal years[...] and it was all kind of first starting to happen in the party scene in Goa – before any of the records came out – and then a whole bunch of people came back. And of course they all knew each other, and two guys came back to Bristol [...] [to] set up parties – and this is before Criminal Justice Bill came in, and there were various kind of like... Sort of underground venues, and people would just put on parties in houses and, like, there were a few kind of sort of squat sites. There was one up by Montpelier train station. You know, loads of hippies in vans and stuff. It wasn't quite as crusty as it is now, like, and it certainly was a lot more prolific than it is now[...] it was very open, because the legislation hadn't been brought in to sort of shut all that stuff down.' (Nervasystem, 2015)

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 gave the British police powers to shut down outdoor gatherings such as those described by Nervasystem. In order to survive, rave culture had to integrate with the live music infrastructure of British cities (Brewster and Broughton, 2007; Reynolds, 2013). In Bristol, as elsewhere, it was the 'alternative' venues catering for reggae, punk music and hip-hop which welcomed this influx of ravers. These venues were already attuned to the basic concepts underpinning EDM culture: the DJ, the event crew, the sound system; a relaxed security presence and a late closing time. This move 'indoors' engendered changes in how dance music events were organised – event crews no longer had the responsibility of finding and preparing the venue or hiring their own security, for example, instead having to contact and negotiate with venue owners. However, something of the essence of the rave movement survived through the use of these alternative music spaces, which have a long history of welcoming marginal musical practices.

2.2 Bristol Music Venues and Underground Dance Music

The histories, locations, and physical attributes of the alternative venues in Bristol help to illuminate their present-day usage, and their aesthetic and practical qualities as perceived by promoters, musicians and audiences. These attributes determine the value of the venues as a resource for music scene participants, and the strategic possibilities that they hold, in particular, for promoters. In this section, I will detail four venues which were responsible for hosting a sizeable portion of underground dance music events in Bristol during my study. These were Lakota in Stokes Croft, the Trinity Centre in Old Market, The Black Swan in Easton, and Basement 45 on Frogmore Street (Figure 2.1). All four venues are independent, meaning that they are owned and managed by local people rather than national or international companies. They are therefore free to put on events which do not make a large profit and to engage with promoters who are more interested developing a local music scene than making money. As a result, they host a wide variety of musical events for different musical communities. (Henning and Hyder note that in Bristol ‘it is unusual for particular venues to be dedicated solely to a particular musical or cultural contingent’: 2015, p.105.)

Of the four venues, Lakota is the largest, with four dancefloors, three bars and a capacity of nearly 1200. The venue opened in 1989 in the shell of an old brewery which is now protected by the Stokes Croft Conservation Area, being ‘a local landmark due to its scale and prominent position’ (Bristol Council, 2007). Lakota has been run by the same family since 1992, gaining nation-wide reputation as an underground dance venue in the 1990s. Although the building is technically in Stokes Croft, it sits on a side road projecting some way into St. Pauls and is therefore placed on the boundary between Bristol’s most famous African Caribbean neighbourhood and its growing student quarter. The venue’s owner, Martino Burgess, is from a Jamaican family with a history of venue ownership in Bristol. (Her parents owned the Tropic Club in Montpelier, an important but mostly forgotten venue in Bristol’s musical history.) She is also a lawyer and sits on ‘the board of the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, Bristol Music Trust (which manages Colston Hall), Bristol Jazz Festival Limited and Bristol

Food Network CIC' (Gregg Latchams, n.d.). A recognized local figure, she occasionally appears in local and national newspapers. Thus Lakota occupies a curious position between the city's underground musical culture and its supercultural elements.

The Trinity Centre, a music venue on Old Market street near the city centre, presents another intersection between Bristol's African-Caribbean community and today's dance music scenes. Built between 1829 and 1832, the Holy Trinity Church served as a community church until 1976 (Burton and Berry, 2011). Following closure, the grounds were deconsecrated in 1977 and the premises were passed on to the Bristol Caribbean Community Enterprise for use as a community centre. The centre opened during St Paul's festival in 1978, a demonstration 'of solidarity with Bristol's minority ethnic groups' (p.13). Reggae 'bashments' and sound system clashes were held there in the early 1980s – for black youth in Bristol, who were often denied entry to pubs and clubs, Trinity was 'one of the few venues they could call home' (p.17). Punk music also found a home at Trinity whereas other venues refused to let such bands play. This approach has not always been financially beneficial to leaseholders – the centre was closed from 1985 until 1991 due to debt; one employee later noted that 'no one was sure which community it should serve' (p.38) due to its geographic position between Easton and Old Market.

The Trinity has hosted EDM events since the early 1990s, when famous acts such as Orbital and the Prodigy were given a place on the roster alongside rock bands. After 1994, it was among the first venues to accommodate rave culture in Bristol. This helped the venue to stay open: Burton and Berry note that 'the rise of the dance music scene meant that Trinity was claimed by at least one community' (p.38); the venue's cultural history and fringe status meant that it 'appealed to the artistic consciousness that was integral to the techno and trance scene – as well as to the promoters' pocket' (p.40). Today, the Trinity is managed by a trust and focuses on community events. Having been thoroughly refurbished in the early 2010s, it is no longer a cheap venue to hire. However, underground events are still held there, and local people can access the venue easily if they can afford it.

The Black Swan in Easton is one of Bristol's more 'edgy' venues, but is popular with young Bristol residents who are undeterred by its rough reputation. The premises consist of a pub on the street front and a separate two-room club with a large outdoor area. Although celebrated within Bristol as an underground dance music venue, the Black Swan does not enjoy the same national coverage as Lakota or Trinity. The venue lends itself to harder, more 'urban' forms of electronic dance music – with the M32 motorway running along one edge of the courtyard, it is far from the pastoral idyll of the modern psytrance festival. Nonetheless, promoters consider the availability of a large outdoor area with a fire a luxury. There is a good degree of separation between the two stages, an architectural feature which is particularly appreciated by promoters and performers, as the music on the second stage can often be drowned out if there is a large sound system in the main room. (This is especially true in psyculture, as the second stage will often present 'downtempo' or 'psychill' music – see 6.2.)

Basement 45 is a more intimate venue in which smaller underground events can be held. It is located on Frogmore Street (Figure 2.1) and is therefore the most 'central' venue of the four in terms of proximity to Bristol's harbourside area. It is within the region which Aubrey et al. (2002) would ascribe to students and young professionals. (The site of the venue once belonged to The Mandrake, an historic venue which was once popular with NHS staff working at the nearby Bristol Royal Infirmary.) With a capacity of only 280, Basement 45 is especially popular with young or relatively inexperienced promoters due to its small size: it is a relatively easy space to fill. The two rooms also make it suitable for events with multiple stages, although the outdoor area is very limited and the arched ceiling in the second room can cause issues with sound. The venue also offers DJ lessons and individuals or groups can hire the premises to practice on the sound system during the day. In this way, Basement 45 caters for younger music scene participants, giving them a space to perfect their craft.

Even within this small sample of 'alternative' venues in Bristol, there is breadth in terms of cultural history, location (in terms of both physical and community geography), and commercial models, all of which determine how the venues are used and by whom. Within the vocabulary of Actor-Network

terminology, they might be referred to as ‘boundary objects’ (see 1.2; Star and Griesemer, 1989, p.393) – that is, resources which are implicated in several networks, the material and cultural properties of which are interpreted by participants according to the specific projects which they are trying to realise.

2.3 Event Promotion as an Activity

Until recently, live music promotion has not attracted much attention from scholars. Emma Webster (2011) has been the first writer to properly address this issue; she finds that promoters ‘have hitherto been academically neglected (and often publicly maligned) individuals and organisations’ (p.9), more often associated with commercial interests than with a genuine interest in local musical culture. By contrast, she describes promoters as ‘cultural investors (and exploiters), importers and innovators who both shape and are shaped by the live music ecology within which they operate’ (p.10).⁴⁸ Drawing on her work on live music with Matt Brennan (Brennan & Webster, 2011), she posits a typology of live music promotion which helps to illuminate the specific provision of resources for music events. This has three categories: the state promoter (who ‘promotes via subsidy’), the enthusiast (who ‘promotes because they want to’) and the commercial promoter (who is ‘profit-motivated’) (Webster, 2011, p.38). Three further models are proposed by Webster, creating a second axis on which individual instances of promotional activity might be placed. These are the ‘independent model’ in which the promoter simply ‘acts as a facilitator’, hiring both artist and venue; the ‘artist-affiliated model’ in which ‘the promoter is linked to the artist in some way’; and the ‘venue model’ in which ‘the venue acts as promoter or is provided as an empty shell for external promoters’ (Brennan and Webster, 2011;

⁴⁸ Webster defines DJ performance as ‘live music’, stating that ‘the “live” aspect of live music is not simply about whether the music is being produced in real-time on “real” instruments (although this does impact on the experience for the participants). Rather the “live” element of live music is focused participation within a social music event.’ (2011, p.11).

cited in Webster, 2011). I would suggest substituting 'grassroots' for 'enthusiast' here as the latter has implications of amateur musical participation, and there are promoters in this category who make a living from such activities. However, this typology is otherwise in agreement with my observations in Bristol.

The vast majority of promotional activity in UDM cultures falls within the independent/enthusiast category. This means that venues do not normally organise UDM events, nor do performers book venues themselves or retain personal promoters. UDM promoters are 'subcultural producers' (Hodkinson, 2002): that is, they are internal to the dance culture in question, and their primary concern is building the scene by putting on events. They rarely make money from this activity at the local level, although situation may be different for larger events and festivals. Payment for the UDM promoter is not normally factored into the cost of an event: any money that they receive is taken from the surplus after artists, venue and décor have been paid for. Perhaps for this reason, notions of 'amateur' and 'professional' do not accrue to promotion in the same way as other forms of scene participation, such as music performance or production.

Whereas Webster describes promotion as a 'role', I would suggest that independent promotion in UDM scenes should be instead understood primarily as a strategy or project-based activity (see 1.2). There are several reasons for making this distinction. Firstly, many underground music events are one-off occurrences, put together by participants who may only undertake this activity once or a handful of times in during their musical career. Promotion therefore does not necessarily involve continual commitment over long periods of time. Secondly, promotion is often one among several means by which a person engages with a music scene. As such, it does not necessarily define that participant's identity relative to the scene, but may be one of a number of activities which make up a musical career. It may form part of a wider strategy, such as performing, such as a performing career, or it may interlock with the strategies of other participants to produce mutually beneficial arrangements, such as the relationship between a crew and its resident DJs (see 3.2).

Crucially, promotion is 'inherently risky and variable' (Webster, 2011, p.10). More so than other musical participation strategies, it can involve the loss of considerable amounts of money. At the same time, promoters are expected to provide a living for professional musicians and other scene participants, especially now that income from live performance is more substantial than income from sales of recordings or merchandise for most musicians (Holt, 2010). Without promoters many other strategies would not be possible: as a formative aspect of musical networks, this activity is crucial.

2.4 Event Promotion and UDM Cultures

As noted in the previous section, event promotion in UDM cultures has distinctive properties which differentiate it from other kinds of music promotion activity. These include the formats of the events, the social qualities of the promotional group or 'crew', and the kinds of venues which are used. Certain kinds of risks and rewards characterise UDM promotion as a result, which may differ from those identified by Webster (2011) and other research into live music.

In order to discuss event promotion in this context some basic definitions for different types of EDM events are needed. The following is a list of some common terms:

1. Festival – Multi-day ticketed event held outdoors.
2. Rave – One-night ticketed event held outdoors, often illegally.
3. Free party – One-night unticketed event held outdoors, often illegally.
4. Club night – One-night ticketed event held in a nightclub.
5. Label night – Club night organised by a record label.

Different EDM cultures place emphasis on different event formats. Psyculture, for example, favours the festival, which has become the cultural ideal. This allows for a wide range of music and other activities essential to the wider 'transformational' aspect of the psytrance party (St. John, 2009; 2010).

However, other types of event are also important, including club nights and free parties. Club nights in particular have been neglected in the literature on psycculture, perhaps because they lack the illegal thrill and historical authenticity of rave and free party culture and the grand spectacle of modern-day festival culture. However, club nights retain certain aspects of the 'original' Goa trance experience which have been lost in the transition to a festival-based music scene. For example, they normally feature a single night (and often a single stage) of music, which engenders a different atmosphere to larger events (Ledesma, 2011).

UDM events of every kind are organised by a 'crew', a group of scene participants who work together to put on an event. Each crew has a name, which is normally shared with the event in question. Examples in this chapter include Tribe of Frog, Planet Shroom and Psychedelic Jelly. A crew does not belong to a venue but operates independently and may take their event from venue to venue. Across the UK, these crews participate in local music-making ecosystems in which resources are created, shared, and competed for. They also interact with the festival crews who put on larger events in the summer, with crew members, performers and various technological resources being shared between the two. (It is quite common for a local UDM crew to help organise a stage for a festival, for example.) Thus UDM crews and audiences are positioned between two scenes – a local, multi-genre music scene and a translocal festival scene – which draw on a shared pool of resources.

In psycculture there are also separate decoration crews, who are responsible for transforming a venue into a colourful psychedelic environment. These tend to be professional or semi-professional and move from location to location as their services are required – they are often less 'local' than event crews in this sense. Different décor crews will have different specialities: for example, 'stretches', large sheets of synthetic fabric which are pulled into exotic shapes using metal wire, or 'string art', elaborate patterns of UV string woven around nails on a wooden frame. These decorations are expensive to create and maintain. As such, decoration services are not free, and must be taken into account as part of the cost of the night. Good decoration is important for a PEDM event, and the name of the

decoration crew will often feature prominently on promotional material. It is not unusual for a decoration crew to be brought in from another country for a UK event.

The event crews in dance music culture have several forerunners in the history of electronic music. The most significant are the hip-hop crews which emerged in New York City in the 1970s, whose activities were the 'trinity' of breakdancing, graffiti and rap (Schloss, 2004; Brewster & Broughton, 2007). These, in turn, were a descendant of the reggae 'sound systems' which characterised Jamaican musical culture from the 1950s onwards (Veal, 2007; Henriques, 2010). Thus, the organisational forms which underpin ostensibly 'white' UDM event cultures such as psyculture have origins in black music cultures of the mid-20th century. These social formations may be understood as networks in the manner outlined in 1.2: they are assemblages of people, technology, musical materials, practices and concepts held together by embedded ontologies of musical sociality and musical experience. Their actual workings can be quite opaque to outsiders, who may not have the conceptual framework needed to understand their social/material nature and musical aims. For example, the term 'sound system' may be confusing for those unfamiliar with Jamaican musical culture: it denotes a particular arrangement of people as much as a particular arrangement of musical technology.

A crucial difference between these older event promotion networks and today's dance music crews is that the latter do not necessarily need to own a large amount of sound equipment. Most nightclubs have a sound system permanently installed, and so only crews putting on illegal outdoor events (i.e. free parties) need their own speakers, amplifier, generator, etc. Where needed, these and other technological resources may be sourced from the wider network surrounding the promoters. With regards to club nights, crews have different kinds and levels of responsibility when it comes to the provision of technological resources for an event. These depend on the nature and structure of the party in question, the arrangement that they have with the venue, and the specific needs of the artists performing. It is often the case that the crew will provide DJ decks and a mixer for the musicians, for example, or extra lighting for the venue.

The limited nature of the various resources needed to put on a UDM event (especially venues and audience members) means that crews presenting similar kinds of music occasionally clash. If two events fall on the same date it can cause one or both to fall short in terms of audience members. This may have significant financial consequences due to the cost of hiring the venue and artists. Crews operating within a particular UDM culture, such as psyculture, will therefore try to disperse events evenly throughout the year so as not to directly compete for audience members. In addition, many crews will cease to operate throughout the summer months as participants (both audience members and crewmembers) are busy travelling to festivals. For example, in UK psyculture, promoters must consider the positioning of their event in relation to large European festivals such as Boom in Portugal, Ozora in Hungary, and Mo:Dem in Croatia, which attract large numbers of PEDM enthusiasts every year. (Club events are thus considered a winter phenomenon in UK psyculture.)

Modern-day urban PEDM crews thus bear some similarities and some differences from their forebears in electronic music. Even the relatively brief history of psyculture allows for comparison between past and present models. D'Andrea (2007) describes party promoters among the hippie expatriates in 1990s Ibiza and Goa:

An average trance party required a budget of about Rs. 35,000 (US\$750). Western party promoters raised the money, which was equally spent on renting the sound system and on bribing (*baksheesh*) police officers. [...] By all means, promoters were glad to break even; if not, they paid any difference with their own resources. They were aficionados who organized parties because they wanted to play and be acknowledged as scene DJs. A team of party promoters involved a small group of friends. Veteran freaks operated in more international networks, whereas younger promoters grouped themselves by nationality (usually Israelis). Each team sought to promote one, seldom two parties each season, or face the risk of party saturation. (D'Andrea, 2007, p.197.)

Today's urban PEDM promoters are not necessarily performers – indeed, many do not DJ or produce music at all. Furthermore, bribery is not a central component of party organisation in UK venues. However, D'Andrea's observations that such individuals are 'aficionados' organized in friendship groups, that their motivation is rarely monetary, and that a primary constraint on their activities is avoiding clashes with other crews in the area, hold true for today's event crews. Moving forward, we

see that nationality plays a somewhat different role for static participants than for their mobile counterparts. Here, the ability to integrate the wider international scene into a local framework is paramount, an activity which is undertaken by promoters even in the earliest stages of a musical career.

2.5 PEDM Events in Bristol

2.5.1 Tribe of Frog

Bristol is home to a number of crews who put on PEDM events throughout the year. The largest and most famous of these is Tribe of Frog, which was established in 2000 and has continued to the present day. Its significance is such that it has appeared in both the literature on psyculture (D'Andrea, 2007; Ledesma, 2010; Lindop, 2010) and the literature on event promotion in the UK (Webster, 2011). It has even made an appearance in the popular teen-drama TV series *Skins*, suggesting that the event is famous even beyond the psytrance scene.⁴⁹ Indeed, Tribe of Frog is well-known to young Bristol residents, including university and college students who aren't otherwise engaged with psyculture. This level of visibility is unusual for a psytrance event: with the exception of the night IllumiNaughty in Manchester (which isn't strictly a psytrance event) there are no comparable examples in the UK.

The Tribe of Frog crew has changed over the years since the event's inception. When it was first formed in the 1990s, the crew was called 'Wild Frogs' and consisted of a group of artists who put up decorations for psytrance events in London. The name 'Tribe of Frog' was adopted in 2000 when they began putting on club nights of their own in Bristol. (As artists, they still consider the decorations to be just as important as the music, and much of their resources are spent on this aspect of the night.) Today the event is largely organised by one person, Jason Frog, although there is a large associated cast of artists and resident DJs. Jason is responsible for Tribe of Frog's social media presence, booking

⁴⁹ *Skins*, Season 1, Episode 5, broadcast on February 22nd, 2007.

artists, organising festival stages, and much of the decoration work. However, the other members help in various ways, for example by suggesting artists for upcoming events, helping with decoration, providing equipment, and so on.

Tribe of Frog events take place every month throughout the autumn, winter and spring of each year. These are mostly held in Lakota and normally fill the venue to capacity of 1200 attendees. Four stages are active simultaneously from 10.00pm until 7.00am, presenting thirty-six hours of music in total. These are divided by genre, with full-on psytrance occupying the main room and related musics occupying the other three rooms.⁵⁰ This would be a normal layout for a psytrance festival: indeed, due to its size, Tribe of Frog's organisational properties are in some ways closer to those of a festival than a club night. Although much of the music is not 'trance', and some of it isn't even strictly 'psychedelic', Tribe of Frog is understood and promoted as a psytrance event. However, due to its musical diversity and emphasis on fancy dress it is attended by participants from other scenes and subcultures in Bristol (e.g. goths, junglists, ravers).

Tribe of Frog's events are visually spectacular. Ultraviolet wall-hangings, hand painted on cotton canvas, cover almost every surface of the venue; abstract, three-dimensional shapes hang from the ceiling; UV lighting is applied to as much of the club space as possible, lighting up both the audience and decorations (Figure 2.2). This visual splendour is responsible for much of the appeal of the night to both PEDM enthusiasts and other attendees, and features heavily on promotional material and social media (see Chapter 4). Tribe of Frog has its own decorations and therefore does not need to make use of external décor crews. The amount of time it takes to set these up and take them down is considerable: Jason Frog spends five days preparing the venue for each event, and a further three taking it all down again.

⁵⁰ It is the centrality of the Tribe of Frog stage at Waveform Festival 2008 which leads Lindop (2010) to discuss the 'ubiquity' of psytrance at alternative festivals in the UK.



Figure 2.2 - The main room at 'Frogz in Space', April 23rd, 2015.

Tribe of Frog has a yearly cycle of events, some of which have an explicit fancy-dress theme ('Halloween Dance of the Dead'; 'Frogz in Space'; 'Psychedelic Rainforest') and others which mark points in the calendar year ('Summer Gathering'; 'New-Year's Eve'). Different sets and configurations of decorations are used for each theme, such as a giant spaceship for space-themed events, and leaves and butterflies for the rainforest event. This kind of thematic fancy-dress is not typical of psytrance events – it perhaps helps to mediate between psytrance enthusiasts and other attendees (such as students) who do not normally wear or own psychedelic clothing but may be inspired by the theme to wear something unusual and colourful. (Musicians rarely wear fancy dress for Tribe of Frog – they most often wear 'normal' psychedelic clothing or streetwear.)

Tickets for Tribe of Frog cost £5 - £12, depending on how quickly they are purchased after the party is announced. These can be purchased as e-tickets from the event's website, although paper tickets are also available from a number of shops in Bristol: The Bristol Ticket Shop; Twilight Fashions, a shop specialising in goth makeup, jewellery and clothing in St. Nicholas Market; Cooshti, a clothing shop on Park Street; Katze, a fairtrade alternative clothes store on Gloucester Road; and 'Appy Daze, a head shop in the nearby town of Bath. The nature of these distributors indicates Tribe's position within Bristol's cultural ecosystem: they have as much to do with alternative clothing and fashion as with music, and do not necessarily cater to a strictly psychedelic or hippie clientele.

The monthly events draw a significant student crowd from the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England, which is based in Bristol. A large proportion of these attendees are not otherwise engaged with psytrance culture. Some will become psytrance enthusiasts in time. However, for many, Tribe represents their only interaction with this musical culture. This could be conceived of as aesthetic 'co-participation' (Crossley et al., 2015, p.7) in which individuals participate in a cultural event without necessarily being fully-fledged members/participants of that culture.⁵¹ The presence of so many students does not appear to diminish Tribe's standing within psytrance culture, however. Psytrance enthusiasts will travel considerable distances to attend, arriving from Wales, Cornwall, and northern cities such as Manchester and Birmingham. In other words, there seems to be little concern for 'subcultural capital' here: Tribe is an inclusive event, and PEDM enthusiasts welcome other participants if they enjoy the music and respect the vibe of the party.

⁵¹ Here I have used the term 'co-participation' in place of several of Crossley et al.'s (2015, p.7) mechanisms of taste formation – 'exposure' (initial exposure to a new musical culture, perhaps through recordings or internet websites), 'choice heuristics' (participation in a nearby, accessible culture as a means of mitigating the overwhelming number of available choices available), 'secondary benefits' (the social benefits of participation – for example, strengthening a friendship group by attending a club night together) and 'association' (associating participation with positive social experiences, leading to further participation) are all aspects of co-participation, being aspects of taste formation which would lead subcultural non-participants to attend Tribe of Frog.

The longevity of Tribe of Frog has given the crew time to work with the owners of Lakota, each adapting to meet the other's needs. Over the years the Tribe crew have helped to make numerous alterations to the venue, supplying electricity to remote corners, widening doors, and installing fans. In return, the venue owners have given them space on the premises to store equipment and decorations. Here, the relationship between crew and venue is not just a hiring of space, but a mutually beneficial arrangement. In turn, the improved venue is used as a resource by other crews belonging to other EDM cultures in Bristol: thus the value of Lakota as a 'boundary object' (see Chapter 1) is determined by the strategies enacted by its owners and the groups which make use of it.

Tribe of Frog also puts on a number of outdoor events during the summer months. The first is always a 'summer gathering', a ticketed event which is held in a secret location in June. This is a members-only event for people who attend Tribe regularly: only those who have been signed up for membership on the website are invited. The other two summer events are stages at the festivals Nozstock and Boomtown, which are held in July and August respectively. In each case, Tribe of Frog's decorations, equipment and resident performers are brought to the festival, and further guest performers are arranged as normal. In this way, the various crews involved – the festival crew, Tribe of Frog, and other event crews – enact a combined strategy, each contributing their resources towards a larger event which they could not organise on their own. (This kind of 'takeover' is typical of psyculture and other UDM cultures and may also be observed in nightclub events.)

2.5.2 Planet Shroom

Planet Shroom is Bristol's longest-running psytrance night after Tribe of Frog, having started in 2005. The event is an amalgamation of two previous nights – Planet Easton and Shroom – which took place in the Easton Community Centre in the early 2000s. Today there are only two permanent crew members, Lurk and Illumashroom, but there are a number of people who help with the event in

various ways. Held in the Trinity centre, Planet Shroom draws a much smaller crowd than Tribe of Frog, usually between three and four hundred people. The event takes place two or three times a year, often in January and October and occasionally in March or April as well. Additional events are also held in November in conjunction with record labels and artists: for example, an event was held with the record labels Zero1 in November 2016 and Bom Shanka in November 2017, and a live gig by the band Ott and the All-Seeing I was presented in November 2015.

There is only one available stage in the Trinity centre, and Planet Shroom uses this to present only one kind of music, which is full-on psytrance. As a result, the event tends to draw an audience of dedicated psytrance fans rather than students or a general 'subcultural' audience. The crew used to put on a second room for chillout music, but the extra space became unavailable when Trinity decided to refurbish their premises. Crew member Lurk explains the decision-making process which followed:

L: We used to be allowed to have a small room upstairs[...] we got the Quantum Bleep guys to host it, and there was always really good music up there, and we did it really nicely with sort of tents, and, you know, it was almost an outdoor sort of free party vibe to it, and people loved it. But then Trinity decided that they wanted to develop upstairs and I think there's like offices now and a performance space with carpets and all the rest of it[...] We looked seriously about moving venue, but then there wasn't another venue in Bristol that we liked so... Trinity has the Opus sound system built in, it has the ceilings, the space so that we could do the décor, and so we decided to stay. And I think that that has actually – although people miss the second room, I actually think inadvertently it's been the making of the night, because it goes back to how it was when I started partying in nineteen, twenty years ago, '94, '95, where generally there was one room, and people go in and they experience the same thing and it's one vibe, one experience, and it's very... It's unique I think, really, you know, it's a unique experience and it's very focused, and although people say they miss the second room, in a way I don't, you know, because... Yeah, I think it helps the atmosphere[...]

As suggested by Lurk, one-room events have a greater continuity with 1990s Goa trance culture and with the present-day free party scene than multi-stage events such as Tribe of Frog. Planet Shroom thus occupies a particular 'niche' in Bristol's psytrance ecosystem, one which perhaps appeals to older and more subculturally specialised participants.

Planet Shroom's décor is normally handled by an external crew and often features string art and stretches. However, the event is also characterised by an elaborate laser show operated by crewmember Illumashroom, who occasionally provides this service for other PEDM events under that moniker. These lasers are used to create video-like projections on the walls of the venue and to create a fantastic web of light over the heads of the audience (Figure 2.3). This is a somewhat 'retro' display, going against the current trend for VJ performance using a laptop and projector. (Illumashroom does in fact control the lasers using a laptop and two MIDI controllers; however, the effect is still very different from a conventional video projection.) The decorations and lasers take nearly a day to set up and almost as long to take down again.



*Figure 2.3 - Planet Shroom on April 23rd, 2015, with decoration by InOrbit and lasers by Illumashroom.
(Photograph by InOrbit, reproduced with permission.)*

PEDM participants tend to have an eclectic taste in music and will attend other kinds of music events, especially UDM events; as such, Planet Shroom must vie for the attention of the local dance music audience. Failure to draw a crowd can incur significant losses of hundreds or even thousands of pounds, as the cost of the venue, artists, security, sound engineer and décor crew must all be paid for. Different crews will have different mechanisms for dealing with this eventuality – in the case of Planet Shroom, losses are absorbed by Illumashroom. Lurk describes the difficulties of putting on such an event:

C: So what's the hardest thing about putting on a night? What's the big thing that you think 'people don't realise how tricky this is'?

L: It's just the amount of other stuff that you're competing with. And not just within the music scene, it's like, you know... There's so much stuff in people's lives competing with everything else and it's just making yourself heard, finding a voice, getting in.... You know, yeah... And the stress of losing money. I mean, Illumashroom has lost four-figure sums doing it before...

C: Whoa!

L: And, since I've been involved, and you think you've nailed it, you think you've got it, and something happens and someone puts on a party in Devon, you know? One of our October parties[...] it was nice weather and someone decided to put on an outdoor party in Devon.

C: Last minute?

L: You know, at the last minute. For a party like Shroom that ordinarily only gets three hundred people in, and probably needs a few more than that to break even, it took probably fifty people away.

C: Yeah.

L: Which is five hundred quid, you know, and that's the biggest stress about it. I find myself watching the door like a hawk for the first two or three hours, you know, a couple of hours, trying to work out if we got more people in than usual at that stage.

From the venue's perspective Planet Shroom is similar to a private-hire event: it is for a niche audience rather than the general public, and as long as the bills are paid it does not particularly matter if the event is under-attended. Trinity is an expensive venue to hire (£900 +VAT as of 2017) so there is pressure on the promoter to sell enough tickets. Planet Shroom's continuing use of the hall is thus predicated on a strong relationship between the crew and the venue owners, who trust that the fee will be paid. (Trinity is run by a board of trustees, so this relationship is conducted in a professional rather than personal manner.)

For many years, Planet Shroom was advertised primarily by way of posters placed around Bristol and maintained a modest internet presence, an approach which the crew had adopted in the pre-social media era. However, in January 2015 Lurk promoted a Planet Shroom event on Facebook by way of a 'sponsored' post (i.e advert) algorithmically targeted at people who might like to attend. For the first time, there was a full house:

C: Why do you think so many people turned up?

L: Well, I think we dragged ourselves into the 21st century, and we switched from the old-fashioned sort of marketing techniques of posters and flyers and we went social media, we put all the marketing budget into social media. And, you know, there's a lot to be said about Facebook being horrible, but the advertising system they've got, if you know how to work it, really does allow you to reach people[...] we hit a lot of people we may never have before, who may never have known about Planet Shroom before.

Facebook makes it easy to reach out to a very particular audience, and the cost of doing so is cheaper than printing out and distributing posters and flyers. However, this might also be considered a kind of 'selling out' at odds with the countercultural values of the psytrance scene, and an intrusion of corporate culture into grassroots musical practice. Targeted advertising is perhaps, as Lurk suggests, best evaluated according to the strategic uses to which it is put and the success of the algorithms in finding the right audience. Certainly, it has helped Planet Shroom stay afloat and contributed in turn to Trinity's success as a venue. In this sense, Facebook and the various corporate interests that it represents are part of the wider assemblage which constitutes Planet Shroom.

2.5.3 Psychedelic Jelly

Psychedelic Jelly are a young crew who began putting on psydub events in Bristol in 2017. (Psydub is a kind of music which has attributes of psytrance and dub reggae – see 6.2.) Before this their primary means of participating in psyculture had been through juggling performance, which several of them had studied at college level. The idea of putting on a club night was conceived when several friends returned from travels abroad, and, whilst looking for jobs, were living at the house of crewmember Fractal Forest:

FF: They were living here for a couple of months, I think, and we were all really into downtempo psychedelic music, so we'd be playing each other what songs we'd found and stuff. And we were like, 'Aw, dammit, I wish there was a night where we could go and dance to this sort of music', you know? And it was like, yeah, why don't we do it?

The biggest initial challenge for the crew was finding a suitable venue. Through the recommendation of Globular (who had also considered putting on such an event and had explored several possibilities) they got in contact with The Jam Jar, an art space near Old Market. This is a very DIY venue run partly by volunteers, oriented towards live music and theatre as well as club and private hire party events, and was thus in keeping with the underground values of psyculture.

The first event took place on May 5th, 2017. Five acts were booked, including Globular, Fractal Forest, Nimi (a local DJ who later became a resident for the event), Wolf Tech (a producer from Cardiff) and myself as Geoglyph. In addition, an acoustic 'live jam' took place the beginning of the night featuring drummers and Hang players.⁵² Several audience members also brought instruments, including a

⁵² The Hang (a registered trademark) is a metal pitched percussion instrument in the shape of a flying saucer. It sounds like a steel drum, albeit more portable. The Hang was developed by the Swiss company PanArt in the early 2000s. Many imitation instruments are now available from other manufacturers around the world, however, some of which are of comparable quality. PanArt have tense relationships with these other manufacturers, most of whom have used the design without permission.

clarinet and a saxophone, and played along with the music before joining in a second jam towards the end of the night. The result was an unusual event: the single-stage focus, art-space venue and live instruments gave the party an atmosphere akin to a psychedelic ‘happening’.

Much to the crew’s surprise, this first event sold out. This was deemed proof of the viability of a regular downtempo night in Bristol and inspired the crew to put on more events. However, they were unable to use the Jam Jar again, for two reasons. Firstly, the venue was already too small for the number of people who wanted to attend; secondly, licensing issues meant that the venue would now have to close at 2am. (A PEDM event should ideally go on all night and into the next day – see Ledesma, 2011.) This was part of a larger issue to do with noise complaints from people living nearby.⁵³

After some searching, the Psy Jelly crew decided to use Basement 45 for their second event in November 2018. This meant putting on two stages instead of one – the extra costs were to be covered by the increased capacity and extra ticket sales. The event went relatively smoothly and sold a good number of tickets but was marred by several issues. Firstly, the venue had decided to hire out one of the back rooms to a private party, meaning that non-attendees were wandering through the venue. Secondly, the second stage was under-attended for much of the night. Fractal Forest attributed this to the fact that the same kind of music was being played on both stages, dividing the audience’s attention: ‘it means whatever room’s got the more famous act[...] the other person is not going to have many people in there’. Finally, the security were impolite and had arguments with attendees and one of the headlining acts. For these reasons crew decided to move on.

⁵³ One resident stated that ‘It’s ridiculous to have very loud music and drunken people in the street immediately opposite a church, primary school and residential buildings potentially every weekday evening from 6pm until midnight and weekends until 3am’ (Cork, 2017). A representative from the Jam Jar, noting that other Bristol venues were facing similar complaints, replied that ‘None of us wish to be in a protracted struggle with our local communities, but there must be a very serious conversation about the future of accessible spaces in this city, and the future of independent music in the UK’ (ibid.).

A few months later, after considerable searching, the crew managed to find a new venue for their event, the Jack of Diamonds on Old Market street. (This is near the Trinity Centre – see Figure 2.1.) This venue had been a strip club until recently but was now under new management and was being renovated. The owners were amenable to the preparations for the night and even made alterations to help them hang up the decorations. (By this point a ‘jellyfish’ theme had been established – see Figure 2.4). Some reminders of the venue’s previous life remained, including stages, mirrors, and private areas with seating – these were found suitable for juggling performance and generally in keeping with the downtempo vibe. Furthermore, there was a second room upstairs which could be musically linked to the main stage. The crew were inspired by this space which might allow for other features, such as a chai stall or a massage table, at future events.



Figure 2.4 - Psychedelic Jelly, January 13th, 2018, with Fractal Forest holding up a jellyfish decoration.

(Photograph by LimerickArts, reproduced with permission.)

Noting that Psychedelic Jelly had drawn a sizeable and friendly crowd, the owner of the Jack of Diamonds allowed them to schedule further bookings for March and May of 2018. In this way a relationship was established, and the event found a long-term home:

FF: Yeah, that's like our new home I think now. I'm happy with it. Like, it's not huge, but I quite like the room. Like, being friends with the carpenter there was really useful. He basically put up these two bits of wood on the front wall and back wall just for us, because we wanted to hand up some décor, because then we could string stuff above. So they're really useful – not many venues would be like, 'Yeah, I just nailed a bit of wood into my wall for you'.

Psychedelic Jelly also helped with an event put on by another crew, Psychedelic Therapy, in January 2018. This was held in Basement 45, in which one room was allotted to the main crew who were playing full-on psytrance, whilst the second room was given to Psy Jelly for a 'takeover' (as described earlier). The programme for this second stage consisted of Psy Jelly's three resident DJs and another local performer, whilst the decorations were drawn from the crew's accumulated stock. The two crews thus pooled their resources, including decorations, performers, and potential attendees, to realise a larger event than either could manage on their own.

Psychedelic Jelly thus resembles both Tribe of Frog and Planet Shroom in its organisational properties. Like the former, it is based around a group of friends whose activities extend beyond music into visual art, juggling, and other aspects of psychedelic culture. The crew are amenable to collaboration and have brought their stylistic brand (including decorations and performers) to events organised by other crews. However, like Planet Shroom, Psy Jelly are focused on one very particular kind of music and prefer a single-stage format for their own events. Their strategic activities thus take advantage of niche tastes within the wider musical spectrum of psychculture. Moving forward, they must continue to demonstrate the viability of this niche in the context of Bristol's busy nightlife ecosystem – working with venue owners and other event crews will be central to this endeavour.

2.6 Conclusion

Event promotion is one the clearest examples of 'strategic' musical participation in today's UDM scenes. Here, resources including music venues, local and non-local performers, and decorations are deployed at a particular space and time in the hope of a particular outcome. The stakes are high: failure to draw a crowd can mean considerable costs for the crew and may prevent subsequent events from taking place. In today's busy night-time economy, however, filling a large venue can be a significant achievement.

Establishing a regular event requires considerable effort. The three examples given in this chapter – Tribe of Frog, Planet Shroom, and Psychedelic Jelly – demonstrate the importance of the relationship between crew and venue in this endeavour. From the perspective of the venue, the crew must be able to consistently draw a crowd, or to be otherwise reliable in terms of covering the hiring cost. From the perspective of the crew, the venue must be organised in terms of bookings, sound and security, and amenable to the specific needs of the party (in the case of psyculture, this means allowing for extensive decorations). Long-term relationships can be rewarding for both parties both financially and artistically – it is these relationships which keep the 'pathways' (Finnegan, 2007) of underground music open in UK cities.

Not all UDM crews aim at creating a regular event. The psytrance scene in Bristol, for example, was characterised by a number of smaller, one-off events which took place in same venues listed in this chapter. These often catered for a specific niche within the PEDM genre-spectrum: for example, Cosmic Vomit was held at the Trinity Centre in July 2015, and featured forest psytrance; Brain Drill was held in Basement 45 in February 2017 and featured hi-tech psytrance. (Further details on these genres and events will be given in Chapter 6.) In addition, there were several 'label nights' organised by DJs affiliated with labels from outside the city. The purpose of these events had more to do with bringing musicians into the city from outside than establishing a regular pathway for local participants.

One-off events thus play an important role in local EDM ecosystems, connecting the local with the translocal and bringing various crews, performers, and audiences into contact.

For reasons of focus, I have neglected the free parties which formed a smaller, but no less important, backdrop to the nightclub events held in Bristol. Only one regular psychedelic free party was operating during my research period – although the crew had a name, I will not mention it here, in order to protect their identities. This was a very organised affair: it took place in the same venue every time, a secret spot in an industrial area which is unpopulated at evenings and weekends. The police knew of such activity in this location and would occasionally turn up to make sure the party was not out of hand, but would rarely shut it down; the area was thus a quasi-official site for free parties, and UDM crews from other genres also made use of it. The PEDM crew in question was a group of four or so individuals who provided a sound system, a generator, CDJs and a table, decorations, and wood for a fire. They also took responsibility for booking local artists. A list of set times was provided before the event, although this was more flexible than the kind provided for a club night and very much subject to last-minute change – the performers, who do not get paid, are liable to cancelling without notice. In terms of promotion, then, organising a free party is not so different from organising a club event.

3 Chapter 3 - Performing

Following on from the previous discussion of event promotion, this chapter gives some details on performing careers in electronic dance music, looking in particular at nightclub events rather than festivals or free parties. Although the focus is on psyculture and PEDM, much of what is written here is applicable to other UDM cultures. However, there may be significant differences with more 'mainstream' EDM styles, notably in the way that artists are booked. For example, as noted earlier, it is a characteristic of UDM that promotional crews are normally separate from venues, an organisational attribute which is not necessarily the case in commercial EDM cultures. Much of what I will describe here in terms of the relationship between performers and crews in psyculture may therefore be seen in the relationships between performers and venues in other musical cultures.⁵⁴

3.1 DJ Performance and Bookings

The normative mode of performance in psyculture is to DJ using CDJs⁵⁵ or a laptop (see 0.2; Fikentscher, 2000; Butler, 2006). Performers tend to begin their careers at home as 'bedroom DJs' using a modest setup: today, a laptop and an inexpensive controller is enough to get started. Here, they learn the basic musical and technical skills needed such as beatmatching, EQ mixing, and balancing the levels of the tracks. However, the most important skills in DJ performance – handling a large sound system, interacting with the crowd, structuring and pacing a set – cannot be acquired at home, but must be learned on the job. This means that gigs are needed from a very early point in a musical career if a DJ is to advance and develop their skills. It is the activities of event promoters which

⁵⁴ Numerous examples of this kind of performer/venue relationship can be seen in Brewster & Broughton (2007) and Reynolds (2013).

⁵⁵ CDJs are decks for DJ performance which use CDs rather than vinyl. Popular brands include Pioneer (who are considered the 'industry standard' and found in most clubs), Numark and Denon.

allow DJs to move from the bedroom to the wider world: they provide the basic resource, the 'slot' (which increasingly replaces 'The Deal' in today's musical cultures – see 0.1; Cohen, 1991; Holt, 2010), on which a performing career is founded. Newcomers will start by playing opening or closing sets at an event whilst it is still quiet and will gradually move on to more prominent sets at peak hours as they gain experience, confidence and knowledge of their chosen genre.

In terms of psyculture, this career progression takes place in two interconnected spheres: the translocal festival scene, and the local 'indoor' nightclub scene. DJ careers often begin with the latter. Tetrasound, for example, began his performing career in Bristol in the mid-2000s. His initial moment of contact with psyculture was an instance of 'co-participation' (Crossley et al., 2015):

C: So when did you discover psychedelic music, or psytrance music?

T: After when I arrived in Bristol. I was invited by my friend to leave my house and go to the city centre for a drink, and I said no, I don't want to go. And he said yeah, let's go, let's go, and I decided to go. And then we ended in Lakota, and then that was the Tribe of Frog night. And since then I was reborn. My jaw was on the floor, and I couldn't believe it, what I'd seen.

From that point onwards Tetrasound began listening to and collecting psychedelic music. As an experienced techno DJ, he already had the necessary skills to perform psytrance. (These styles have a number of similarities including a pronounced four-to-the-floor rhythm – see Butler, 2006.) His initial challenge was therefore to gain recognition within the Bristol scene as a psytrance DJ. He formed a unique strategy for getting his name 'out there':

T: I dreamed about meeting Jason, about meeting the Tribe of Frog crew. And then I started buying CDs, and then every single time when I go for a party I recorded a promo. So people knew me from that I had – Tetrasound with CDs, so I always had lots of CDs in my pocket and tried to spread those CDs. And every single time I had a new one, with labels – with, like,

printed, full colour labels – and I glued everything with titles. And then basically I started to play, I started playing at parties and I started getting more bookings.

Tetrasound's strategy was successful, and he soon found himself playing at psytrance events, including Tribe of Frog. A highlight of his career was his progression from Room 2 to the main stage:

T: I started from like a stage in the middle of Lakota. But then, because I was really passionate about it, and, I don't know, I put in lots of hard work and training, so I managed to secure places on the main stage. And I was lucky enough to, after that, always play before or after the main headliner, which was very very good, and that always reminds me of the time in where I was in Lakota and I was in that corner thinking about, you know, who is this guy? Who is this crew? And then let's say ten years later, or six years later, I was exactly on another side of that spectrum, and I was warming up for Eat Static, for Hypnocoustics, for Aphid Moon.⁵⁶

Krosis' early psytrance career was similar to that of Tetrasound, although his first performance at Tribe of Frog was gained through the annual DJ competition, in which hopeful bedroom DJs submit a demo mix and winners are selected to play at one of the monthly Lakota events:

C: So you started DJing psytrance quite a bit before you started producing?

K: I started DJing out of my bedroom about a year before I started producing. [...] The first gig I played was the second 5D collective [...] And then after then it just kind of kicked off really quickly. And I played Tribe of Frog after about seven months I think.

C: That's really impressive. Tribe's a big party.

⁵⁶ Eat Static, Hypnocoustics and Aphid Moon are three of the most famous psytrance acts in the UK. All three have played at Tribe of Frog in recent years.

K: Tribe's what got me into [psytrance in the first place], so it, like, totally blew me away to be able to play it.

C: How did you get the gig? [...]

K: That was the competition! Yeah, Tribe of Frog DJ competition.

C: Oh, right, cool!

K: So I was lucky to win that, basically. But yeah, that got me noticed.

In this way, regular local EDM events can offer career progression within themselves for performers. It is here that EDM culture most closely resembles the musical 'pathway' theorised by Finnegan (2007): these events provide a route, both metaphorical and literal, through musical space and urban space, giving participants opportunities for progression and attainment through sustained commitment to a particular set of places and events. However, as noted in the introduction, this pathway is composed of discrete instances of participation and opportunities laid out by promoters, and may also lead outwards (as in the case of Tetrasound and Krosis) to a translocal performing career – it is neither as continuous nor as cyclical as Finnegan proposes.

Not all psytrance performers begin their careers within their local scene. Globular, for example, played his first gigs abroad after having made his name as a producer on the internet. This trajectory is more typical of producers than performers – producers can make their activities known through the publication of original music and may therefore be invited to play in other countries at an early point in their career, whereas DJs must perform in order to get their name 'out there', and performance opportunities at this level are most often available through local networks. Musical life can be quite different for those who are focused on international rather than the local scene: Globular plays mostly at festivals, meaning that his bookings are heavily weighted towards the summer months. This can create financial difficulties in winter and spring when paid performances are less frequent.

Furthermore, much of Globular's summer is spent travelling, which can be isolating, although he meets many friends and fellow performers on the road. This strategy therefore has both costs and advantages.

It is common for performing artists to manage their own bookings, especially in the early stages of a musical career. In this circumstance crews will contact performers directly via email or social networking sites. However there are other entities, such as record labels or booking agents, which may play a part in this process. (These two can be very similar – many labels handle bookings for their artists, and some agents release compilation albums featuring artists on their roster; some define themselves as both label and agent.)⁵⁷ Entities which handle bookings in this way may be instrumental in helping to negotiate between promoters and artists who are in the more advanced stages of their career. These are 'subcultural' services run by scene participants; like labels, they tend to have an international roster which is managed via the internet.⁵⁸

Joining a booking agency can lead to more frequent, prestigious and better-paid gigs, and greatly reduce the amount of work for the artist. However there are also downsides: an artist can find themselves priced out of the local market, for example, or unable to make flexible arrangements for events of different sizes. Globular joined Sofa Beats in 2014, an agency which is home to some of the most famous downtempo PEDM artists in the world.⁵⁹ This lessened the burden of negotiating with promoters and helped him to procure some high-profile gigs, including a set at Boom festival in 2016. He describes the effect of this on his musical life:

⁵⁷ An example of the latter is Nano Records, a UK label which is home to a number of famous psytrance artists.

⁵⁸ Some notable booking agencies catering for PEDM artists include FM Booking, Echo Booking, and Sofa Beats.

⁵⁹ Artists on Sofa Beats, as of 2017, include Desert Dwellers, Entheogenic, Gaudi, Solar Fields, and Carbon Based Lifeforms. Sofa Beats have also released several compilations and mix albums featuring these artists, including *The Clear Path* (Desert Dwellers, 2017) and *Beat Generation* (Zen Baboon, 2017).

G: Overall, it's been amazing for me. I can just remember that feeling of the stress and all that time and work and effort you put in to try and get gigs, and try and barter with people, and it's horrible. I hated it. I didn't have the connections, and to be picked up by Sofa Beats – yeah, it's been amazing, I don't have to think about it at all. Like, I think about gigs every now and then, and I just say 'yes' or 'no' to something, and, yeah, it's sorted. And [the agent] knows what he's doing, he's massively connected. [...] I think my only possible regret is that he's very hard-line with prices and people, and he can be quite tough to deal with. And some people love it- they love that he's very professional – and some people, it just grates them majorly.

C: You mean promoters?

G: Yeah. I mean promoters and people that put on parties, yeah.

C: Yeah. I guess he's super-organised, and that can be nice because that's reliable. But also he doesn't relent, I think, with the fees?

G: Nope, not at all.

C: Which can maybe make it – but that's his job, right?

G: It is his job. But some people would say, like, you can have a bit of give. But, at the same time, yeah, I don't know... It's tricky, especially with the smaller parties.

Promoters have often expressed a wish to bypass Sofa Beats when booking Globular in order to secure a favourable deal, a request with which he is unable to comply, as this would defeat the purpose of having an agent. This has caused issues, for example when the downtempo event crew Psychedelic Jelly put on their first event in Bristol in May, 2017 and asked Globular to play. On the one hand, he was very keen to be involved with this event; on the other, he recognised that the promoters were unlikely to be able to afford his normal fee, as the event and venue was small and there were other artists to be paid. In the end he decided to waive his fee altogether, playing as a favour to the crew,

thus allowing him to be involved and to help build the local downtempo scene. He was later booked for a paid gig at Psychedelic Jelly, which was by this point thriving – his strategy paid off in the long run. (This kind of activity might be thought of as ‘scene building’; that is, actively attempting to maintain the health and connectivity of a particular musical network.)

Expectations with regards to payment bring to light otherwise hidden assumptions about ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ musicianship. This is most noticeable when events fail to make a profit. For example, some of the smaller festivals in the South-West of England and Wales made significant financial losses during my research, sometimes running into tens of thousands of pounds. The ensuing discussion brought these questions of musicianship to the fore: it was accepted that certain musicians rely on performance fees for a living, and these participants had to be paid; others chose to forego any payment, or accept partial payment, citing their non-professional status as a motivation. For example, in 2016 Snowdrop waived her fee for her performance at a local festival which had incurred substantial losses. I asked her how she felt about the situation: she answered, ‘Fine. Like I say, [...] I don’t make a living – I’m not trying to make a living – from DJing[...]’ (Snowdrop, 2016). Globular, who had been booked via Sofa Beats, was paid, although the festival had to take out a loan to do this. He felt slightly uneasy about the situation but recognised that the promoters were aware of his status as a full-time musician, and that being part of a booking agency meant that he was unable to negotiate directly with them anyway. In this instance his career strategy was a mixed blessing: his performing fee was assured, but his personal agency with regards to the situation at hand was reduced.

3.2 Residence and Affiliation

Local EDM event crews will tend to have one or more ‘resident’ DJs who play regularly at their events. A resident does not normally play a headline set (i.e. a set at around 1am, when the dancefloor is full) but more often a supporting set at a less prominent time. They may be considered a member of the

crew, although their responsibilities in terms of party organisation and promotion are not likely to be arduous. Tetrasound was a resident with the Cheltenham- and Gloucester-based crew Toadstool for several years:

C: What does a resident do?

T: Resident... I think just warming the dancefloor on the highest possible level. And there's no 'what a resident must do' but promote the night, get involved in the party itself. Personally I didn't really help much with decorations. I was in Bristol but there were other people doing this. I should have a little bit more, but I haven't done it, so there's no excuse really. *Laughs* But these days even the Tribe of Frog residents – there are not many things which they must do, almost nothing. Some of them, they promote the night. Some of them less, some of them more. But there is no particular task to do it, really. (Tetrasound, 2016)

The nature of a residency will depend on the event in question. For example, Krosis became a resident DJ at Tribe of Frog in 2015, one among several who perform regularly in Room 3 (the dark psytrance, forest and hi-tech room – see Chapter 6). This entailed more regular gigs with higher pay than before, but also some responsibilities in terms of helping with the line-up of dark psytrance DJs. Krosis has also helped with Tribe of Frog's stage at Boomtown festival – this later led to forming his own crew, 'Hi-Technicians', which puts on hi-tech music (see Chapter 6) at this festival every year.

DJs may also be associated with record labels, a relationship which is known as 'affiliation'. The responsibility of a label-affiliated DJ is to promote the music of that label through performance, and occasionally through other promotional activities such as networking on social media. In return, the label sends free music, and helps to promote the events at which the performer is playing. Tetrasound has been a label DJ for much of his career:

T: [F]or three years I was with Blacklite records. That was the record label from Turin, from Italy. And that was really nice, because that was really special to me when I received an email

one day from the manager Nukleall asking me for some details, and saying that they know my music, they know my set, and they want to offer me a position at the record label as a label DJ. So we had some talks for a few days, and then they said yes.

C: So what does a label DJ do? What happens?

T: Most of it is promoting the music, and also it's good if the DJ could promote the parties as well... organise parties. So all the friends from the crew, all the people from the record label, artists who write music, they're also able to play. So you promote them, you promote the name of that record label, and, yeah, it's all the promotion and getting more gigs, more bookings, and to promote the music so people are buying more CDs and the message is spreading around. And, yeah, this is it really. All about the promotion.

C: So it's a bit like being a resident DJ at a night such as Tribe of Frog?

T: Yeah, no, it's more I would say. It depends, because we had people who did nothing, and we had people who were posting stuff all the time. DJs who promote nights, they have been inviting other artists so there was like five hundred, a thousand people on the dance floor, and it was like a Blacklite record party. So this is all about just making sure that the name is growing, and more people know about this. It's all about the quality, building the name, building the quality of the record label, and doing their best.

In theory, label affiliation acts as a signifier of musical genre – it is assumed that a label DJ plays the kind of music that the label releases. However, the actual relationship between the sound of the label and the sound of the performer is not always straightforward. Some labels have DJs who perform in a range of genres: in this case it may be subtle similarities in aesthetic or sound design which tie the roster together.

Producers are also in a sense affiliated with the record labels on which they release their music, although this relationship is somewhat different. A producer is expected to play their own music primarily, and the 'live set' (see section 3.3; Butler, 2014) is the ideal format for this. However, many producers choose to play regular DJ sets when they perform and may thus represent their label much like an affiliated DJ.

Relationships between performers, crews and labels often feature prominently in the promotional material for psytrance events. A typical flyer for Tribe of Frog, for example, will list one or more affiliations next to the alias of each performer (See Figure 3.2). If no affiliation exists, another association might be listed instead, such as a residency with another crew. For performers who have no associations at all, 'Tribe of Frog' may be given instead, indicating that crew are responsible for discovering the musician in question. This labelling activity benefits both parties: performers benefit from the prestige of the label or the crew with which they are associated, and events benefit from the prestige of the representation in their line-up.

DJs affiliated with a record label sometimes organise PEDM events, taking on a promotional role on behalf of the label. (This kind of 'label promotion' could be added to Webster's typology as a distinct type of promotional activity – see 2.3; Webster, 2011.) These events demonstrate the aesthetic qualities, organisational capacity, and overall pulling power of the label and members. Artists are often flown in from abroad for these events, helping to position the translocal scene in the context of local venues and infrastructure. The event 'Blacklite and Maharetta Records Present: A Psychedelic Melting Pot' which was held in the Black Swan on December 14th, 2014, was one conspicuous example during my research. This was organised by two DJs from Bristol, Tetrasound and Neutron, who were associated with the labels Blacklite Records and Maharetta Records respectively. Not all of the artists on the line-up belonged to these labels – several of the performers in the chillout room were simply friends of the promoters and prominent local musicians. The following description, taken from the event's Facebook page, outlined the aim of the night:

We Invite you to a Celebration of Music and Creative Arts,

Our Aim is to Give Some energy back to our Trance Scene Where we have both partied for many years And would like to give our Appreciation back to all you Dance floor Freaks.

So we are Bringing together a fusion of well Recognized Labels, Who have worked hard to Achieve Great success In their Careers.

And are now Back from blasting the Biggest Dance floors Across the Globe bringing Their Latest Production To You.

Our Aim is to Bring a fresh style of Music and Creativity Combining new European Styles to Promote and Celebrate Great music and Art, With Talented Individuals From the Local Area, where we shall intertwine a powerful Chill out space And High Energy Trance floor.

Encapsulating Our Passion And love for the music In a PSYCHEDELIC MELTING POT!

(Psychedelic Melting Pot, Facebook 2014, original punctuation)

Tetrasound was responsible for booking the venue, décor and artists. Although the event lost money (around £1000), this was not considered particularly disappointing: Tetrasound described the event as a 'really good night' with 'good feedback' and a 'really strong lineup'. As such, this expense could perhaps be considered a resource judiciously employed in the service of the label and the artists involved, both as label associates and local scene members.



Figure 3.1 - The flyer for the event 'A Psychedelic Melting Pot'.

3.3 Live Electronic Performance

Some performers choose to play their music as a 'live set', bringing studio equipment to a music venue and generating all or part of the musical sounds onstage.⁶⁰ The instrumentation, numbers of performers, and technological basis of these performances vary enormously. Indeed, the only common feature of all live sets is that they are given by producers (or producers with additional musicians) and consist entirely of that producer's musical output. As such, the live set is a display of composition and performance ability rather than knowledge of repertoire and aesthetic judgement, as in a DJ performance (Fikentscher, 2000; Butler, 2006). In order to perform in this manner, a producer must have written enough music to fill an entire performance slot (usually between ninety minutes and two hours). A live set is thus a demonstration of tenure as a producer, of technological prowess, and of dedication to a career in electronic music. To assemble such a long performance can take weeks or even months of work, depending on the length and complexity of the set, the number of players, and the nature of the equipment used. The live set may be understood as a kind of project – this is symbolised by the creation of a 'project' file in Ableton Live or similar software, which then becomes the ontological core of the performance (see Butler, 2014). When a new live set is needed, for example after the launch of an album or at the start of a festival season, a new project file is created. As such, the live set is understood by participants as a cultural text as well as a way of performing (much like the DJ mix).

In terms of event promotion a live set is understood and advertised as being distinct from a DJ set. It is considered prestigious in psyculture: live sets are often programmed at peak hours of the night (around 1:00am) when there are lots of people on the dancefloor. (In Figure 3.2 we can see live sets marked on a Tribe of Frog flyer.) Live performers are also normally paid more than DJs. The use of

⁶⁰ This has been a normative way of performing electronic dance music from the genre's inception: the first performances of house music involved the use of a Roland TR808 drum machine alongside disco records (Brewster & Broughton, 2007, p.326).

instruments brings the live set closer in appearance to other forms of popular music, notably rock music. PEDM’s musical roots in psychedelic and progressive rock (see 0.3.1; Elliott, 2010; St. John, 2012)⁶¹ may thus be one reason for the prestige of the live set format in psyculture.⁶²



Figure 3.2 - A Tribe of Frog flyer from September 2013.

OOOD have been a live act from the outset of their collective musical career – indeed, their first album, *aLive* (1996), was assembled from live recordings. Although subsequent albums have been recorded in a studio, OOOD’s identity is still very much predicated on the live nature of their performances. The individual members of the band frequently perform as DJs whilst retaining the OOOD moniker (e.g.

⁶¹ St. John (2012) describes psytrance as ‘an optimized assemblage heir to acid rock’ and notes that ‘Liveness remains an esteemed, albeit elusive, quality’ (p.57).

⁶² Some rock groups are associated with the contemporary PEDM scene, notably The Ozric Tentacles and Papadosio. Various PEDM acts also use the ‘band’ format, but do not play rock music; these include Shpongle, Ott and the All-Seeing I, and OOOD.

Colin OOOD, Steve OOOD, Rama OOOD, Ryo OOOD); however, when they perform together they play as a band, with the four members playing different instruments. The setup changes from event to event, but the following is typical: Steve plays guitar and synthesizers; Ryo plays acoustic and electronic drums; Rama uses a laptop and effects units; Colin uses a laptop, controller and synthesizer. (In Figure 3.3 they are using a slightly different configuration.) Performing live thus draws on the players' experience as instrumental musicians. With only four players, however, it is impossible to fully realise the dozens of layers of a normal PEDM track. Much of the music is therefore pre-rendered, notably the percussion and bass but also some of the more rhythmically precise lead parts, allowing the band members to play with rhythmic freedom over the top. OOOD's sets are largely improvised and never rehearsed.



Figure 3.3 - OOOD performing a live set at Ozora Festival in Hungary, 2017. (Photograph by Gergely Somogyi Photography, reproduced with permission.)

Globular also performs a live set but does so as a solo artist rather than a band. His setup is more compact than that of OOOD but highly complex: he uses a laptop running Ableton Live and two small tablets running Lemur controller software, which communicate via a wireless network hosted from the laptop itself (Figure 3.4). His tracks are split into 'stems' containing different parts of the music (e.g. percussion, leads, ambience, vocals) which are pre-arranged in an Ableton Live project file. The tablets are used to apply software audio effects to these stems, such as granular delay, filters, or gating, and to play virtual synthesizer parts over the top. Each track has a different set of effects and instruments associated with it, which are represented by a configuration of dials, sliders and pads on a separate page within Lemur. As the performance progresses Globular moves from page to page, opening up new configurations of controls for each piece.



Figure 3.4 - Globular performing live at Psychedelic Jelly in 2017.

This hardware setup has the advantage of being very portable but is somewhat unimpressive to look at if you are not onstage. With the controllers lying flat on the table and the laptop facing away from the dancefloor, it is not obvious what is happening when Globular performs. This is a common issue which live electronic musicians often seek to address. Mark Butler writes that:

For audiences, establishing connections between physical gestures and their musical effects is a key strategy for understanding the performance. Musicians accordingly seek to maximise the legibility of their actions through the ways in which they interact with interfaces as well as through the interfaces they choose to use.

(Butler, 2014, p.102)

For these reasons, Globular decided to add an Ableton Push controller to his live setup in 2016 (Figure 3.4). The Push is a large hardware controller with velocity-sensitive backlit pads and rotary dials, allowing for more nuanced physical interaction and a more visual performing style than tablets. This new setup is significantly heavier than his previous one (a significant issue when travelling for performances) but helps to make Globular's performances more interesting for onlookers.

Simply bringing more gear does not solve all of the problems attendant with live electronic performance. Indeed, since the central component of a live set today is a laptop running music production software, the equipment can be left to run with no input from the performer. It is entirely possible, and by some accounts quite common, for a performer to 'mime' a set which is in fact entirely pre-sequenced (van Veen & Attias, 2011). Live performers thus face a challenge: how can they make it clear that the performance is actually live, and that their actions onstage do have some impact on the sound of the music? (The same issue applies to laptop DJs in that they could easily record or sequence the set at home and simply press 'play' when they get to the venue. This is perhaps one of the main reasons why the CD remains a popular performance format.)

For OOOD, who have always performed live using hardware instruments as well as laptops, this situation can be frustrating: they have often shared a line-up with artists who fake the performance of a live set. However, Colin and Steve recognise that the audience are not necessarily able to discern

the difference between various types of performance and may not be as interested in the 'liveness' of a live set as musicians and promoters. Steve emphasises the obligations of the performer to the vibe of the party:

S: Dunno, it's a sticky thing. It's each to their own, isn't it, what other people are comfortable with doing, really. I suppose the main focus is for the people at the party to have a good time.

Colin is more critical; he feels that many musicians are taking credit for giving a live performance without engaging with the challenges that this strategy brings:

C: Do you think people aren't playing 'live' enough?

CO: Well, no, I completely agree with Steve. It is about giving the people on the dancefloor a good time. That's why we're there. But there are certain things that some people seem to do that you take them away and the audience would still be having just as good a time. And, you know, like Steve I don't really care what people do as long as – well, here I am setting conditions as if I have the right to do that – but for my personal tastes I just want to know that what they're doing is audible.

S: Creating something, yeah.

CO: You know, if you're going to be busy doing something, be busy doing something I can hear. Because that's what I'm paying you for, that's why I'm paying you – that's why the promoter is paying you more than a DJ, it's because what you're doing onstage is supposed to be hard! It's supposed to be difficult!

(OOOD, 2015)

Colin suggests the term 'producer set' to indicate a pre-rendered mix over which the performer has little or no influence whilst on stage. However, it is not clear that audience members understand this

distinction, nor that other promoters are willing to adopt it as a means of advertising different kinds of performance. (Jason Frog uses the same term to refer to a producer who is performing their own music as a DJ – see Figure 3.2.) As such, although this idea suggests a more nuanced model of ‘liveness’ than the one currently in place, it may not catch on.

Live performance is not for everyone. PEDM is highly intricate, and not necessarily conducive to real-time performance due to the detailed nature of the production. Despite producing and performing psytrance for over twenty years, Nervasystem has never performed a live set:

N: I’ve never really gone for that because... I don’t know, it takes such a long time and such a large amount of effort to make these tunes, you know, and produce them well, and arrange them and everything. It’s a studio process, and to do that live is kind of... You can’t do it to the same degree of quality, you know? Not the way I work, anyway.

Performing live can also be damaging to equipment. Nervasystem remembers seeing OOOD playing live in the mid-1990s, recalling that ‘some of their kit died that night, never to come back to life again because it got covered in sweat and kind of god knows what’ (Nervasystem, 2015). The strain that the performance places on hardware, the difficulty of travelling to venues, and the potential expenses that this may incur, are further costs that need to be taken into consideration.

Live performance also interacts in complicated ways with a performer’s other obligations, such as residency or affiliation. For example, a live set takes a considerable amount of time to construct – it is not reasonable to try and create a new one for each performance. As such, the ‘resident live performer’ cannot really exist, as this would mean playing the same music at each event. (OOD turned down an offer of residency at Tribe of Frog for precisely this reason.) Furthermore, a live set is always composed entirely of music written by a single producer or group. This means that the normative model of label affiliation, in which a DJ represents a label through performance, does not work.

As a 'performance strategy' (Madrid, 2008, p.155) the live set thus has advantages and disadvantages. Its status as the ideal way of performing PEDM (for a producer) means that live performers get more prestigious bookings and much greater exposure. However, it is an expensive and time-consuming task, entailing greater travelling costs and more risks in term of damage or loss to studio equipment. Furthermore, it conflicts with other ways of engaging with an EDM scene, notably residence and affiliation. The live set is based on very different values to that of DJ performance, celebrating the creativity of the individual or band rather than the collective 'scenius' (Eno, 2015) encapsulated by the DJ set.⁶³ Although it is perhaps tempting to interpret live performance as a way of generating 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995) in cultures where it holds particular cultural significance, such as psychculture, this does not accurately reflect the nature of the issue. This is not a means of distinguishing between 'insider' and 'outsider' but rather a complex issue which generates both problems and opportunities for participants.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter and the previous chapter have looked at event promotion and performance in psychculture, focusing on nightclub events. These activities are closely related, each providing the necessary conditions for the other to take place. Promotion and performance can thus be understood as interlocking strategies for engaging with a music scene in which various actors come together to realise complex musical projects. It is the mutuality and compatibility of different strategies, and lasting relationships which form around both individual and recurring projects, which give rise to music scenes.

⁶³ '[G]enius is the talent of an individual, scenius is the talent of a whole community' (Eno, 2015).

This chapter on performance has detailed the various elements which structure a performing career in electronic dance music. These include performing opportunities in the local and translocal scene, associations with event crews (including residence), association with labels (including affiliation), and the differences between DJ and live performance. Each has a different effect on the relationships between individuals and groups; each gives rise to complex discursive issues and decisions for participants to engage with. As such, performing careers cannot easily be interpreted as linear, although they may have elements of progression and attainment (such as gaining a residency or a prestigious booking). Rather, a variety of options is available to EDM performers as their career unfolds. Although some options may represent a step towards professional musicianship, such as signing to a booking agency, these often present both opportunities and constraints for further musical participation. Musicians must therefore carefully consider the scene around them in order to make a long-term career out of EDM performance.

4 Chapter 4 Digital Technology, Distribution and Social Media

Digital technology has been discussed in terms of its ability to remove barriers to the creation and publication of music, an effect which is often framed as a 'democratisation' of musical culture.⁶⁴ The argument here is that anyone can now make music and distribute it, and so musical participants are no longer beholden to the international music industry to enact a meaningful musical career. Bennett (2016) states that, whereas popular musicians in the twentieth century sought professional status through acquisition by a record label, today 'those invested in music making as a sustainable career, in either a full-time or, as is increasingly the norm, a part-time sense[...] see other pathways toward meaningful involvement in music' (p.xvii; paraphrasing Rogers, 2013). This development has also been described as a 'disintermediation' of the value chain of recorded music (Tuomola, 2004), referring to the fact that the various intermediaries which characterised the 20th century music industry are no longer positioned between musician and audience.

Recent writing has focused on the effects of 'Web 2.0', a paradigm in digital culture in which user-generated content is shared by way of internet platforms (e.g. Baym & Burnett, 2009, Suhr, 2012).⁶⁵ This has been seen as a particularly 'democratising' technology in terms of musical activity, allowing musicians to interact directly with fans and to broadcast their output on their own terms. Looking at Web 2.0 services such as MySpace and Facebook, Suhr (2012) finds that 'social networking sites are perceived as places where musicians can exercise full control over their careers, gaining independence

⁶⁴ Huq (2006) states that '[m]odern-day developments such as Cubase software and sampling technology are usually viewed as positive in music-making as they have de-mystifying, democratising properties[,] potentially de-standardising music production to make it a more participatory experience' (p.46); Leyshon (2014) suggests that 'due to the democratization of recording technologies and of the means of distribution through the internet, artists are no longer so reliant on the traditional institutions of the music industry to be productive' (p.156); Katz (2010) offers the 'democratization of creativity' and the advent of 'participatory culture' (p.173) as examples of the 'phonographic effects' of music technology.

⁶⁵ The term 'Web 2.0' was coined by Darcy DiNucci in a 1999 article for *Print* magazine (DiNucci, 1999), although it did not enter common use until 2004, when it was more thoroughly explicated by O'Reilly and Dougherty at a major conference on the subject.

and empowerment through do-it-yourself methods' (p.1). However, this requires an enormous amount of work on the part of the musician in terms of social networking, which Suhr describes as a kind of 'affective labour' (after Hardt, 1999).⁶⁶ Fans, too, perform a kind of 'fan labour' (after Baym & Burnett, 2009) by sharing music and interacting with a service's features. The kinds of connections needed to sustain a musical career do not arise automatically here, but must be forged in a time- and labour-intensive way.

In this environment the line between amateur and professional musicianship – and even between musicians and non-musicians – is unclear.⁶⁷ Affordable digital technology has put the means of production and distribution in the hands of many individuals who do not have a record deal or any other means of making money from music; non-musicians, too, engage in creative forms of technologically-mediated participation, such as the creation of a playlist or a music blog (Baym & Burnett, 2009). The result is an enormous abundance of amateur musical activity: observing this trend, Wikström (2009) predicts an 'interesting future' in which 'almost all content is available online is user-generated and only a small fraction is created by those people who actually write texts, make movies or sing songs professionally' (p.159).

Conversely, the internet has created new ways for musicians to monetize their activities, although these do not align neatly with conventional notions of 'professional' musicianship. For example, some musicians give their music away for free in hope of securing paid gigs or selling other products, (Anderson, 2009). Other strategies are more obviously monetized. Internet crowd-funding is one example, although money raised in this way may be used to realise a particular project rather than

⁶⁶ Building on the writing of Maurizio Lazzarato, Hardt (1999) defines 'immaterial labor' as 'labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, knowledge, or communication' (p.94). He further defines 'affective labor' as a kind of immaterial labor defined by 'the creation and manipulation of affects' (p.96).

⁶⁷ This idea has historical precedents in the writing on technology and society: Toffler (1981) predicted the rise of the 'prosumer', who undertakes unpaid creative labour using highly localised means of production; even earlier, Walter Benjamin (1935), suggested that 'the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character' (p.12).

generating direct income for the artist (Powers, 2015; Williams & Wilson, 2016; D'Amato, 2016). In this context, 'professional' status may not necessarily refer to a career of regular paid performances and commercially successful releases, but rather the ability to command a series of technologically-mediated interactions with a music scene which generate income in different ways.

A key issue here is musical value, and the extent to which it is possible to view digital music as a commodity. The 20th century music industry focused on the generation and sale of 'product', meaning physical objects such as CDs and vinyl or merchandise such as T-shirts, DVDs and posters. However, it is not clear whether digital music files, whether streamed or downloaded, can be usefully conceived of in this way. Wikström (2009) suggests that digital music should instead be conceived of as a service, wherein users pay for access to music rather than ownership. This viewpoint is particularly associated with subscription-based music streaming services such as Spotify, Amazon Music or TIDAL. (A related argument suggests that digital music should be thought of as a 'utility', like water or electricity – see Kusek, 2005.) However, the value of this approach to musicians, or to music scenes as a whole, is uncertain. Subscription-based services do not tend to remunerate musicians particularly well and forcefully reintermediate musical culture in uncompromising ways – their strategic potential is thus limited.

Despite these various attempts to commodify digital music, music on the internet is increasingly viewed neither as a product nor a service, but as 'content'. Bas Grasmayer explains:

For the end-consumer, music is not a product or a service. End-consumers rarely pay for music. They put down money for copies of music, such as CDs, sheet music or music downloads. They put down money for tickets to live experiences. They put down money for subscriptions to music services. Those are all products, but music itself is not.

(Grasmayer, 2012)

Today's online environment encourages musicians to conceive of their output in this manner: not as a valuable product or a service in itself, but as the content which gives value to the vessel which carries it, whether that is a service or a physical item (such as a CD). The primary providers of 'content' today

are large social networking platforms which make money from the content provided by musicians and other artists (normally through advertising) and give relatively little in return. Audiences increasingly expect to be able to access this content without paying for it; by conceiving of their music in this way, musicians are thus complicit in creating a 'gift economy' (Leyson, 2014) where the product of their labour is given away for free.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that many of the strategies which today's musicians enact online expressly involve the conversion of 'content' into 'product'.⁶⁸ Various services have arisen to facilitate this. For example, some of the newer web applications allow for the direct sale of digital downloads from the artist to the listener (BandCamp is the primary example in this chapter – see 4.3) and there are online printing services which allow small batches of physical product, such as CDs or T-shirts, to be made and delivered to the musician for onwards sale. This approach offers the greatest level of control to artists and potentially the greatest source of income; however, it also entails a greater amount of expenditure in terms of time, money and other resources. Moving forward, we shall see that PEDM musicians are drawn towards services which allow music to be conceived as a product and will even create services of their own around this premise.

Other forms of 'subcultural' intermediation are also present which are aimed at scene-building as well as the creation of products. These involve participants positioning themselves within the system of musical production so as to shape the flow of musical information between creator and listener. Some of these are analogous to musical roles in the pre-internet music industry, such as record label owner or radio show host; others are specific to the online environment, such as blogger or video channel owner. (The latter is somewhat specific to the video streaming platform YouTube.) Other, unique strategies also emerge involving the creation of unusual products – some examples will be given later

⁶⁸ This may be seen as a continuation of the age-old 'metaphysical' problem of turning an 'intangible, time-bound aural experience into something that can be bought and sold' (Frith, 2001, p.26) which Simon Frith argues has characterised the various music industries, beginning with the sheet music industry of the 19th century.

in the chapter. In this way, participants have found new ways to interact with music scenes which differ from those of the pre-internet era.

From the perspective of underground musical cultures, such as UDM, punk, extreme metal, or folk music, in which cultural production was conducted in a 'grassroots' manner before the rise of the internet (Berger, 1999; Haenfler, 2015), Web 2.0 is business as usual, serving largely to streamline the processes of production and distribution which were once carried out by way of physical media such as posters, 'zines and cassette tapes. These cultures have taken to the internet particularly well, I suggest, by comparison with 'mainstream' musical cultures, such as rock and hip-hop, because their underlying assumptions about music-making and musicianship more closely align with the opportunities that the internet actually provides. Furthermore, the social forms which characterised pre-internet underground music cultures, such as independent record labels and event crews, have been easy to replicate in the virtual environment which provides a limitless space for small groups to convene and share resources. Here, the entrepreneurial attitude associated with underground culture can be channelled into ambitious projects incorporating numerous participants and a range of material and virtual resources.

Digital technology and the internet thus provide numerous opportunities for individuals to interact strategically with today's music scenes. However, these also require new ways of thinking about the musical product and its value, and about musical sociality and mediation. Moving forward, we will see the ways in which psyculture participants deal with these challenges, and the networked structures, comprised of and connecting human, virtual, and physical nodes, which arise as a result.

4.1 Psyculture, Technology, and the Internet

Psyculture is particularly oriented towards new technologies, even by comparison with other EDM cultures. The latest modes of production, distribution and performance are embraced by participants,

even where these challenge preconceived notions about music-making. For example, performance from vinyl (the 'authentic' way of performing in many EDM cultures – see Butler, 2006) is virtually non-existent whereas DJing from a laptop and live performance are commonplace, even though the latter allows musicians to 'fake' a performance (see 3.3; van Veen & Attias, 2011). Participants have also embraced the use of the internet and social media in their musical and social lives. Looking at 1990s Goa trance culture, Taylor (2001) states that 'Goa trance fans don't worry about losing ground to technology; in fact, the main goal of participation in the little culture is to lose oneself in the collective through the use of technology' (p.165); more recently, St. John (2015) observes that participants 'virtualise the experience with the assistance of Facebook groups and other net-based social networking platforms, music filesharing portals, blogging, and webforum participation' (p.256). Digitally-mediated forms of collective identity are thus a central component of psyculture, differentiating it from other underground cultures (such as folk or heavy metal) which emerged in the pre-internet era and have had to subsequently adapt to the digital music landscape.

The history of psyculture helps to explain its present-day configuration of technologies and practices. Because of the peripatetic nature of the 1980s and 1990s 'Goa music' scene, DJs and producers adopted the highly-portable Digital Audio Tape (DAT) as their normative mode of performance and distribution, copying and sharing music in a digital format long before this would become possible on home computers (Mathesdorf, 2011b). This use of DAT differentiated Goa trance culture from that of house, jungle and techno, which were performed largely from vinyl records. By the early 2000s, CD had become a normative way of distributing and performing Goa trance and psytrance music; mp3 and other digital audio formats followed shortly as laptop performance became more commonplace. The relative ease of this transition, I suggest, is a result of the adoption of digital distribution and performance via DAT in the early days of the Goa travellers.

Psyculture has been present on the internet from the mid-1990s onwards. The earliest websites and mailing lists were not oriented towards music distribution but instead served primarily as a means of

circulating information about events and new releases.⁶⁹ Publicising events in this way helped keep the Goa trance scene ‘secret – accessible only for those who could share its ideas’ (Chaishop, 2011, p.75); however, it also ‘helped in the globalisation of the scene by spreading the local news worldwide’ (p.77). Much of the social and musical structure of the early scene was thus a result of digital communication, which allowed scene members to be aware of each other’s activities across large distances. Later, more advanced Goa trance and psytrance websites took on a ‘forum’ structure, allowing visitors to interact with each other in ‘threads’ organised by topic.⁷⁰ These might feature music reviews, or provide a space where crews could advertise events. For musicians, this also provided a crucial way of discussing production and performance, and a resource for newcomers to learn their craft (see Chapter 7). Many of these forums still exist, although the rise of large social networking platforms means that they are less central than before.

Towards the end of the 1990s psyculture began to embrace music distribution via the internet, for both physical and virtual products. Despite the emphasis on copying and sharing DATs during the early years of Goa trance, the ‘digital music commodity’ (Morris, 2015) was, and continues to be, understood in a historically normative way by participants. That is to say: the majority of PEDM musicians and label owners do not expect DJs or listeners to copy and distribute the music amongst themselves, but rather to purchase it like they would any other kind of music. Psyulture participants have largely tended to favour ‘disintermediated’ services which allow them to sell music directly to the listener, or subcultural services in which the intermediaries are also scene members, such as the

⁶⁹ According to Chaishop (2011) the first of these was the Swedish website ‘Psychedelic Mind Expander’ which was started by Andrzej Tarski in 1995, and later changed its name to ‘Psydb’ (www.psydb.net). Another early example was Goabase.de, which lists Goa trance events around the world, and is still active today.

⁷⁰ Notable examples of PEDM forums include Isratrance (www.isratrance.com), PsyNews (www.psynews.org), and PsyMusicUK (www.psymusic.co.uk).

websites Psyshop and Goastore.⁷¹ Kai Mathesdorf, a noted psytrance DJ and editor of *Mushroom* magazine, states that:

The production and sales line of label-distributor-record store is, in fact, something that actually no longer exists. CDs in this music segment are no almost exclusively sold directly to the customer by online distribution networks over the internet. The great mass of music currently produced is spread via download portals – either through a label or from the artist directly – without even being sent to press.

(Mathesdorf, 2011b, p.47)

Noting the extent to which this empowers the musicians and other scene participants, Mathesdorf suggests that ‘We are witnessing the development of a further democratisation of underground music which fits in well with Psychedelic Trance culture’ (ibid.). Grassroots music distribution is thus understood by PEDM participants not only as a technical matter, but as cultural one. However, not all of the music is distributed this way: psytrance CDs and downloads can also be purchased from mainstream internet music outlets such as iTunes, Amazon, and BeatPort. The situation is somewhat more complex than Mathesdorf suggests, with different musicians and labels enacting different distribution strategies using different channels.

Whilst some psytrance musicians have sold their wares via the internet in a conventional manner (i.e. for money), other participants have embraced ‘free music’ (Anderson, 2009); that is, giving their digital music away for free and monetizing other aspects of their output such as live performance and physical merchandise. This is facilitated by many widely-used, ‘non-subcultural’ internet services such as YouTube, SoundCloud and BandCamp, which allow musicians to broadcast their output without charging the listener. However, some more elaborate free music projects have also emerged, allowing free music to circulate within entirely subcultural domains. We will look at one example, the website EktoPlazm, later in the chapter (see 4.4). Due to the utopian rhetoric and imagery concerning technology which permeates psyculture, and its history of copying and sharing as a normative mode

⁷¹ www.psyshop.com; www.goastore.com

of distribution, 'free music' has particular symbolic properties for participants; for the musician, I suggest, the strategic potential of this distribution method is enhanced by these associations.

Despite this enthusiasm for digital communication and distribution, psyculture should not be understood as a 'virtual music scene' (Lee & Peterson, 2004; Gosling, 2004), although some writers have described it as such. For example, Greener and Hollands (2006) refer to psyculture as an 'Internet-based subculture' (p.407) in which virtual connections are 'reinforced by face-to-face contact' (p.411). This statement is erroneous: psyculture is very much an event-based culture; the internet, although it has played a key developmental role, has primarily been used as a means of advertising events and distributing music. Instead of theorising certain musical cultures as 'virtual music scenes', I propose that scholars should look at the virtual aspects of a scene as resources which are deployed strategically by participants. This helps to integrate local, translocal and virtual aspects of a music scene into a shared framework, and to understand the relationship between subcultural and non-subcultural aspects of the virtual domain.

4.2 Internet Services and Platforms

Internet music services have often been conceived as communities, and have been studied as such, often with reference to sociological models theorising relatively bounded and static groups. For example, applying Bourdieu's theories of 'field' and 'capital', Suhr (2012) describes social media as a 'field of cultural production' in which musicians struggle for recognition and success. Looking specifically at MySpace, YouTube, Second Life and Indaba Music, Suhr demonstrates the mechanisms by which musicians interact with listeners and the rating and ranking systems by which musical quality is judged. Platform users themselves are found to perform the function of evaluating and sharing musical content; however, the music industry also plays an important role, at times rewarding musicians for their 'popularity' in this environment. This creates a contradiction: 'On the one hand,

social networking sites provide direct opportunities to advance independent musicians' careers, while on the other hand, they operate as a traditional type of cultural intermediary' (p.18).⁷² This leads Suhr to describe social media as a 'hybrid field' that is both platform and intermediary, and which facilitates both large-scale and restricted cultural production.

Although Suhr's application of the ethnographic method to the online musical environment helpfully illuminates various aspects of contemporary musical careers, there are several issues with her approach. Firstly, Suhr treats individual music websites as her 'units of analysis', giving each a separate chapter in her book. These are conceived as self-contained communities of users operating in relative isolation from the rest of the internet. However, today's musicians utilise many internet services simultaneously, and sometimes even create services of their own. These are drawn together to form complex assemblages which defy interpretation as bounded 'fields' – rather, they are networks composed of heterogeneous elements which facilitate very particular and sometimes quite unusual participation strategies. Secondly, in treating social media sites as cultural intermediaries bestowing value through the collective decision making of their users, Suhr neglects the various and complicated forms of reintermediation which music scene participants enact in the online environment – notably the establishment and maintenance of internet record labels. Also absent are the associations between musicians, labels and event crews, which play an important role in shaping musical careers both online and offline.

In order to address these issues, I propose a user-centred approach focusing on individuals and small groups of scene participants (both musicians and non-musicians) who use the internet to enact specific musical participation strategies. In other words, rather than looking at music platforms as communities or fields within which musicians struggle for recognition, we can look at them as resources used to facilitate particular kinds of musical activity. This allows the researcher to examine

⁷² More recently, Lloyd (2016) states that users of the platforms MySpace and SoundCloud 'enjoy a powerful dialogic function as virtual editors and critics' (p.29).

the way that services are connected together by users, and complex strategies which take place in more than one location. It also helps to illuminate the relationship between the internet and other elements of music-making infrastructure, such as music venues or record stores. In the following sections of this chapter I will apply this approach to PEDM musicians in Bristol, looking at the way they use social media and other virtual resources as part of their day-to-day musical practice.

One common term, 'platform', must be carefully examined before proceeding, as it is not used with consistency and is often misapplied. Historically, 'platform' has referred to hardware and software created by computer manufacturers upon which developers build software applications.⁷³ Marc Andreessen explains:

A "platform" is a system that can be programmed and therefore customized by outside developers -- users -- and in that way, adapted to countless needs and niches that the platform's original developers could not have possibly contemplated, much less had time to accommodate.

(Andreessen, 2007)

Allowing for a liberal interpretation of term 'programmed', we might conceive of an internet platform as an application which allows for a heavily customisable user experience, with few or no intermediaries determining how it should be used. I suggest that many so-called 'internet music platforms' do not offer this functionality and are in fact better conceptualised as 'internet music services'. The latter term is occasionally used to refer to web applications which offer music for download, streaming or physical purchase, and may include applications as diverse as Spotify, SoundCloud, Amazon or iTunes. In broad terms, we could suggest that an 'internet music service' is an application which connects users with musical content, whereas an 'internet music platform' is a particular type of internet music service which allows users to create personal pages for sharing

⁷³ Platform, n.: '[A] (type of) machine and/or operating system, regarded as the base on which software applications are run'. (OED, Online)

musical content.⁷⁴ By this definition, user-to-user-oriented, profile-based applications such as SoundCloud or BandCamp are internet music platforms; heavily intermediated retail and subscription-based services such as Amazon, iTunes, and Spotify are not. Forum-based websites and peer-to-peer file sharing sites should not be considered platforms: although registered users may have a ‘profile’ page displaying personal information, these profiles do not in themselves serve as a vehicle for uploading or sharing content. Conversely, YouTube *is* a music platform by this definition, despite being focused on video rather than audio.

A defining feature of today’s internet music platforms is a relatively democratic treatment of users. Platforms such as SoundCloud and MixCloud do not make a clear distinction between musicians and non-musicians: both can create pages on equal terms, and content can be shared in a manner which resembles the initial upload process (Figure 4.1). Individuals and groups are also largely indistinct; an account for a record label or crew looks similar or identical to a page for an individual user. (Some users will pay for a ‘premium’ subscription, which allows for greater storage space and access to listening statistics; however, these are normally identical in appearance to a free account.) Such platforms tend to make use of a ‘newsfeed’: on logging in, the user is presented with a list of new content or content that has been recently shared by other users. In this context the activity of musicians and fans looks similar, and there is little to differentiate between original content and shared or ‘re-posted’ items. The newsfeed thus levels the playing field between the various participants within a music scene, allowing each to engage with musical content in creative ways. As we shall see in the coming examples, this democratic treatment of users is central to many of the strategies for which internet music services are used – ‘sharing’ is often as important as ‘posting’.

⁷⁴ Bogdanovich (2016) states that ‘The key element in the architecture of all SNSs is the profile[...]’ (p.436). (Here SNS stands for ‘Social Networking Service.’)



Figure 4.1 - Two tracks on the researcher's SoundCloud page.

Connections between services and platforms are of vital importance. This has historically taken the form of a hyperlink which allows the user to move from website to website (Elliott, 2002). More recently, the 'web widget' has become a key device for linking internet services together, meaning that the content, like the user, can move between different locations on the internet. For example, a track hosted on SoundCloud may be displayed on Facebook, or a set on MixCloud may be shared on a forum, by way of a miniature music player which connects allows content to be displayed where the link is shared. These connections blur the boundaries between services, helping musicians to the meet the 'challenge of managing representation in front of several audiences and across several platforms' (Bogdanovich, 2016, p.441). They also allow for more complex, interlocking strategies involving multiple services – we will look at several examples later in the chapter.

Borrowing a concept from business studies, I suggest that the totality of an individual or group's online activity, insofar as it is visible to other users, can be thought of as their 'web presence'. (This may be contrasted with 'online presence', a term used in business studies to refer way that brands maintain visibility online through search engine optimisation, advertising, and reputation management.) A web presence may include a website, an account on a social networking platform, a page on a music streaming service, an online store, and so on. An individual or small group such as a crew or a label

can maintain a wide presence if they are willing to put in the time and effort required to maintain it; conversely, it is possible for a large project with multiple participants to be represented by a single page on a social networking platform. Web presence also includes the ways in which artists are represented by other entities, such as record labels or event crews, and the activities of these entities which involve the participant in some way (such as putting on an event or releasing an album). It is thus a complex effect arising not only from the number of different online resources used by a musician, but also from the particular projects and strategies that these resources are used to enact, and the way that these interlock and interact.

Participants in underground music scenes generally understand web presence to be an important aspect of scene building (see 3.1) and will aid each other in creating and maintaining visibility in the virtual environment.⁷⁵ This is mostly achieved through sharing of musical content on internet platforms: fans and other participants take the content provided by musicians and share with the wider group. It is also often the case that fans, rather than musicians, are responsible for the initial uploading of content to a service. (For example, on YouTube it is often the case that third-party 'channels', rather than artists or labels, upload underground musical content to the service. Due to the fact that YouTube is oriented towards sharing content in this manner, these uploads often accrue many hundreds of times more views than the original creators of the music could possibly manage on their own.) An etiquette has emerged in which links are provided to an artist's home page, social media accounts or web store, often with the recommendation that the listener should 'support the artist' by making purchases or attending gigs. This rhetoric is widespread and may be understood as an aspect of scene building, although its effectiveness in generating income for musicians is uncertain.

An artist or label's web presence is thus a result of various participation strategies by different internet users, which interlock and complement each other in complex ways. Much of this activity is predicated

⁷⁵ Prior (2016) describes musical sharing on the internet as 'a resonant social practice that holds people together' (p.500).

on the idea that music can be accessed and shared for free, raising questions about the value of music and its status as a commodity. The activities of 'liking', 'sharing', and 'listening' (or 'viewing') contribute to presence in complex ways which do not necessarily direct attention to the musicians themselves. As such, a flexible and open-minded approach is required – musicians must often cede control of their output if they are to benefit from the networking opportunities offered by the online environment.

4.3 Internet Platforms Used by Psyculture Participants

In this section and the next, I will give details on some of the internet services used by the musicians in my study. I have divided these into two types: firstly, large internet platforms which cater for a number of musical genres; secondly, 'subcultural' services which only cater for PEDM and are maintained by scene members. (I will give just one salient example of the latter, a psytrance distribution service called Ektoplazm.) This paves the way for a user-oriented discussion of the scene participation strategies in which these services are implicated and combined.

The largest and most important platform used by the participants in my study is Facebook. This dominates virtually every area of musical participation, from promoting events to releasing music and making contacts. All around the world, PEDM producers, DJs, crews and labels use Facebook to conduct their day-to-day musical lives. However, Facebook does not in itself allow users to upload and share music – it must be combined with other services for its potential as a 'music platform' to be realised. In this sense, it is primarily used as a base for other kinds of online activity, allowing participants to share and connect with other scene members from a central location whilst also drawing in other services and platforms to perform other functions. Thus, although entirely focused on social networking, Facebook enables a wide range of participation strategies, from event organisation to music distribution.


Facebook has a number of features which are of particular use to musicians. The most important are the 'pages' which users can create for their projects. These are distinct from a user's personal profile, and a user can have multiple pages of various kinds, allowing them to have multiple projects active simultaneously. The categories which Facebook offers for these pages are broad and allow for a degree of flexibility in terms of how musicians define themselves and their output: the most commonly used are 'musician/band' for production or performance projects, 'record label' for distribution projects, and 'community' for event promotion crews. These pages allow users to create 'events', which are used not only for upcoming parties but also for other purposes such as the release of a new album. Facebook does not distinguish between different types of event and allows users to make imaginative use of this function. Facebook pages are thus a focal point for the web presence of many PEDM producers and performers and are used for a wide range of purposes.



Figure 4.2 - Krosis' Facebook page.

As noted in the previous section, YouTube was by far the most widely-used music platform during my research period, despite being a video streaming service. Although individual producers, DJs and labels made use of YouTube as a means of broadcasting their output, its defining feature is the user-created

'channels' which are used to share content. Music-oriented channels operate like record labels, sharing a particular kind of music and acting in a curatorial fashion, although this is done without the permission of the creator. Several YouTube channels dedicated to PEDM were in operation during my study (notably Psybrations, Trancentral, Psychedelic Universe and The Psychedelic Muse) which would routinely share music by PEDM producers without seeking permission from the artist or label. These channels were occasionally reproached for this activity by older producers and label owners; however, I observed that younger artists largely welcomed this kind of sharing, viewing it as free publicity and a validation of their creative endeavours. As an example, Figure 4.3 shows the information section from a YouTube upload of Globular's 2016 album *Holobiont* by the channel Cosmic Soundwaves. Here, there is a link to Globular's BandCamp page where he sells his music and merchandise, as well as links to his Facebook and SoundCloud accounts. It is evident from the comments in Figure 4.4 that some listeners did discover his music through this channel, and some did go on to make purchases from his BandCamp page. In this way, Cosmic Soundwaves contributed to Globular's web presence even though the content was uploaded without the producer's permission.



Cosmic Soundwaves
Published on Apr 8, 2016

Subscribe: <http://bit.ly/SubscribeCSW>
Download: <https://globular.bandcamp.com/album/h...>

1. Tabula Rasa 0:00
2. Emergent Resurgence 12:11
3. [42] 19:53
4. An Upwards Curve in the Horizon 30:38
5. ...and It Speaks of Everything 42:16
6. The Might of Chondria 49:29
7. Overcoming Occhiolism 57:20
8. Temple of the Pollinator 1:06:38

Follow Globular:
<https://www.facebook.com/globular>
<http://www.soundcloud.com/globular>

Figure 4.3 - Globular's *Holobiont* (2016), uploaded to YouTube by the channel Cosmic Soundwaves

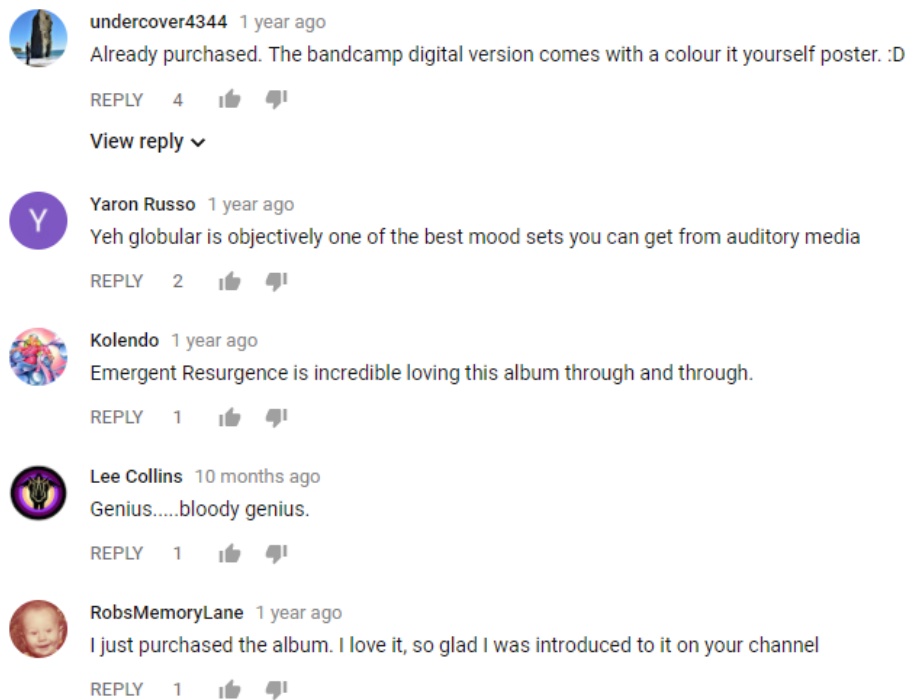


Figure 4.4 - Comments on the Cosmic Soundwaves upload of Holobiont

After YouTube, SoundCloud is the most popular music streaming platform among PEDM musicians. Like Facebook ‘pages’, SoundCloud accounts are used for a range of purposes. Users can upload individual tracks, mixes, radio shows, or recorded performances to the service, and share these with the audience for free. There are no limits on how many times a piece can be listened to; as such, uploading music to SoundCloud may be interpreted as a kind of ‘free music’ distribution. Users may also purchase a ‘pro’ account (costing £5/month) which allows them to upload a greater amount of music and to access statistics as to where, when and how much their content is being played. Another advantage of using SoundCloud is the service’s ‘widget’, a miniature music player displaying the waveform of a track, which can be embedded in other websites. This allows the viewer to play the track or mix in question without leaving the service they are browsing. Many services (including Facebook) will automatically display one of these widgets when a SoundCloud link is provided, making it very easy for musicians and listeners to make connections between services. This is especially useful on forums, where SoundCloud and YouTube widgets are used to facilitate musical discussions of various kinds.

The music distribution platform BandCamp gained considerable popularity during my study. Primarily a music downloading service, this allows artists to sell albums and individual tracks at any price, including zero or 'pay what you want', from a personalised page. There are no gatekeepers: anyone can make an account, and Bandcamp takes 15% of the revenue from digital sales. The service keeps a record of all the music purchased by a user, thus forming a 'collection' which is permanently associated with that account. The user can stream their collection from a mobile app, download and re-download the music at any time in a range of formats, and copy the music to as many devices as they like. This helps both the musician and the customer to conceive of the music as a 'product' rather than 'content', and to engender a sense of ownership over the music which is not offered by services such as SoundCloud or YouTube.

BandCamp is not otherwise a social networking service. It offers little in the way of user-to-user communication, unlike Facebook or SoundCloud. This is perhaps advantageous as it allows musicians to direct their efforts towards larger social networking services. Bandcamp instead offers the ability to create a simple storefront which connects effortlessly with other platforms, allowing them to retain control of their content as it moves from service to service with little effort. Bandcamp is thus the opposite of Facebook – it needs to be used in conjunction with other services with a stronger social networking component for its full potential to be realised.

4.4 Subcultural Services: Ektoplazm.com

In addition to these large internet platforms, scene participants will also create and maintain their own websites and internet services. These I have described as 'subcultural' services, after Hodkinson (2002). The most ambitious services involve music distribution, which requires considerable technical expertise on the part of the webmaster and possible expenses in terms of hosting and bandwidth.

However, they also allow for highly idiosyncratic participation strategies, and for new ways of understanding the musical commodity and musical sociality on the internet.

The most striking example of a subcultural internet music service in psyculture is EktoPlazm (www.ektoplazm.com) which offers free, legal PEDM downloads. Founded by DJ Basilisk in 2001, EktoPlazm has become one of the largest psytrance websites on the internet, hosting music by artists from all over the world. EktoPlazm has been used in some capacity by all of the participants in my study – Krosis, Globular and OOOD have used the service to distribute their music, for example, whereas Lurk, Snowdrop and Fractal Forest have used it to obtain music for their DJ sets. Basilisk explains his motivations in a blog and ‘Beginners Introduction’ to the website:

I meant to agitate for change, lead by example, and disrupt the status quo. I aimed to provide artists with another choice beyond conformity or obscurity: massive exposure, artistic freedom, and good karma. At first there wasn't much of a response to the concept; no one—not even the free labels and artists—took free music seriously in those early days. “You get what you pay for” was a common refrain. To address this sentiment I became a tireless advocate for higher quality standards in free music. My vision: free releases every bit as good as what could be bought in stores. This called for high-resolution album artwork, lossless/CD-quality audio files, and proper mastering. Gradually this vision became a reality as more and more labels and artists came on board with the concept. Nowadays there are many examples of free albums that rival the quality of their commercial counterparts.

DJ Basilisk (2012), ‘A Beginner’s Guide to EktoPlazm’

Basilisk views EktoPlazm as a ‘resource’ which producers and DJs can use to enact a musical career. Like BandCamp, there is almost no social networking aspect to his service. Its value therefore lies in the way that it can be combined with other services, such as Facebook, as part of a wider distribution strategy.

It is evident from Basilisk’s writing that he views the music on his website not just as content, but as a product to be valued to the same degree as conventionally paid-for music. Crucial to this endeavour, he repeatedly emphasises, is the quality of the files, artwork, and metadata which accompany a digital music release:

Ektoplazm is fanatical about lossless quality audio and kick-ass metadata. Why should we take a step back from the quality standards set in the 1980s? Bizarrely enough, some commercial shops still refuse to offer lossless/CD-quality downloads. The shops that do often impose frivolous “WAV handling fees” (I’m looking at you, Beatport). Here at Ektoplazm you have a choice between WAV, which is still useful for burning direct to CD, and FLAC, a newer, more compressed (yet still lossless) format that allows embedded metadata such as album artwork and track information. And that’s another thing—buy a song from one of the commercial shops and you’ll be stuck downloading some horribly-named file (e.g. “92809_The_Muddy_Morning_Hymn_Original_Mix.wav”) lacking any kind of useful metadata. Ektoplazm does it right: simple, standardized file names with all the obvious metadata embedded alongside album artwork and BPMs (for the DJs out there).

In an earlier passage Basilisk identifies the music ‘pirates’ of the 1990s and early 2000s as a primary inspiration for this approach:

The Napster revolution had come and gone, forever changing how we consume music, but the recording industry was doing everything it could to resist progress. Apple launched the iTunes Store with major label support in 2003 but this didn’t do a lot of good for fans of an underground style like psytrance. Even if you actually wanted to pay money for digital media you were out of luck: there were no legal download shops offering a wide selection of psytrance releases (and perish the thought of being able to procure lossless/CD-quality audio files). Pirate sites had it all, of course.

In Basilisk’s view, the pirates did more to establish digital music as a commodity than legal download services due to their higher emphasis on file quality and metadata. This view is echoed by Morris (2015) who argues that the ‘Warez’ scene of the 1990s and early 2000s had a greater impact in the development of the digital music commodity than the belated efforts of the music industry, largely because the pirates set a much higher standard in terms of audio quality, formatting, and artwork. He argues that these metadata play a crucial role in the relationship between listener and digital music: metadata ‘not only endow files with information; they afford users a measure of ownership and control over those files’ (p.71). Thus, where such standards are emphasised, communities can emerge these products with a keen interest in their accumulation, circulation and preservation. This is the model which Ektoplazm follows, and the kind of community to which Basilisk aspires.

The curated nature of Ektoplazm also contributes to its value as a resource for musicians. Basilisk receives a large amount of music every month and releases only what he deems to be of a high standard. He makes this point in his ‘Beginner’s Guide’:

Ektoplazm is a curated resource. I pick and choose what I post on the site. It isn't like YouTube where just anyone can upload music. I have a rather stringent process for demos and release submissions. I can't promise that every release will appeal to every listener—but I can promise that the releases on the site will tend to meet a minimum quality standard.⁷⁶

Ektoplazm is thus valuable to musicians not only because it allows them to distribute their music for free (there are other services which do this, such as SoundCloud and BandCamp), but because it places some restrictions on what gets published. This helps to stem the overwhelming flow of new information available to PEDM scene participants, reducing this to a manageable number of musical items. This in turn helps users to conceive of the music as a product, rather than endless, infinitely abundant content. The selection process raises questions about the 'democratic' nature of the service, especially given the egalitarian aspirations outlined in the Beginner's Guide. However, a relatively high proportion of the albums received by Basilisk are released on the site, and there is nothing stopping unsuccessful applicants from releasing their music elsewhere.

I have suggested that websites like Ektoplazm are subcultural, catering only to the psytrance scene, whereas BeatPort and SoundCloud are non-subcultural, catering for all kinds of music. However, the issue becomes complicated when we look at the wider web presence surrounding these services. For example, Ektoplazm has a Facebook page which is used to promote music and interact with users (Figure 4.5.). Social networking accounts play a vital role in this kind of service, helping the music to reach a wider audience. Thus, the wider assemblage must be taken into account in analysing subcultural internet services: they are not always comprised entirely of 'homegrown' components, but incorporate a number of websites and services of varying provision.

⁷⁶ www.ektoplazm.com/distribution



Ektoplazm

11 September 2015 · 🌐

Hard and heavy tunes with a deep progressive opener from Krosis and Woo-Dog Recordings, U.K.! <http://www.ektoplazm.com/free-music/krosis-world-engine>



Krosis – World Engine - Free Download at Ektoplazm - Free Music Portal and Psytrance Netlabel

World Engine is the latest opus from Krosis, a psytrance producer based in Bristol, U.K., who has...

EKTOPLAZM.COM

58 Likes 4 Comments 4 Shares

Figure 4.5 - Basilisk promoting Krosis' EP World Engine (2015) on Facebook

An important relative of these 'subcultural' resources are the websites operated by individuals and small groups as vehicles for their own personal projects. These are much smaller in scope than Ektoplazm, but are nonetheless an important aspect of their owners' web presence and may constitute ambitious projects in their own right. They are normally predicated on a unidirectional flow of information from the webmaster to the internet user; as such, they are neither platforms nor services, but simply 'websites'. Many scene participants get by without a personal website, instead using larger internet platforms to mediate their interactions with the scene; others use them as a focal point for their internet activities. This is not dependent on the size of an artist's fan base, nor their tenure as a musician, but rather on the specific strategies that they are involved in and whether these necessitate owning a private domain. Moving forward, we will see the various uses to which these smaller websites are put, and the ways in which they are connected with larger services in the process.

4.5 Bristol Psyculture and the Internet

This section details the online presence of various entities that make up the Bristol psytrance scene, including crews, artists and record labels, looking at the strategies they enact using the internet.

Particular attention is paid to the connections made between services. Where appropriate, I will begin by looking at the websites maintained by scene participants before branching outwards to include the other platforms which make up their web presence. Each individual or group has a strategy for the dissemination of their output, some choosing to host their sounds on free streaming services and others opting for paid-for products. These strategies make use of social media, entailing regular interaction with fans and promoters. Maintaining a web presence thus involves a significant amount of work which detracts from musical activity. Many artists choose to be affiliated with a record label or booking agency, allowing for some of this work to be taken on by others (see 3.1; 3.2). Other forms of collective activity emerge in this environment, mitigating centralisation and allowing artists to promote each other's work online – looking in particular at record labels, we will see how internet services facilitate these different kinds of musical collectivity.

4.5.1 Groups

4.5.1.1 Tribe of Frog

Tribe of Frog maintains a wide internet presence which provides a good example of connectivity between subcultural websites and social media platforms. The crew has a website (tribeoffrog.com) which acts as a hub for their online activities (Figure 4.6). This serves to advertise future events and to provide information and access to tickets. It also provides access to a membership service, allowing users to create an account through which they can purchase discounted tickets. A photo gallery provides pictures of past events, whilst a section entitled 'Recorded at Tribe' links the user to the crew's SoundCloud page. The website does not allow much in the way of user-to-user communication despite the presence of user accounts (although it has had a small chatroom in the past); rather, it allows for a unidirectional flow of information from crew to audience.



Figure 4.6 - The Tribe of Frog website, 28th of November, 2017

Alongside the website, the crew maintains several accounts on social networking platforms, each of which performs a different function. Facebook is the most important, being the primary means by which events are announced and advertised, photographs and recordings are shared, and audience members connected with each other. This is tied to Twitter so that announcements appear simultaneously on both platforms. (The Tribe of Frog website hosts a condensed widget version of the Facebook page, so this information is also shared between the website and the platform.) Tribe's accounts on Eventbrite and Soundcloud serve more specific functions, facilitating the sale of tickets and the promotion of artists who play at the events. The event's visual brand is maintained across all of these services and platforms, with a red-eyed tree frog acting as a mascot (Figure 4.6).

A number of strategies involving photographic material are employed in order to maintain a general interest in Tribe of Frog events. For every Tribe of Frog event, one or more photographers are hired to circulate the venue and take high-quality photographs. (These are often scene members –

photography is an increasingly popular participation strategy in psyculture, with some charging money for this service.) The resulting photographs are uploaded to the Tribe of Frog Facebook page, which is in turn linked to the 'gallery' section of the website. These create a very eye-catching display which serves as good advertising for future events.



Figure 4.7 - A photo collage of performers at Tribe of Frog's '16th Birthday' event in 2016.

In addition, Jason Frog sometimes creates photo collages using images taken from musicians' Facebook pages (Figure 4.7) when announcing the lineup for an event. Alongside posters, banners, and video clips, these composite images are one of the key ways in which Jason advertises upcoming parties. The effect of these albums and collages is a sense closeness and affinity between attendees, performers and audience members. Many of those who are 'stitched together' photographically do not know each other – the people who attend and perform at Tribe of Frog are too numerous for everyone to be acquainted. However, the group's status as a 'tribe' the Maffesolian sense (see 1.1) is nonetheless suggested through the editing and sharing of pictures on the internet. These composite images also serve as a further resource for performers and attendees to use in their own social media activities.

Tribe of Frog also has a SoundCloud account, which is used to host recordings of every set that is performed at the regular club nights and summer festivals. As noted in Chapter 2, this is a lot of music, around thirty hours per event. These are recorded on small digital recording devices; Jason Frog personally collects and edits these files before uploading them to the audio streaming service. These recordings are shared on social media by the artists, audience members, and other participants. This benefits the crew, who can demonstrate the musical quality of their events, and the performers, who can demonstrate their performing ability in an 'official' document and who benefit from the exposure. In allowing Jason to do this, performers cede control of their musical output for long-term gain.

4.5.1.2 Woo Dog and Shanti Planti

Like event crews, record labels often make use of large internet platforms alongside dedicated websites and subcultural services. Woo-Dog Records, a Bristol psytrance label which released Krosis' first album in 2015, provides an example. The label's website (woodog.co.uk) (Figure 4.8) acts as a hub, with sections listing the label's releases, producers (listed here as 'artists'), DJs and upcoming parties featuring any of the above. The 'shop' section allows visitors to purchase CDs and memory sticks containing psytrance music; a final 'links' section takes users to other psytrance-related websites. The label owner also operates Facebook and SoundCloud pages for the label, from which new releases are announced and the label's artists are promoted. Albums released on Woo Dog appear in full on the SoundCloud page; the account is also used to share content uploaded by artists and DJs associated with the label. Since these artists often play at Tribe of Frog, the recordings uploaded by Jason Frog feature prominently here. Woo Dog also has a BandCamp account offering digital downloads from its catalogue.

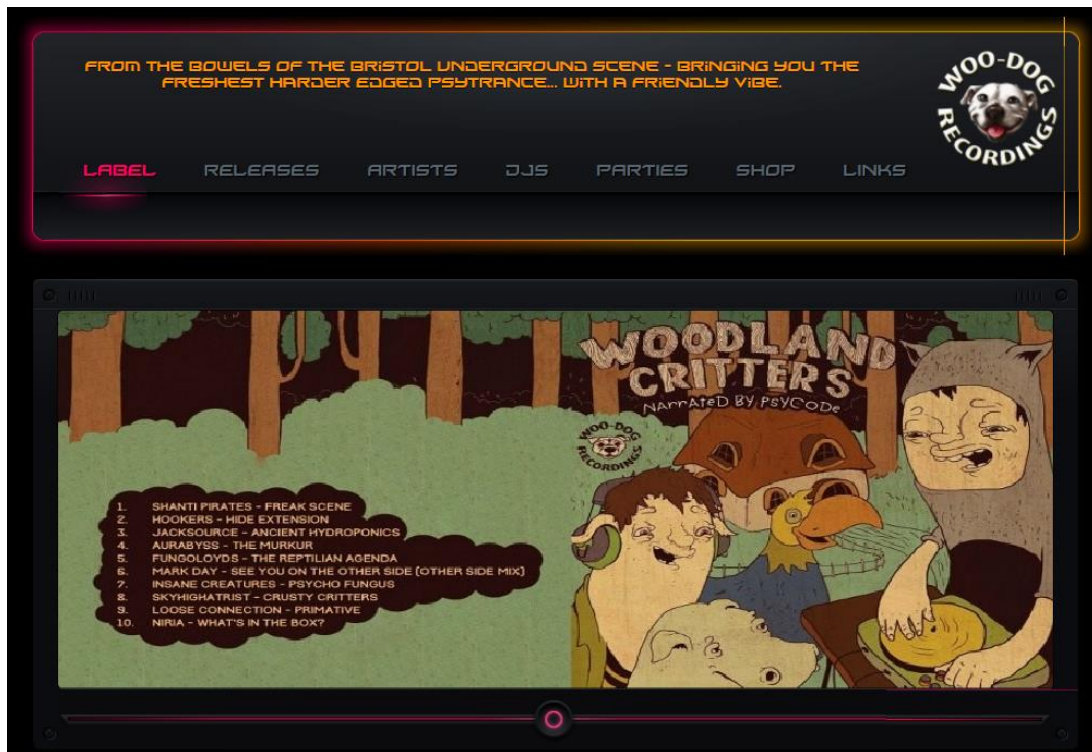


Figure 4.8 - Woo Dog Records' webpage.

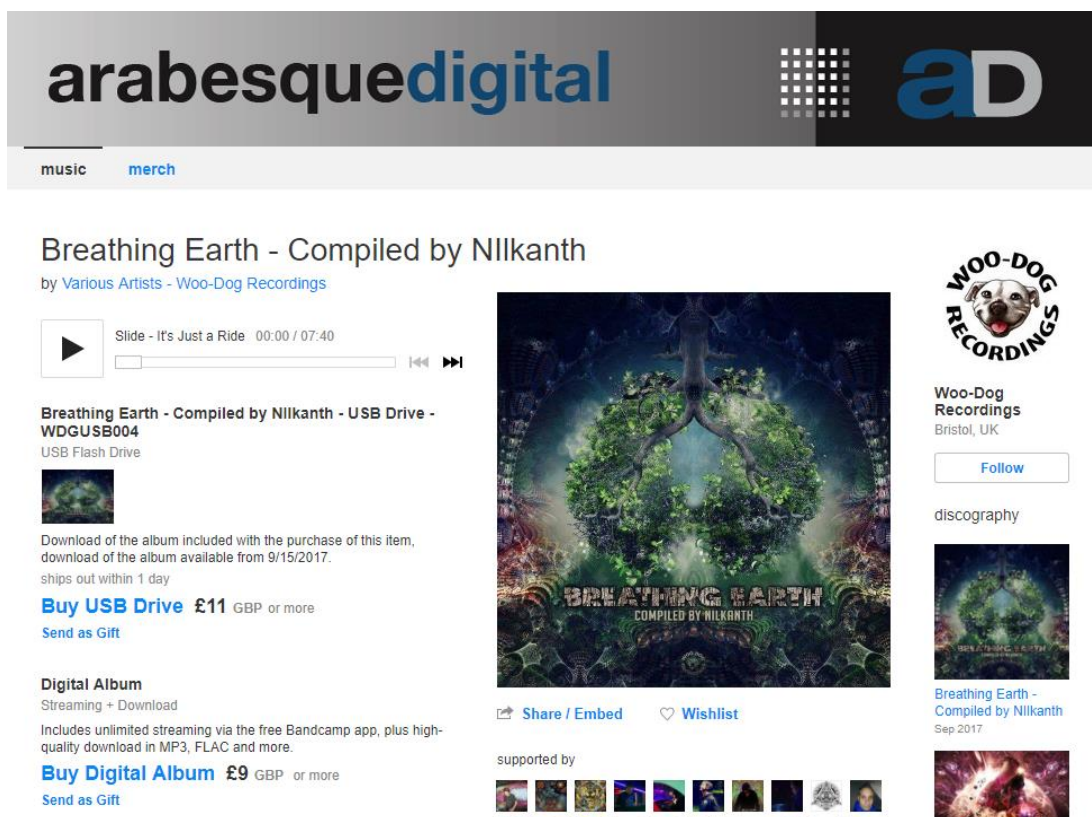


Figure 4.9 - The Woo-Dog/Arabesque BandCamp page.

Orders of physical merchandise from Woo Dog are fulfilled by a company called Arabesque Distribution. Based in London and specialising entirely in PEDM music, Arabesque stores and mails CDs, USB drives and posters to customers around the world. It has two digital 'storefronts', one on Amazon and one on BandCamp. Their BandCamp page is the kind normally used by a record label; Woo-Dog maintains a second 'artist' page which has been linked with the distributor using the artist/label relationship which BandCamp provides (Figure 4.9). This means that physical sales of Woo-Dog's albums can be instantly fulfilled by distributor. Arabesque also posts new releases on Facebook and has a social media presence of its own: in this way, the distributor also performs a promotional role which is part of its value as a service.

Woo-Dog may be contrasted with Shanti Planti, a collective of producers and DJs of psydub and psybass music of which Globular is a member (see 6.2). Shanti Planti is like a record label, although there are several differences. Globular describes the collective as 'like a co-operative, basically', the aim of which is 'to pool all our resources and knowledge to basically cross-promote ourselves, pretty much, and to make a small little scene'. The artists in the collective help to promote each-other's work online; Shanti Planti might thus be considered a combined strategy for widening the web presence of its members. Decisions are not made by a single person but are reached democratically through a voting process, including decisions on membership. This process thus performs a similar selective function to that of a record label: the name Shanti Planti on a new release is a guarantee of quality and indicates certain musical characteristics. Shanti Planti also releases compilation albums featuring music by its members, another function normally performed by a record label.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Some recent Shanti Planti compilations include *Rhythm Code II* (2015) and *Drift Theory* (2016).

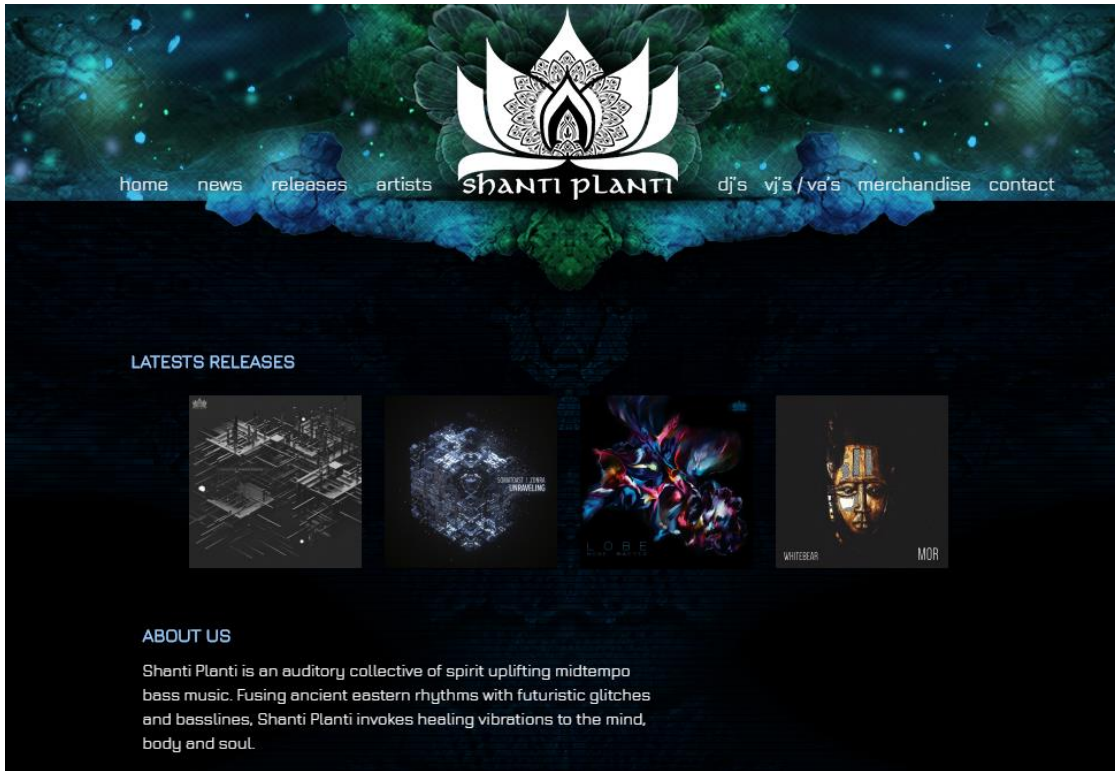


Figure 4.10 - The Shanti Planti Website.

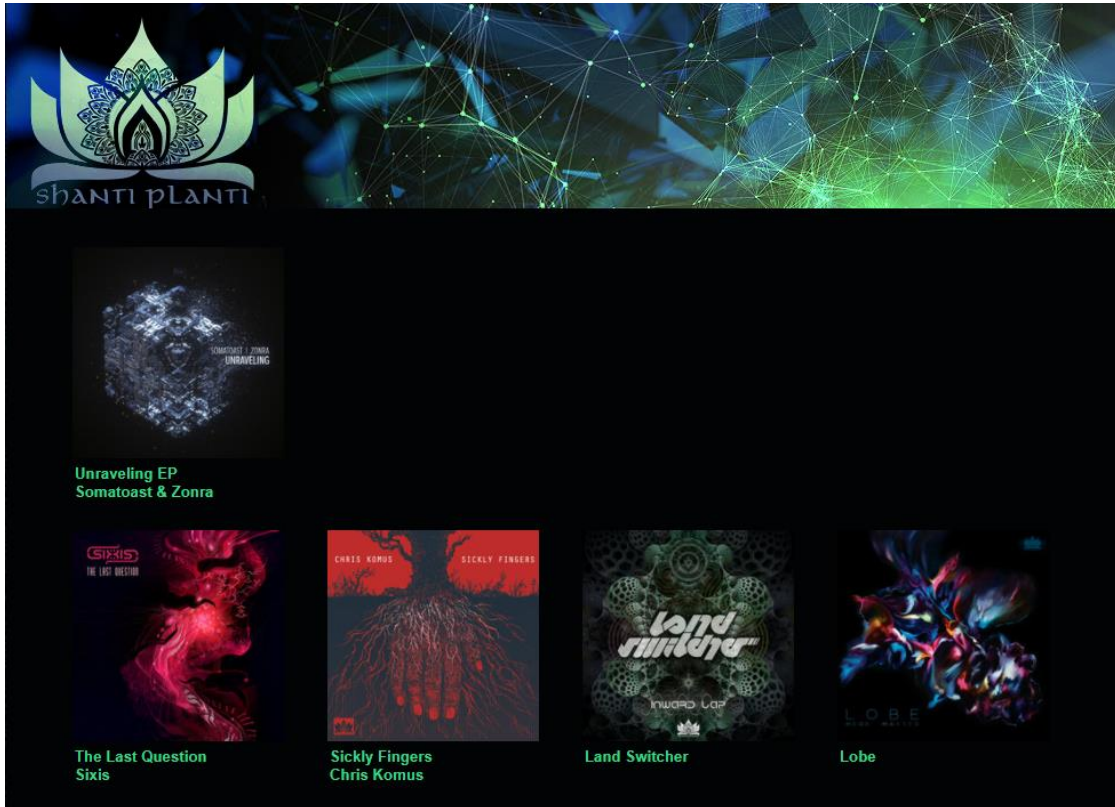


Figure 4.11 - The Shanti Planti BandCamp Page

The collective maintains a dedicated website (shantiplanti.com) listing associated DJs and producers (again listed as 'artists'), with an extra section for VJs (Figure 4.10).⁷⁸ Other sections offer merchandise and new releases, and links are given to Facebook, SoundCloud, BandCamp and BeatPort. Shanti Planti's use of SoundCloud (soundcloud.com/shanti-planti) differs somewhat from that of Woo-Dog, however, in that their page is used to share albums released by the collective's producers, and not for sharing mixes or music by other artists. BandCamp is also used differently: albums are hosted on each producer's personal page (e.g. globular.bandcamp.com) whilst a central Shanti Planti page (shantiplanti.bandcamp.com) displays the entire catalogue (Figure 4.11). The artist thus keeps the proceeds of any sales made. Compilation albums, by contrast, are hosted on the label's page, with proceeds going to a collective PayPal account rather than an individual artist – this money is used for maintaining the label's website, releasing compilations, and other expenses. All of the artists have the password to the BandCamp and SoundCloud pages, allowing them to add new albums to the collection as they are released.

Woo Dog and Shanti Planti are ostensibly similar in that both are net labels catering for a PEDM audience. However, the latter's status as a 'collective' entails different organisational properties aimed at creating a less centralised network. This is reflected in the different uses which the two labels make of the internet services available to them. For example, Woo-Dog use the 'label' and 'artist' pages on BandCamp as a means of mediating between label and distributor, whereas Shanti-Planti use them as a means of mediating between the collective and its members. This latter arrangement allows musicians to receive payments directly whilst still 'belonging' to the wider group. However, it entails more work for the individual, who is responsible for all aspects of preparing and distributing their output. It is likely that such collectives have also emerged in other musical cultures besides

⁷⁸ VJs are 'Video Jockeys', visual artists responsible for digital projections at parties. These are normally distinct from the decoration crew, with some exceptions (for example, decoration crews specialising in 3D mapping).

psyculture: in each case, there is likely to be a different configuration of people and technology, and a different way of sharing resources and responsibilities.

4.5.2 Individuals

4.5.2.1 Globular

Globular is a full-time professional musician who makes a living from gigs, from sales of digital music, and from physical merchandise. He has been almost entirely self-reliant for most of his career, releasing his own music and approaching event promoters directly for bookings, although more recently he has signed to a booking agency (see 3.1). Globular has also eschewed record labels for the most part, opting instead for affiliation with the collective Shanti Planti (see above), and using distribution services such as BandCamp and EktoPlazm which allow him to release music without being represented by a label or distributor. (By contrast, iTunes and BeatPort do not allow individuals to upload music, but only labels or distributors with a catalogue of albums.) As a result, he has a high level of control over his musical output. However, this approach requires an enormous amount of work in promoting his music via social media platforms. Shanti Planti also helps with this task, although membership of the collective requires that he, in turn, helps to promote the music of his label-mates.

'Free music' has played an important part in Globular's distribution strategy. Most of his music is available for free on EktoPlazm and on a 'pay what you want' basis on BandCamp (Figure 4.12). His relationship with EktoPlazm is particularly positive: his first LP, *A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy*, is number one on Basilisk's list of essential albums in the 'Beginner's Guide to EktoPlazm' and he has accrued many tens of thousands of downloads on the website. Globular is enthusiastic about Basilisk's project:

G: I'm so stoked for what he's done for me, that dude. I'm still a pretty small artist when it comes to it. But what he's done for me is nuts, and when I first put a release up there, the amount of support he showed me really gave me a huge boost. And having that community

to give your music to is just insane. Seeing tens of thousands of downloads within a week or something is just like, whoa, where the fuck else do you get that? (Globular, 2014)

Thanks to the popularity of EktoPlazm and the dedicated community which Basilisk has created, many thousands of psy-downtempo fans have heard Globular's music who might not otherwise have discovered it on SoundCloud or YouTube. At the same time, for Basilisk, Globular's success as a producer and performer demonstrates that free music can also be high-quality music: he is proof of the EktoPlazm concept.

Holobiont
by Globular

The Might of Chondria 00:00 / 07:50

Digital Album
Streaming + Download

Includes high-quality download in MP3, FLAC and more. Paying supporters also get unlimited streaming via the free Bandcamp app.

Ⓢ & Ⓜ

This music relies on donations from wonderful people like yourself to keep it going, so please consider paying if you can :) Thank you x

Buy Digital Album name your price

Send as Gift

★ **ACTUAL** ★ **irl Holobiont CD - made out of real matter..!**
Compact Disc (CD) + Digital Album

The culmination of a lot of hard [and fun] work - one very real, solid, Holobiont CD, created with love for you to treasure :) x
Includes unlimited streaming of *Holobiont* via the free Bandcamp app

Share / Embed **Wishlist**

supported by

- Spoiness *What's not to like? This album is brilliant, a beautiful trippy dubby electronic adventure. Thanks Globular. Favorite track: Tabula Rasa.*
- Sebastien Charasse *spoiler alert: mind-blowing GEM !!!*

Figure 4.12 - The album Holobiont on Globular's BandCamp page.

Globular - Digging & Building
 FREE MUSIC | DOWNTEMPO, PSY DUB | April 30, 2014 | Posted by Basilisk

GLOBULAR
 DIGGING & BUILDING

01 - Deeper Than Dirt (71 BPM)
 02 - Infinity Inside (80 BPM)

Born from a need to go deeper into downtempo auditory imagination-space, Globular offers up *Digging & Building*; two epic tracks melded into one tripped-out journey of discovery and creation. As ever though, Globular encourages you to tell your own story with his releases, and dance the dance that speaks to you. Written and produced by Morison Bennett. Artwork by Object. Mastered by Colin Bennun at the Stoodio.

[MP3 Download](#) | [FLAC Download](#) | [WAV Download](#) · DOWNLOAD COUNT: **10,638**.

Released under a Creative Commons license for noncommercial usage.

**** Rated 96.16% with 172 votes

Related Downloads

- GLOBULAR - MAGNITUDES OF ORDER
- GLOBULAR - A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY
- GLOBULAR - COLOURS OF THE BRAINBOW

22 Comments Comments RSS Feed

Figure 4.13 - Globular's EP *Digging and Building* on Ektoplazm

Despite the fact that it is available for free, many of Globular's fans are also willing to pay for his music in both digital and physical form. The reasons for this are not immediately clear, although this may have much to do with the independent/grassroots notion of 'supporting the artist'. (See, for example, the YouTube comments in Figure 4.4.) The resulting income is not enough to live on but acts as a supplement to money from gigs and other sources. Globular also sells physical merchandise from BandCamp, including CDs and t-shirts. These sales are fulfilled by the artist himself: items are stored in his studio and he mails them directly to customers, often with personalising touches such as stickers and messages.

Several other services are required for the distribution of these physical goods. Firstly, CDs, posters and t-shirts must be printed. There are many companies who provide this service in the UK: designs can be sent as digital files and the finished product received by post. (For the album *Holobiont*, Globular used Breedmedia in Sheffield for the CDs and Niche Frames in Bristol for the posters.) Distributing these goods necessitates the use of a delivery service, such as Royal Mail, and the artist must spend a considerable amount of time packing, labelling, purchasing postage, and so on, in order

to honour the sale. Thus, although the internet allows Globular to sell his goods directly without the use of an intermediary, various additional 'real-world' services are required to complete this task – he is not entirely self-sufficient in this sense.

Globular has made effective use of internet crowdfunding services. These were used on two occasions during my research period: on the first, Globular raised £1071 on GoFundMe in order to purchase a new pair of studio monitors;⁷⁹ on the second occasion, he raised £4,183 on Kickstarter towards the release of the album *Holobiont*.⁸⁰ The money from the latter was used to pay for artwork and mastering, and the printing of CDs and posters, with surplus funds going towards general studio maintenance and the acquisition of new hardware and software. Unlike the GoFundMe project for his speakers, the Kickstarter project involved a series of rewards and incentives for donating, including digital and physical copies of the new album, posters, t-shirts, and a credit in the album's liner notes. Kickstarter and GoFundMe offer quite different services in this respect, with the former requiring a system of pledges and rewards to be put in place (it is effectively a way of pre-selling products – see Williams & Wilson, 2016) and the latter allowing donations to be given without any need for reciprocal action.

More recently, Globular has engaged with the digital patronage service Patreon, which allows fans to support artists through a monthly donation. He has accrued an income of just over \$300/month from forty-two patrons on this platform as of October 2017 (Figure 4.14). Globular's patrons are given access to exclusive content, including unreleased music, video tutorials and specially-recorded mixes. The list in (Figure 4.15) pertains to a supporter donating \$25 a month or more but also includes the rewards for those supporting at lower amounts.

⁷⁹ <https://www.gofundme.com/globular>

⁸⁰ <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/8616209/new-globular-album-holobiont-help-me-make-it-happe>

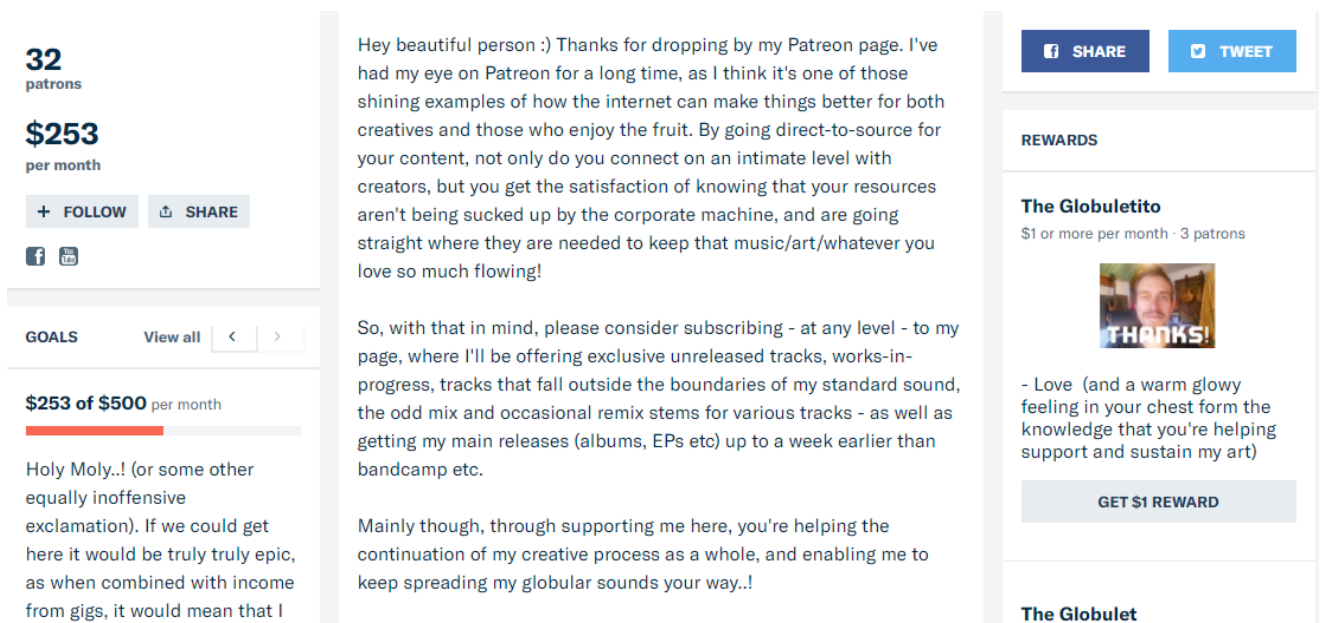


Figure 4.14 - Globular's account on Patreon

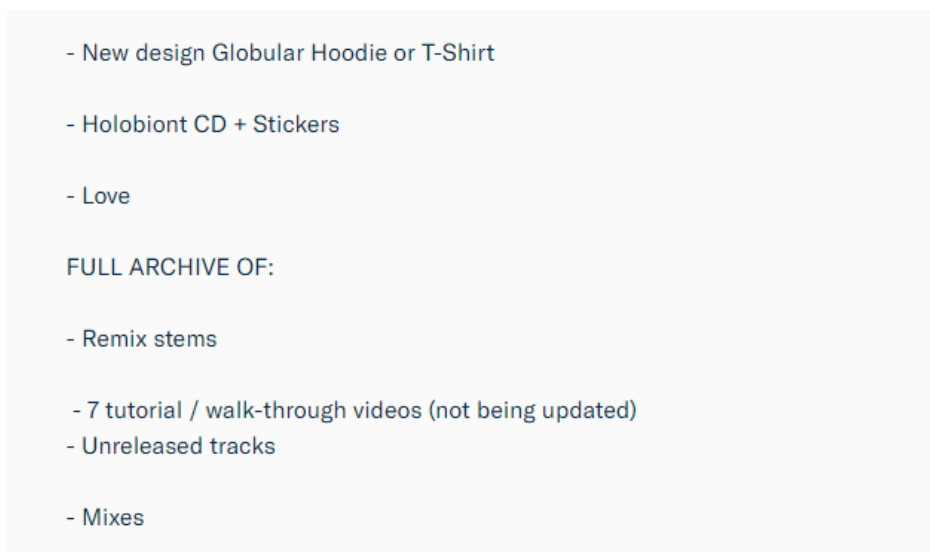


Figure 4.15 - The \$25+/month rewards on Globular's Patreon page

Globular has created a closed Facebook group for his patrons which facilitates the distribution of content as well as the discussion of relevant topics. His reasons for doing this are primarily practical: Patreon's messaging service is not flexible enough to allow for communication necessary for the

rewards specified in his pledges, which include varied levels of access to archived material. However, the Facebook page has taken on a life of its own, revealing a small community of like-minded supporters who discuss music-related topics. Many of these individuals are musicians themselves; the tutorials and remix stems specified in the Patreon pledges have thus turned out to be a particularly suitable reward for this group (see 7.2.2).

In 2017 Globular was approached by Digital Reprints, a project specialising in the physical distribution of downtempo PEDM albums which have previously been limited to digital formats. Like Shanti Planti, this is like a net label, but with some differences – on the Digital Reprints BandCamp page, the owner describes it as ‘a record label that isn't even a label (indie, community label??? call it what you want)’.⁸¹ This ‘label’ had already successfully completed two similar projects featuring music by famous downtempo PEDM acts. Each box set was limited to a hundred copies costing £35 each, which were pre-sold by way of a Kickstarter campaign (Figure 4.16). Globular agreed to the project and helped assemble a box set of his own music, *The Context*, which contained three CDs of previously-released music and a fourth CD of unreleased tracks (Figure 4.17). He also created a promotional video using footage from a live performance. The Kickstarter campaign was successful: the target of £3500 was met within two days, and all copies of the box set were sold two weeks before the end of the campaign. Globular was given £1000 from the proceeds and the rest was used to pay for artwork and printing.

As a strategy, Digital Reprints is not dissimilar to music distribution on EktoPlazm: here, one person’s subcultural distribution channel intersects with another’s musical projects, resulting in the creation of a ‘product’ out of what might otherwise remain ‘content’ on internet platforms. In this sense, EktoPlazm and Digital Reprints are both examples of musical reintermediation similar to those outlined by Klimis (1999) and Tuomola (2004). In using these various services, multiple value chains

⁸¹ <https://digitalreprints.bandcamp.com/>

are positioned between Globular and his audience, offering different types of products and different types of value for musician and consumer.

About this project



Globular - The Context (Limited Edition Box Set)

Liverpool, UK Electronic Music

£4,550

pledged of £3,500 goal

94

backers

Support this project

[Pledge £15 or more](#)

High Quality Download

Help fund this project without owning the physical release.

+ High quality digital download of all 34 tracks in almost any format you want.

+ Your name printed on the credits.

The Digital Version will be available only for the duration of the campaign.

INCLUDES:

- 34 Track Digital Download

ESTIMATED DELIVERY

Nov 2017

4 backers

[Pledge £33 or more](#)

Figure 4.16 - The Kickstarter page for Globular's box set *The Context*.



Figure 4.17 - The final product, one of only 100 sets printed.

4.5.2.2 Snowdrop and New Moon Grooves

Snowdrop is a DJ who plays psybient, psydub and psybass music. She is for the most part a DJ rather than a music producer (although she does intend to release some of her own music in future). However, she has an internet radio show called 'New Moon Grooves' which she broadcasts, records and uploads to internet services. In this sense, Snowdrop is no less a cultural producer than Globular or Krosis: she too has a musical output which is distributed to and appreciated by the PEDM community. Her strategies for presenting and promoting this output on the internet are similarly creative, drawing together various digital resources to realise an ambitious musical project.

New Moon Grooves (henceforth 'NMG') is broadcast by way of Snowdrop's personal website (www.newmoongrooves.co.uk) on dates roughly corresponding with the new moon phase of the lunar cycle. The show is usually just over an hour long and focuses on recently-released music. Snowdrop

announces the names of tracks and producers featured. This radio-style format is unusual for PEDM (which, unlike other UDM styles, has never had a strong association with pirate radio), offering a level of detail and personal attention that most DJs do not provide in their online mixes. A chatroom on the website further contributes to the interpersonal element by allowing listeners to interact with each other. This is normally populated by a handful of listeners, mostly friends, family and other downtempo artists, during the live broadcast. Snowdrop was inspired by other internet radio stations such as brap.fm, which have multiple DJs broadcasting shows every week, or more frequently. However, her unique vision prevented her from using these services: the fact that the show was to be presented on the new moon (which does not align with the months of the Gregorian calendar) would conflict with the requirement to produce a regular weekly or monthly show. In order to realise her project she had to create a service of her own.

Snowdrop's personal philosophy of healing permeates the dialogue. At the beginning of each show, she tells listeners that 'This is your time and your space to disengage from the working week, and to reconnect with the rhythm of the cosmos'. Initially, the show and website were thematically focused on the 'divine feminine', the representation of women and femininity in various spiritual and artistic practices from around the world.⁸² In its earliest iterations, the website also featured artwork, poetry and articles from various sources on this topic. Snowdrop has subsequently simplified the project, removing most of the non-musical elements whilst broadening its thematic range to incorporate a number of spiritual and seasonal themes. These are reflected in the titles of her mixes: 'The Dawn of Spring' (April, 2016); 'Fertility' (May, 2016); 'Summer's Blessings' (June, 2016) (Figure 4.19). Snowdrop's music-making is thus part of a wider personal project which ties in her work as a DJ with her spiritual and academic interests.

⁸² Snowdrop is currently writing a PhD thesis on this subject – further details will be found in her forthcoming work.

Various applications and services come together to create the NMG website. The show can be streamed using a number of applications, including an instance of Adobe Flash Player embedded in the web page, or through an internet radio app such as TuneIn. The chatroom is an IRC channel powered by KiwiIRC, a free IRC client. The shows are recorded and uploaded to SoundCloud and MixCloud shortly after broadcast. In this way, NMG spreads beyond its URL to inhabit a number of virtual locations. Most listeners hear the show after the broadcast through recordings uploaded to SoundCloud and MixCloud – in this sense it could be considered a type of podcast as well as a radio show.

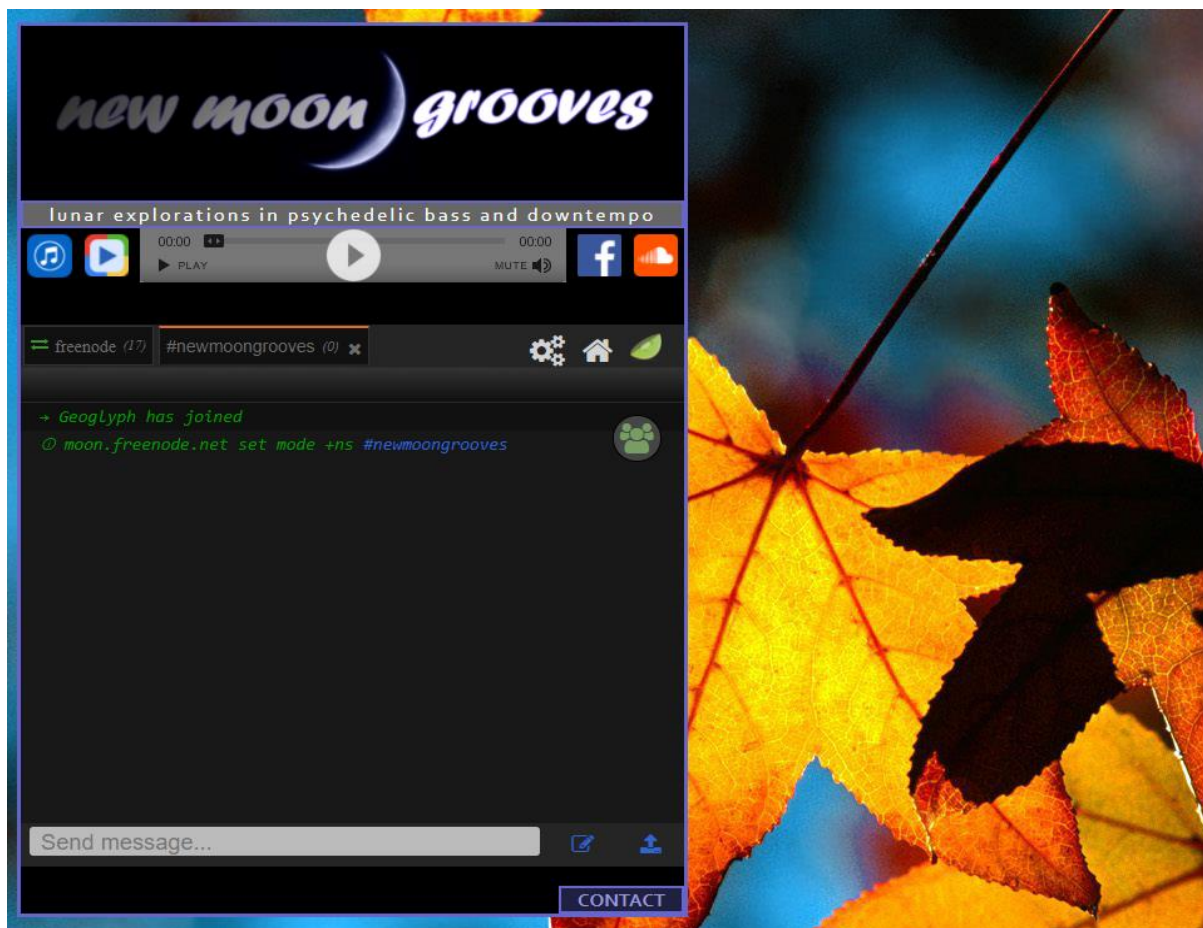


Figure 4.18 - SnowDrop's Website for New Moon Grooves

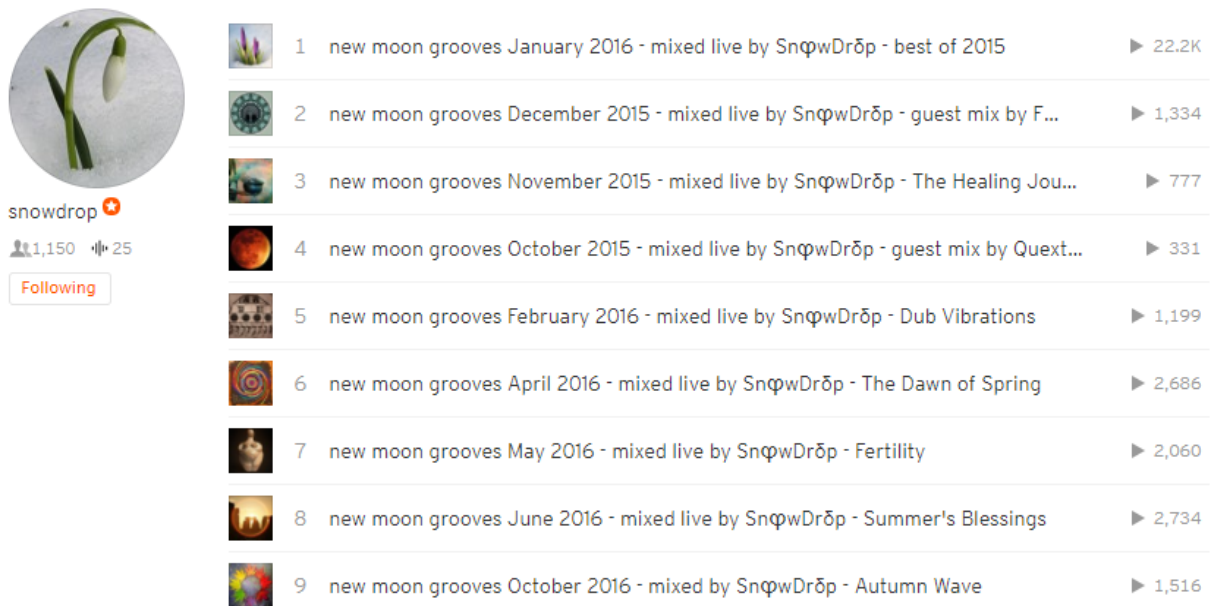


Figure 4.19 - The 'New Moon Grooves' playlist on Snowdrop's SoundCloud page.

The live broadcast itself is conducted by way of a complex chain of hardware and software devices. Snowdrop mixes on a laptop, using Ableton Live and a Novation Nocturn controller; the output is converted into an audio signal by a Numark DJIO interface and sent to a second soundcard desktop computer. Here, the signal is streamed into WinAmp using a third-party plugin (in_line.dll) and routed to SHOUTcast by way of a second plugin (dsp_sc.dll).⁸³ At the same time, the desktop records the mix for SoundCloud using the freeware audio program Audacity. All of these items, programs and plugins have different creators, many of them large companies; however, as an assemblage of such components, NMG remains very much a DIY effort, as evidenced by the website's simple design (Figure 4.18 - SnowDrop's Website for New Moon Grooves). Although Snowdrop's programming skills have advanced she is hesitant to update it: 'I think it's got its charm, because I've done it myself, you know?'

⁸³ This second plugin has been created by SHOUTcast, and its purpose is outlined on the website: 'The DSP is free software which lets you run your SHOUTcast radio station using the Winamp media player. You can play your music and audio files in Winamp and the DSP plugin will send the digital audio directly to a SHOUTcast streaming server for distribution around the world' (SHOUTcast, 2017).

Snowdrop was also closely involved with psybient.org, a forum-based website for downtempo PEDM music during the period from 2014 to 2017. Her main duty was to compile a weekly list of newly-released downtempo music from which forum members vote for a 'release of the week'. The music which she discovered in the process often made its way onto NMG. As such, psybient.org and NMG acted as interlocking strategies for Snowdrop to discover and promote new music. Snowdrop has little in the way of obligation to the producers whose music she uses – many of these artists release their music under a Creative Commons license which allows for such use.⁸⁴ (Creative Commons is thus well-suited to UDM cultures, which have a long history of distribution by way of the recorded mix tape – an activity that is not considered 'piracy' by producers, but would be understood as such by the mainstream music industry.)

DJs have been understood as selective listeners who sift through music and re-present it in a coherent, comprehensible form to their audience (see 0.2; Brewster & Broughton, 2006; Reynolds, 2013). In the internet era, however, they may be increasingly viewed as cultural producers in their own right. Globular and Snowdrop, for example, are not that dissimilar in their online activities. Both use the internet to broadcast their musical output which takes the form of digital music recordings, and both help to build the psychedelic downtempo scene by promoting the work of other artists. New Moon Grooves demonstrates the creativity that DJs bring to the online environment: far from an intermediary or 'sieve', here they are strategic musical actors and generators of complex, multi-faceted cultural texts.

⁸⁴ The Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) license allows users to share music, to 'copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format', and to adapt it, to 'remix, transform, and build upon the material' (Creative Commons, 2018).

4.5.2.3 Colin OOOD's 'StOOODio Mastering' Service

Colin OOOD operates an audio mastering service from his home studio in Bristol. Here, completed tracks are given their final preparations for listening at home and on the dancefloor (Nardi, 2014; Shelvelock, 2012). This normally involves equalising, compressing, and raising the volume of the tracks to a normative level, although other processes may also be involved. Colin's 'StOOODio Mastering Service' has a dedicated section on the OOOD website as well as a Facebook page and a presence on SoundCloud via his personal account. Colin's service caters mainly for PEDM musicians (Globular and Nervasystem are two of his regular clients), but he also masters a range of other genres including techno, rock and heavy metal.

Colin began by mastering music by his band OOOD, and his own solo project Voice of Cod, and soon afterwards began picking up mastering work from other psytrance artists. This process was organic, growing naturally out of his wider music-making activities. This career trajectory is a departure from the historic model of mastering in the popular music industry which has traditionally taken the form of an apprenticeship followed by professional work in a purpose-built mastering environment (Nardi, 2014; Shelvelock, 2012). Although the StOOODio is distinguished by its carefully controlled acoustics and some high-end equipment, it is otherwise similar to the production environment used by his clients, utilising much of the same software and hardware that producers use to produce and mix their tracks. Colin's clients are not paying for the most expensive equipment to be used, but rather for his musical experience and advanced listening skills – 'the ear, not the gear', as audio engineers sometimes put it.

Mastering is Colin's main source of income. For this, he depends on a steady stream of clients which largely comes from the psytrance scene. The mastered recordings themselves are a vital form of advertising for the StOOODio mastering service: on services such as Ektoplazm and BandCamp it is normal for the mastering engineer to be credited. (This may be part of the linking 'etiquette' observed earlier in the chapter, in that it may be understood as an aspect of scene building.) In addition, Colin

has created some demo reels which are hosted on his personal SoundCloud account. These juxtapose short clips of unmastered tracks against the mastered versions, allowing listeners to hear how Colin's mastering process affects different kinds of music (Figure 4.20).

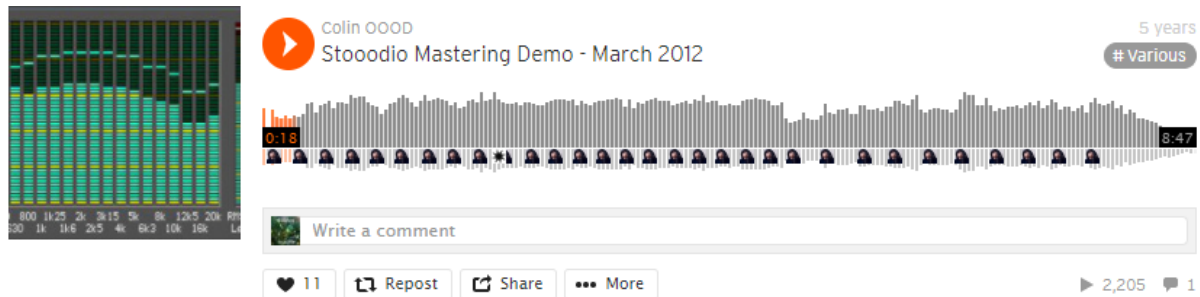


Figure 4.20 - The mastering demo reel on Colin OOOD's SoundCloud page.

Mastering is not necessarily a one-way process. Files will often be traded back and forth until a satisfactory result is achieved. Although it is preferable if the client is happy with the first mastered product that they receive, Colin is happy for clients to make suggestions for further alteration. (On the OOOD website, he offers 'Unlimited remasters (within reason!) - I'm not happy until you're happy'.) Sometimes the client will make changes of their own, having noticed issues in their music which were previously inaudible. This happened when I published my own EP *Artifact* in 2016: as an inexperienced producer working on cheap equipment in an untreated bedroom studio, there were various problems with my mix which I had neither the experience nor the equipment to perceive. The ability to 'have another go' proved invaluable both in terms of creating a good album and becoming a better producer. Mastering engineers might therefore help with the 'development of talent' which Keen (2007) claims is missing from today's disintermediated musical landscape.

Internet file transfer services play a crucial role in Colin's mastering process, allowing files to be transferred from client to engineer and back again. Colin used Copy.com for this purpose between 2014 and 2016; after the service was discontinued in 2016 he switched to Google Drive. In addition, clients may choose to send him files using other services such as DropBox or WeTransfer. Although

Colin can produce CD masters, and even vinyl masters given access to a lathe, for the most part his clients will send a digital file and expect a digital file in return. As such, these file transfer websites play a vital role in Colin's service, and must be considered part of the wider physical and virtual assemblage which constitutes the StOODio.

It is apparent that Colin OOOD, in his capacity as a mastering engineer, is not a cultural producer in the same sense as Globular or Snowdrop, although he is part of the wider art world by which musical recordings are produced. (The work of the mastering engineer occupies a curious position between the aesthetic and the technical – see Chapter 7 for a discussion of 'ear training' and timbre in electronic dance music.) Nonetheless, Colin draws together various resources, including audio hardware, software, social media, and file transfer services, to enact a musical strategy with various outcomes. In turn, this strategy provides a resource for underground musicians, allowing them to raise their music to the level of a professional product whilst working with limited means and equipment. As such, Colin is not just an intermediary between producer and audience, but an actor within the musical network whose actions have consequences for other participants.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated some of the ways in which PEDM musicians use the internet and other digital communication technology to enact complex scene participation strategies. Whereas previous writers have approached platforms and other internet services (often conceived as online communities) as their unit of analysis (e.g. Suhr, 2012; Silver et al., 2016), the user-centred approach demonstrated here highlights the connections which users make between services, including large internet platforms and smaller culture-specific websites, and between the virtual domain and real-world aspects of music-making. Rather than communities, internet services are portrayed as resources

deployed strategically towards various ends. This, I suggest, gives a more accurate depiction of today's digital networks of musical production and distribution than previous ethnographic approaches.

Reintermediation has been a recurring theme throughout the chapter. In the examples given here, this process has been focused on helping scene participants to conceive of digital music as 'product' rather than 'content': that is, as a bounded and finished entity rather than a drop in an unceasing flow of information. In each case the value of music is affected in some way by the positioning of one or more actors within the system of musical distribution. Labels such as Woo Dog and Shanti Planti are clear examples of a traditional 'curatorial' kind of reintermediation reminiscent of the historical music industry. However, other, less selective services might also be viewed in this light. Colin OOD's mastering service is one example: having music mastered by an experienced professional helps to establish a sense of a finished, valuable musical product, although there is technically nothing to stop producers releasing un-mastered or self-mastered tracks on the internet.⁸⁵ Reintermediation is thus a key means by which participants engage with music scenes online.

Other projects, such as SnowDrop's radio show New Moon Grooves or the Tribe of Frog recordings on SoundCloud, serve to reintermediate musical culture in other, more complex ways. Here, the musical recording is treated as a resource, moulded into new shapes, and combined with extra-musical elements (visual imagery, spoken or written words, etc.) to make a new cultural form. These composite digital products may in turn be used by other participants in their own participation strategies, for example through the 'sharing' process by which musicians and audiences link together digital services. The ways in which digital music circulates on the internet are thus non-linear and subject to complex interactions between the strategic aims of participants. Moving forward,

⁸⁵ Nardi (2014) describes mastering as 'a crucial gateway between production and consumption insofar as it consists of the final step of sound manipulation before a product is released for sale' (p.10); Shelvelock (2012) states that 'Far more than just a technician, the mastering engineer is a creative partner in the creation of recorded musical communications' (p.56).

conceptual and taxonomic resources, in their descriptive and organisational capacity, are found to structure this circulation, and to build and hold together the wider music scene on the internet.

5 Chapter 5 Genre and the Internet

Genre has already played an important role in the preceding chapters. In the first chapter, it was found to be a key element in the structure of Bristol's musical ecosystem, and in the organisation of PEDM events and performing careers. In the second chapter, it served as a means of distinguishing types of internet services, from the large and inclusive social networking platforms such as Facebook or SoundCloud, to smaller and more exclusive services such as Ektoplazm, which cater for specific kinds of music.

This chapter takes a closer look at musical genre on the internet, looking in particular at the use of 'tags' on both large internet platforms and smaller subcultural services. In this environment, musical participants can employ genre concepts in a creative, playful manner, and mix them with other kinds of descriptive writing and information. This allows musicians and audiences to build up a subtle web of concepts which is virtually linked to the cultural material it describes. More than just a way of organising music, I suggest that the use of tags is also an aspect of scene building, helping to form the musical network by linking together otherwise disparate pieces of information on the internet.

This chapter does not give an extensive history or taxonomy of PEDM genres. However, some general assertions can be made which will help the reader to navigate the discussion at hand. Some notes on the history and development of PEDM have been given in Section 0.3.1; further details can be found in Lindop (2010), Rietveld (2010) and St. John (2012). The following is a brief summary:

- The object of the present study is psychedelic electronic dance music (PEDM), a type of EDM which emerged in Goa, India in the late 1980s. PEDM combines characteristics of acid house and rave culture with those of progressive and psychedelic rock music, as well as 'world' and 'ethnic' musics which are normally incorporated via sampling.
- Psytrance is the main genre of PEDM music which is played on the main stage at psychedelic festivals and other multi-stage events. This is a type of four-to-the-floor dance music

distinguished by the use of the 'KBBB' bass pattern (see 0.3.2; Figure 0.2), FM synthesis and trippy sound effects.

- Psytrance has a number of variants with colourful names such as 'full-on', 'forest', 'hi-tech', etc. At an ideal psytrance event different kinds of psytrance will be played at different times of day ('morning' or 'progressive' psytrance is played during the daytime, and 'night' or 'dark' at night). However, this does not necessarily happen in practice, and there are many other factors which will affect how a PEDM event is structured.
- There are other PEDM genres which do not use the KBBB pattern and are therefore not considered 'psytrance'. These are mostly 'psychedelicised' versions of other electronic music genres (e.g. psydub, psybient, psybreaks, psychedelic techno).
- PEDM genres are understood to be positioned on a tempo 'spectrum'. Some events attempt to deliver a wide variety of tempi ('full-spectrum' events) whilst others are focused on a specific subgenre or portion of the spectrum.

Throughout the chapter, the notion of hierarchically embedded 'genres and subgenres' is problematized. Rather, various kinds of generic concepts are found to perform their organising function in a 'rhizomic' manner (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). This is facilitated by the contemporary digital media landscape in which metadata are used to draw horizontal connections between content rather than vertical, 'arborescent' connections. In this environment, genre also intersects with a wider field of organisational principles such as the artist's project identity (which may be one of several), geographical region, affiliations with labels and crews, and other musical concepts which are not understood as genres. The concept of 'metagenre' (Shuker, 2005) has been used in both popular and scholarly writing as a means of describing similar phenomena in underground musical cultures; however, the relationship between these different types of categorical practice has yet to be fully theorised in the context of internet tagging systems.

In the next section, I propose that genre terms may be understood as a distinct kind of 'semiotic resource' (Leeuwen, 2005) used by participants in the production of musical culture; I will define these as 'taxonomic resources', emphasising their organisational function. This allows them to be considered in relative isolation from the other elements of a musical system, such as musical rules, fashion, event formats, etc. Isolating terminology this way may seem counterproductive in an account based on a theory of articulation and emphasising the heterogeneity of elements which make up a musical system (see Chapter 1). However, in recent years the use of computers to distribute, store and play musical recordings has changed the way that genre terms interrelate with cultural systems. In the digital environment, words are used to organise music in a mechanical way: although the user may draw connections between genre terms and the musical or cultural features to which they refer, computers themselves do themselves not understand these relationships and are 'disinterested' in the hierarchies that they may imply. As I shall demonstrate, this has implications for the way in which musical material is organised and understood by internet users.

5.1 Genre Terms as Resources: Cultural Capital, Discourse and Strategy

Genre may be understood as a form of cultural knowledge: the ability to recognise and refer to musical genres is prerequisite for participation in a musical culture, and the ability to make subtle distinctions between musical categories is essential for creative involvement of any kind. Some writers have thus linked competence in identifying musical genres with the acquisition of subcultural capital. McLeod makes this point explicitly with reference to EDM:

The process of naming new subgenres within electronic/dance music communities is not only directly related to the rapidly evolving nature of the music itself. It is also a function of the marketing strategies of record companies, accelerated consumer culture, and the appropriation of the musics of largely non-white, lower-class people by middle- and upper-middle-class Whites in the United States and Great Britain. Further, the naming process acts as a gate-keeping mechanism that generates a high amount of cultural capital needed to enter electronic/dance communities. (McLeod, 2001, p.60)

McLeod's idea of a 'naming process' draws attention to the way that words are used to organise musical experience and suggests that this is integral to the way that popular music (in this case EDM) is produced and distributed. I suggest that this viewpoint focuses too much on exclusivity, however. By emphasising the value of genre in terms of 'subcultural capital', McLeod overlooks the ways in which genre terms form musical networks, and the creative ways in which participants use genre concepts to share and propagate their culture.

Some writers have looked at genre and the popular music industry more widely, similarly depicting it as a tool used for organisational purposes. Frith (1996), for example, describes industry genre categories as a means of 'organizing the sales process' (p.75): 'Genre is a way of defining music in its market or, alternatively, the market in its music' (p.76). For record companies, radio stations and record stores, genre categories are a means of identifying, reaching and, where necessary, creating an ideal consumer. This is prone to failure, and genre definitions must be revised constantly in order to fully grasp the market. 'It's as if a silent conversation is going on between the consumer, who knows roughly what she wants, and the shopkeeper, who is laboriously working out the pattern of shifting demands' (p.77). Similarly, looking at the origins of common popular music genres, Negus (1999) states that 'Terms such as rock'n'roll, salsa, funk and jazz were drawn from their vernacular use within particular cultural traditions and then used by the music industry as a way of organizing catalogues' (p.162).

Other writers have suggested that genre terms are not just a way of organising music sales, but also a way of shaping cultural experience. In this sense, they can be understood as an aspect of musical discourse. Holt (2007) states that 'A genre category can only be established if the music has a name.[...] The name becomes a point of reference and enables certain forms of communication, control, and specialization into markets, canons, and discourses' (p.3). Horner (1999) takes this further, arguing that 'the discourse used to describe popular music has material consequences for how that music is produced, the forms it takes, how it is experienced, and its meanings' (p.18). Horner explicitly

positions genre terms as a form of musical discourse, stating that ‘To name a set of phenomena “rock music” is to contribute to our sense of it and our experience of it. It gives us a sense of its relation to other phenomena (non-music, other types of music) and the ways in which we should think about, experience and respond to it’ (p.21). These statements differ from Frith’s and Negus’ analysis of genre and the music industry, in which genre terms are seen as somewhat removed from, or even to exploit, musical practice and musical experience. By contrast, Stokes (2003) argues that ‘When people use words to describe, organize or manipulate musical cognition, those words might be considered adjuncts of musical discourse, part of the process by which musical experience is recognized and organized, and not in some sense alien to it or parasitic upon it’ (p.230).

It may be the case that different genre terms function at different ‘levels’ and thus have different organisational or discursive properties. For example, Fabbri (1980) makes a distinction between a musical ‘genre’ and a musical ‘system’, the former being used where ‘a certain set of musical events is being considered in relation to other opposing sets’, the latter where it is being considered ‘in relation to its sub-sets’. Following this logic, musical categories could be divided into ‘generic categories’ and ‘systemic categories’. However, it is not immediately apparent how we might assess the relational level of a genre term outside of its specific cultural context, nor whether musical practices are as neatly and hierarchically embedded as the sets of relational concepts used to describe them. I suggest instead that the taxonomic work that genre terms are used to perform is heterogeneous: each arises from a different set of cultural and historical circumstances, and each does a different kind of organisational work when it is employed. In other words, ‘level’ is not an intrinsic property of genre concepts, but rather emerges as a result of the way that they are used. This is particularly important with regards to the digital music environment, in which non-hierarchical taxonomies emerge as a result of the use of tags to classify musical information on the internet.

In order to resolve the ontological issues arising from the treatment of genre categories as an aspect of musical discourse, I propose that we treat genre terms as *resources* on which participants draw as

they engage with a music scene. They are part of the cultural 'toolbox' (Swidler, 1986) used to create meaningful forms of musical and social experience. These organisational concepts are continually tested and re-tested, made and re-made, by participants through their strategic engagements with a musical network. This approach is thus compatible with theories of articulation and musical genre which begin with the assumption that 'genres are not static assemblages of empirically verifiable musical characteristics' (Brackett, 2015, p.190) but rather complex, shifting assemblages with multiple components.

A key issue, here, is the relative levels of influence over genre terms wielded by different members a musical network. Whereas the major music distributors, labels and record stores of the 20th century attempted (with limited success) to control genre terminology in order provide a regulated environment for the sale of music, other kinds of musical/social network structures have allowed musicians and fans greater ability to decide how music is classified. Underground music scenes, for example, have often created their own distribution channels, such as zines, pirate radio stations and websites, which allow musicians and fans greater control over genre concepts (Fikentscher, 2000; Haenfler, 2015). More recently, the internet has allowed scene participants to create their own channels for interacting with music and with each other. Web platforms such as YouTube and SoundCloud give musicians and fans the ability to describe their own cultural output through the use of titles, tags and descriptive writing. Ordinary scene participants today are thus in a similar position to the record companies, A&R departments and record stores of the past: they use words as a means of organising cultural experience, and media as a means of communicating sophisticated musical and cultural arguments.

5.2 Musical Genre and the Internet

The previous chapter looked at the various internet services which musical participants use to distribute and share music, organise events, and connect with others. These include large internet platforms which cater to many types of music (e.g. SoundCloud, BandCamp) and music distribution services with various levels of genre-specificity (e.g. BeatPort, JunoDownload). In addition, scene participants often create their own websites for various purposes, including distribution (e.g. EktoPlazm, Re:Volt). Different internet services allow for different categorization practices, giving users varying levels of control over the classification of music.

During the early years in which the internet was first being used to advertise, sell and distribute music, decisions about musical genre were made by the 'webmaster' – the owner or the person (or people) responsible for designing a given service. Surveying the music websites of the late-1990s (specifically the website CDNow, which was bought by Amazon in 2002 and subsequently disbanded), Fabbri (1999) states that webmasters 'seem to agree that certain kinds or types of music are broadly acknowledged, though they are probably much less interested in understanding how this knowledge is organized' (p.10). Like the music industry representatives and record store owners identified by Frith and Negus, the webmaster of the 1990s primarily saw genre as a tool for the sale of musical product. There was little room for musicians, or other intermediaries such as record label owners, to make decisions about how music was classified, or to make strategic use of genre concepts.

The subsequent emergence of 'Web 2.0' placed the focus of attention on the user and the sharing of user-generated content (see Chapter 4; Baym & Burnett, 2009; Suhr, 2012). Within this paradigm, it became common for the user of a website to be responsible for classification of information, rather than the webmaster. This was facilitated by the emergence of the 'tag', a piece of information which is appended to an item of content, such as photograph or a piece of music, in order to classify that item and to help users find similar content. Early internet music platforms such as MySpace gave musicians the ability apply genre concepts to their own music in the form of tags. (As of 2007,

musicians on MySpace could choose up to three genres from a selection of 122 categories, allowing them to describe their musical output with some degree of subtlety – see Silver et al., 2016.) Later services such as SoundCloud and BandCamp have given users the ability to create their own classifications from scratch, leading to a great increase in the number and variety of genre concepts employed in the classification of music. These two types of classification can be described as ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ tagging systems respectively – tags in a top-down system are defined by the creators of the website, and there are a finite set which can be used, whereas tags in a bottom-up system are created by users, and there is no limit to the number or variety of terms which can be employed. Not all of today’s services fall into the bottom-up category; indeed, many maintain for top-down system, which has its own advantages.

Genre must be understood as one among several types of metadata associated with music. In this context, metadata refers to the information that accompanies a music file, such as the name of the artist or album, the location and date of release, and artwork. These may be embedded in the file itself or held in a database alongside the music. Metadata allow for multiple ways of searching through a collection of music by drawing similarities between items – for example, it is possible to search by artist, date of publication, genre, etc. This helps to mitigate the file directory structures within which music files are stored on a computer or server. These directories might be described as hierarchical or ‘arborescent’ (after Deleuze & Guattari, 1980), resembling a tree with branches. Metadata, by contrast, create non-hierarchical, horizontal connections between pieces of data held in different locations. These engender ‘rhizomic’ structures, like the roots of a fungus (ibid.). Different people will have different criteria in their use of metadata and will bring different forms of cultural knowledge to bear on the process of finding and organising music. Metadata are thus ‘entangled within the creative inclinations and existent knowledge practices’ (Audette-Longo, 2016, p.522) of users.

Although tag systems are rhizomic by nature, the structures which emerge within them are not necessarily so: arborescent or hierarchical structures may be present in this environment, although

these are not necessarily immediately visible to the user. Applying various computational processes to genre information obtained from MySpace in 2007, Silver et al. (2016) identify three overarching 'meso-level genre complexes' (p.17) – rock, hip-hop and 'niche' – with different organisational characteristics in terms of outer boundaries and internal variation. They find that rock music has several subgenres which interrelate; hip-hop, by contrast, has only the one central genre (hip-hop itself) around which other genres are arranged. The world of 'niche' genres (which represents all underground electronic musics) has no centre at all, instead consisting of 'porous communities fluidly combining, lacking any larger structure to bind them together' (p.19). These three models are described as 'multi-centred', 'single-centred' and 'uncentred' respectively (p.2). Thus, although ostensibly non-hierarchical, tag systems may encompass various kinds of taxonomic structures with different qualities.

The nature and impact of rhizomic organisation can be more fully understood by observing how tags are presented to users. If we view an album on BandCamp, for example, all of the tags associated with that album will be listed at the bottom. If we click on a tag, such as 'psytrance', we are presented with all of the other entries on the website which have the same tag. Further recommendations are made along the top – these are the tags which most often appear alongside 'psytrance', indicating a connection between these concepts. Although BandCamp does not do so, we could prioritise these tags according to how many entries they each have, and how many other tags are frequently associated with them. A 'tag cloud' is a way of visualising this information – here, tags with more associated entries appear larger on the screen, whilst those with less appear smaller (Figure 5.1). However, the smaller tags are not understood by the service as subsets of the larger tags: any hierarchy present emerges from the stylistic understandings of the user, or must be extracted using mathematical models (as in Silver et al., 2016).

tags

electronic experimental rock alternative hip-hop/rap
punk metal ambient indie noise ambient pop pop rock
hip hop experimental folk folk acoustic indie rock instrumental
electronic rap drone techno psychedelic hardcore electronica singer-songwriter
lo-fi punk acoustic jazz industrial alternative rock house jazz beats world

Figure 5.1 - Part of the main tag cloud on the website BandCamp.

When given free-reign to create their own tags (i.e. in a 'bottom-up' system), musicians employ a range of terms which they find to be suitable for describing their music. These may or may not include genre terms; often, they are a mix of genres and other types of metadata. The following is the list of tags chosen by Globular for the release of his album *Holobiont* (2016)⁸⁶ on BandCamp:

downtempo	dub	electronic	electronica	globular	holobiont
psychedelic	psydub	uk	world	psy	psybient
psychedelic	psychill	Bristol			

There are several different kinds of information in this list, including genre terms, geographic locations, and the name of the artist and album. The genre terms vary in terms of the range of musical activity that they encompass, including very broad categories (electronic, downtempo) and smaller ones pertaining specifically to psychedelic music (psydub, psybient). However, there is no indication of hierarchy here, nor that certain styles are 'embedded' within others. (For that matter, there is no indication that 'Bristol' is a subset of 'UK', although this is objectively the case.) From the perspective

⁸⁶ <https://globular.bandcamp.com/album/holobiont>

of BandCamp itself, the tags are merely strings of letters used to draw comparisons between files in its database.

The 'disinterested' nature of tag systems like the one on BandCamp gives users a great deal of scope for creativity and nuance, and to bring to the service organisational ideas which do not neatly align with conventional notions of 'genre' or other normative types of metadata. These may be part of a musical culture's wider vocabulary for music. In psyculture, for example, there are certain frequently-used terms which are not understood as genre categories, but are nonetheless used to describe and to organise music on internet platforms. The two most salient examples are 'morning' and 'night', terms which are frequently applied to the genres of full-on psytrance and Goa trance. In theory these refer to the structure of a psytrance party: 'morning' describes certain works of full-on psytrance or Goa trance which could be considered suitable for a morning set at a festival due to their uplifting nature, whereas 'night' describes full-on psytrance which is suitable for the darker hours because it is darker and more abstract (St. John, 2012; Vitos, 2009). However, actual stylistic definitions of these terms are hard to come by, and there is some disagreement as to how they might be distinguished from the neighbouring genres of full-on and dark psytrance. Other examples in psyculture include 'tribal', 'uplifting', 'organic' and 'old-school' – these, too, are not free-standing genre concepts, but always appear in conjunction with more well-defined musical terms.

A key concept which might help us understand these terms is 'metagenre'. Roy Shuker (2005) defines metagenres as 'loose amalgams of various styles (e.g. alternative rock, world music)' (p.122). These are contrasted with 'actual' genres, which 'arguably exist in a purer, more easily understood and specified form (e.g. disco)' (p.122). Noting the wide variety of 'psychedelicised' EDM genres internal to psyculture, Lindop (2010) refers to psytrance itself as a meta-genre encompassing a wide variety of

musical styles.⁸⁷ However, the term has made its way into everyday use, where it has acquired a second meaning similar to that of subgenre, indicating a narrow subsection grouped according to a particular criterion. (If you search for ‘metagenre’ on Google, you will see both definitions given on internet forums and services such as Yahoo! Answers.)

I propose a definition of ‘metagenre’ which takes both of these uses into account and habitates the concept for the world of internet tags: a metagenre is a secondary organisational concept applied to a body of music to which stronger organisational principles have already been applied. ‘Psychedelic’ is a metagenre by this definition, being a term which has been applied to various musical genres (e.g. psychedelic rock, psychedelic folk, psychedelic trance) to indicate a cross-cutting trend in mid-to-late 20th century popular music. Another example is ‘instrumental’, which is applied to certain pieces of rock, jazz and heavy metal music which do not have vocals; again, this does not override the principle genre categories, but complements them as a second layer of classification. These two examples are ‘macro-level’ metagenres which are applied to many kinds of music, and thus follow Shuker’s original definition. However, I suggest that at the micro-level there is another kind of metagenre which is used alongside only one or a handful of specific musical styles belonging to a particular musical world. Terms such as ‘morning’, ‘night’ and ‘uplifting’ in psyculture belong to this micro-level category. Like macro-level metagenres, these cannot be used without reference to other, more stable genre terms – they can be used only as a secondary layer of classification after a primary layer has been applied. A metagenre may therefore be an intergenre or a type of subgenre. To apply this concept to internet tag systems, we may say that a genre is a tag which can be used on its own, whereas a metagenre is a tag which cannot.

⁸⁷ A similar approach is taken by Anderton (2010) in his discussion of progressive rock, which he describes as ‘a highly inclusive, overarching framework within which numerous “progressive” styles and genres (some of which, like Krautrock, are sub-divided even further) may be discussed in relation to each other’ (p.430).

Other concepts have emerged which are understood neither as genres nor metagenres, but rather as descriptions of the sonic or affective qualities of a particular piece of music. Normative examples in psycculture include 'glitchy', 'funky', 'atmospheric' and 'euphoric'. Like genre terms, they can be used to draw attention to similarities between different pieces of music and may therefore act in an organisational as well as descriptive capacity. However, classification is not their primary function, and they are not understood as genres by participants, even where they pertain to generic concepts (e.g. glitch music or funk).⁸⁸ However, in a bottom-up tag system there is little to distinguish between these descriptive terms and more concrete genres or metagenres. As a result, users employ them alongside genre terms and other forms of metadata in their tagging practices.

The Web 2.0 environment favours a combinatorial approach, encouraging the user to employ a varied, colourful and subtle vocabulary for musical style. This is conducive to the co-existence of genres, subgenres and metagenres, as well as a wide range of descriptive terms which do not belong to any of these meta-taxonomic categories. In addition, these organisational concepts are often accompanied by other types of metadata such as artist identity or geographic location. Participants deploy all of these kinds of information strategically, using classification to create, organise, and make sense of musical culture online. For musicians in particular, metadata are a crucial way of communicating with their audience and creating meaningful cultural products.

5.3 Genre on EktoPlazm

This section looks at EktoPlazm as an example of a service which is explicitly and extensively structured by the genre concepts and vocabulary associated with PEDM. As detailed in 4.4, EktoPlazm is a

⁸⁸ 'Glitch' was a genre of electronic music which emerged in the 1990s (Prior, 2008), but is no longer considered a distinct category today. However its impact is evident in a number of EDM genres, including PEDM – it is this genre heritage which participants are referring to when they use the term 'glitchy'.

subcultural internet music service which caters specifically for psytrance and related musics, offering music which can be legally downloaded for free. It is run by a single person, DJ Basilisk, who is responsible for deciding which music is hosted on the website. Basilisk has given extensive documentation of the project and some reflection on the nature of PEDM and its variants which can be found in a blog and 'Beginner's Guide to EktoPlazm' hosted on the site (Basilisk, 2015). This includes some discussion of genre and the stylistic development of PEDM. EktoPlazm is thus a window into the musical aspects of psyculture, and an example of one individual's attempt to understand and organize this music in a meaningful way.

Genre on EktoPlazm is arranged by way of a 'top-down' tag system. This means that Basilisk has defined a finite number of genre categories which can be applied to albums. In Figure 5.2 these tags are visible on the left-hand side. Each tag, when clicked, takes the user to a URL at which all of the albums with that tag are displayed (Figure 5.3). A description of the style is given at the top – sometimes this contains links to other styles, as in the example shown. Here, for example, further links are given to **twilight**, **morning**, **uplifting**, **darkpsy** and **Suomi**, which are printed in bold. Applicants (namely, PEDM producers and labels who want their music to be distributed for free) are invited to suggest which styles might apply to their music, although Basilisk gets the final say on the matter. Genre on EktoPlazm is thus neither 'user-classified information' nor entirely the work of the webmaster but something in-between. This is somewhat of a balancing act: the coherence of the service is paramount, and Basilisk will strive to preserve the continuity of his genre definitions as far as possible.



Figure 5.2 - Ektoplazm website, with genre tags on the left-hand side.

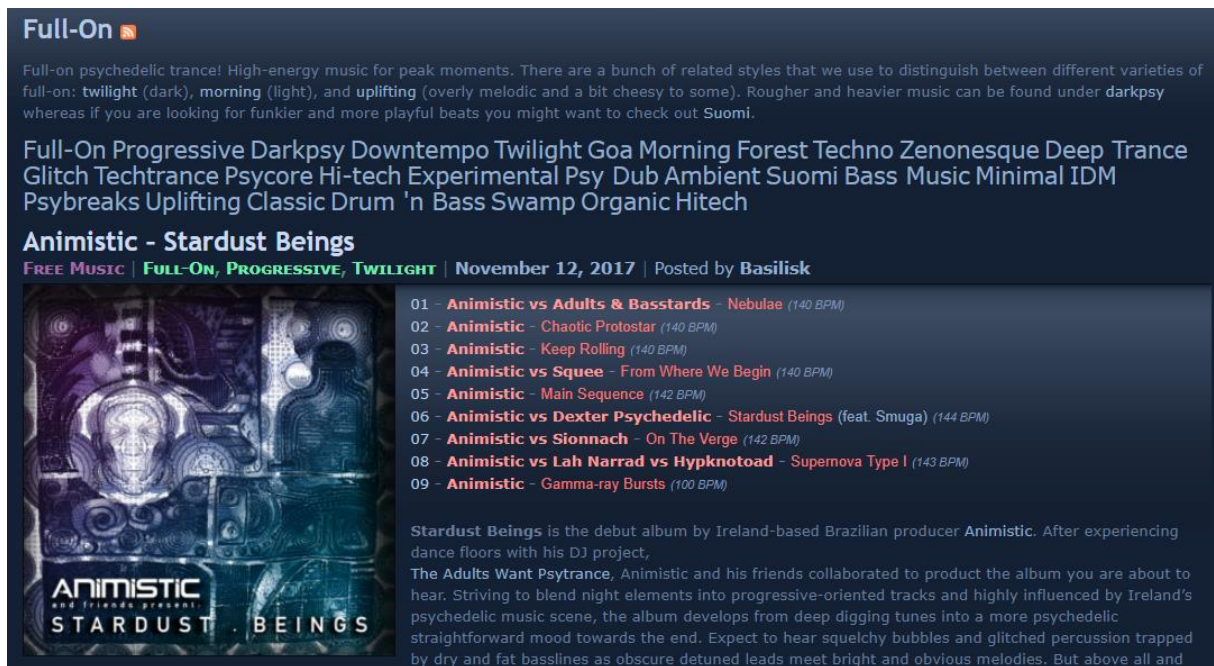


Figure 5.3 - The page for 'Full-on' psytrance.

Free Music · Charts · Profiles · Blog · About · Help

Krosis - Profane Geometry

FREE MUSIC | FULL-ON, TWILIGHT | January 28, 2015 | Released by **Woo-Dog Recordings** | Posted by **Basilisk**



- 01 - Profane Geometry (150 BPM)
- 02 - Ghost Trees! (148 BPM)
- 03 - The Green Chapel (138 BPM)
- 04 - Ice Of Phendrana (148 BPM)

Woo-Dog Recordings is happy to bring you **Profane Geometry**, the hard-hitting digital debut of **Krosis**, a psytrance producer from Bristol, U.K., who has already built a solid local following. This release is designed to showcase the variety of soundscapes he's intent on bringing to the scene. Popping from night-time growlers to chunky full-on groovers, his driving bass lines and organic atmospheres create a shimmering fractal journey for the listener. All tracks written and produced by Rob Incedon-Webber; design and artwork by Anna Foundinaforest; mastering by Morris at Cymatic Studios; released in 2014 by Woo-Dog Recordings.

[MP3 Download](#) | [FLAC Download](#) | [WAV Download](#) · DOWNLOAD COUNT: **6,327**.

Released under a Creative Commons license for noncommercial usage.

Figure 5.4 - Krosis' album Profane Geometry (2015) on EktoPlazm.

Basilisk gives a detailed explanation of this process in the instructions he provides for applicants wishing to have their music hosted on their site.⁸⁹ Here, Basilisk emphasises that the applicant may suggest genres for their release, but also that he will have the final say on the matter:

Style

- Specify one, two, or three styles from [this list](#). Click on any individual style for a description.
- You are welcome to suggest a style but it is **very** unlikely that we will add something new for just one release.
- Each style must have at least 1/3rd representation on your release. Do not select “downtempo” if there is only one downtempo song. The style field is a broad brush, only use it if your release features a lot of a particular style.
- There are several special styles that must be used sparingly and only in specific cases: experimental, tribal, classic, etc. There are also some styles that are really just modifiers of other specific styles; for instance, “morning” pertains to full-on, Goa, or progressive, and should not be used on its own. Refer to the descriptions of individual styles accessible from [this list](#) for more information.

⁸⁹ www.ektoplazm.com/distribution/requirements

- Don't worry too much about getting this part right. The internal logic of our musical taxonomy is somewhat obscure. Just enter whatever feels right and we will figure out the rest.
- We reserve the right to set the style of your release in our system.
- Leave blank if you aren't sure which style(s) your release closely matches.

The descriptions of each style given on the website reveal the combinatorial properties of his taxonomy and demonstrate which styles are normally used in which combinations. His definitions of 'forest' and 'morning', for example, demonstrate the complex relationships that these hold with 'darkpsy', 'full-on' and 'progressive' psytrance:

Forest: Murky, organic, and complex. An extension of darkpsy but different in some way that is sometimes hard to describe. Forest music has a particular vibe that you will learn to recognize over time but most of it will forever remain somewhat hard to distinguish from regular darkpsy.⁹⁰

Morning: Morning trance! Upbeat music to greet the rising sun. Usually applied to Goa, full-on, or progressive, but it may apply to other styles as well. See also: uplifting.⁹¹

In the style guidelines, Basilisk states clearly that 'some styles that are really just modifiers of other specific styles; for instance, "morning" pertains to full-on, Goa, or progressive, and should not be used on its own'. There are several further examples on the website, including 'organic', 'minimal' and 'experimental'. This aligns with the definition of 'metagenre' given earlier; such terms are never used on their own, but always appear in combination with other, more stable genre terms, acting as a modifier or further clarification.

The addition of a new genre to the EktoPlazm website is a noteworthy event. The size and influence of the service within the psytrance scene means that the recognition of a new style by Basilisk may go some way towards establishing it as a 'canonic' aspect of the PEDM genre spectrum. This process

⁹⁰ www.ektoplazm.com/style/forest

⁹¹ www.ektoplazm.com/style/morning

occurred on February 10th, 2015, when Basilisk added the genre 'swamp' to the EktoPlazm website.⁹² The new addition was announced on the EktoPlazm Facebook with the status 'Swamp is totally a thing!' and a link to the new style on the website. In the comments section, several releases were which might be retroactively classified as 'swamp', and group members were invited to respond 'yea' or 'nay'. The Facebook group responded enthusiastically and made suggestions of their own. Basilisk thus took into account the stylistic understanding of his users as he created a new connection between the musical items on his website.

An essentially 'homemade' service, the ways in which EktoPlazm works are partly a result of the tools used to put it together. In an email conversation with Basilisk in April, 2015, I asked what inspired the use of tags on his service:

Tagging made sense to me on an intuitive level. If you have music to sort you invariably end up with some things that don't fit into any of your predefined categories. But I should also give some credit to the software that the site was built on. WordPress natively supports categories and tags as a means of organizing content so the choice was obvious.

(Basilisk, email to the researcher, 2015)

Basilisk's taxonomic system was thus informed not only by the stylistic structure of PEDM culture, but also by the software environment in which the service was created. It too, then, is the result of a particular strategic use of available resources. I asked further about the nature of genres which are 'modifiers' in relation to the more fully-realised genres on the site:

The general idea was to take one of the more popular styles and add a qualifier to associate it more closely with other releases following a similar approach. This can be seen if you consider downtempo, progressive, or full-on, each with their own set of overlapping qualifiers, some of which have become standalone styles through repeated usage and increased recognition in the greater community. There is a method to the madness but it is not a science by any means.

⁹² Swamp is a slower version of forest psytrance which retains the organic and atmospheric sound design whilst operating at significantly lower tempo: Basilisk describes it as 'Dark and mysterious but with varied beats (both broken and technoid), always with strong psychedelic atmospheres' (www.ektoPlazm.com/style/swamp).

This suggests that genre on Ektoplazm is subject to change, and that the logic of genre in psyculture may also change over time. The great advantage of a tag system in a subcultural music service is thus its flexibility – it can easily adapt to encompass new structures and relationships.

5.4 Genre on SoundCloud

Subtle distinctions between PEDM genres are also made on large music platforms, such as SoundCloud and BandCamp, which cater for a wide range of musics; however, some differences in usage are evident. In this context, psyculture as a whole exists and is defined relative to other musical/cultural systems. (In the terms laid out by Silver et al., 2016, we may say that psyculture has ‘outer edges’ as well as ‘inner edges’ in this context.) On the one hand this can lead to an intensification of genre conventions, with PEDM artists utilising a range of taxonomic resources to indicate their ‘psychedelicness’. On the other hand, artists can position themselves on the fringes of psyculture, making less of a commitment to PEDM itself and exploring connections with other musical worlds. This is especially the case with downtempo artists, for whom an interstitial existence between PEDM and other musical forms such as ambient music, dub and techno is the norm.

SoundCloud, the most commonly-used music platform among PEDM producers and DJs during my study, offers a window into the use of tags in a ‘bottom-up’ system, where users are permitted to invent new terms. Here, every track or mix uploaded has a principle ‘genre’ which is displayed prominently next to the item on personal pages and in the newsfeed. Additional tags may also be added, allowing the user to add further categorical and descriptive terms to their music. Producers will often use these additional tags to give further stylistic clarification. For example, Figure 5.5 shows the track ‘Saria’s Descent’ from Krosis’ 2016 EP *World Engine*. Here, Krosis uses ‘psytrance’ as the principle genre whilst reserving the additional tags for more subtle genre concepts such as ‘night’,

'twilight' and 'forest'. (See 6.1.) 'Psychedelic' is also provided as an overarching metagenre or descriptive term.

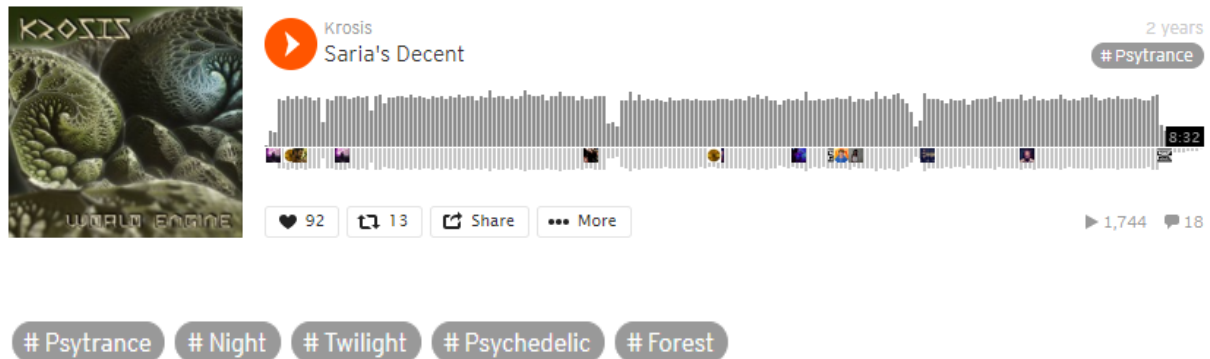


Figure 5.5 - Krosis' track 'Saria's Descent' on SoundCloud with additional tags.

Alternatively, these tags may be used to broaden the stylistic range of a particular item, or to draw in concepts from outside the culture in question. Figure 5.6 shows Tabula Rasa, the opening track from Globular's album *Holobiont*, an example of the downtempo genre 'psydub'. (See 6.2.) Here, the music is defined not only as 'psychedelic' and 'downtempo', but also as 'electronica', 'dub' and 'world'. The latter genre concepts are external to psyculture; however, here they are part of the genre matrix by which Globular describes his music. The selection of tags here also contains information which is not stylistic at all, including the name of the artist, album and record label, and the geographic locations 'UK' and 'Bristol'. There is no indication of hierarchy here: although it could be argued that 'psydub' is a subset of 'downtempo', and that 'Bristol' is a subset of 'UK', the service itself does not make such connections between the terms.



downtempo # dub # electronic # electronica # globular # holobiont # psy-dub
 # psychedelic # psydub # uk # world # Bristol # Shanti Planti

Figure 5.6 - Globular's Track 'Tabula Rasa' on SoundCloud

SoundCloud is also used by DJs, who often have different ways of using the tag system from producers. Figure 5.7 shows a DJ set uploaded by Tetrasound, a recording of his performance at Tribe of Frog in September 2015. The overall genre given is 'Psytrance'; the tags listed at the bottom cover a range of metadata types, including some specific genre terminology ('morning fullon'), the name of the event ('Tribe of Frog'), the name of the record label with which he is affiliated ('Blacklite records'), a descriptive term ('Groovy') and a reference to the Roland TB303 bass synthesizer ('303'). It should be noted that actual 303 sounds do not necessarily appear in such music. Rather, this is a historical reference connecting the music with antecedent genres, such as acid house and Goa trance, which featured the instrument prominently.



Psychedelic Trance # Tribe Of Frog # Morning Fullon # Psychedelic Progressive Trance
 # Groovy # Blacklite records # Trance # 303

Figure 5.7 - Tetrasound's set from Tribe of Frog, September 2015 on SoundCloud

As noted in Chapter 4 (4.5.2.2), SnowDrop uploads recordings of her online radio show New Moon Grooves to SoundCloud every month. For the principle genre, she most often uses 'psybass', a broad term which is applied to bass-heavy, downtempo psychedelic music. However, rather than specific subgenres or other musical concepts, she tends to use the additional tags for the names of the artists

featured in the mix (Figure 5.8). Using the tags in this way allows for her mix to be found by people searching for these artists, whilst also allowing listeners to follow the links and discover similar music. This is not a conventional use of a feature which is supposed to designate ‘genre’ or ‘mood’ (according to the submission form), but it may tell listeners more about the mix and its contents than descriptive terms – for example, listeners who are familiar with Globular’s music will infer that the mix contains ‘dub’ and ‘world’ elements.

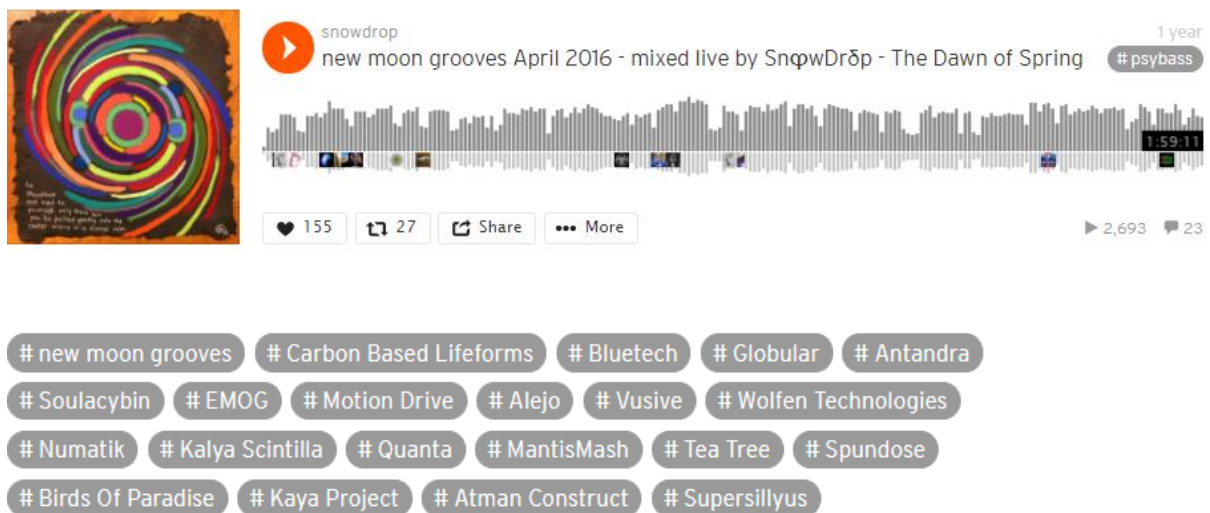


Figure 5.8 - The April 2016 edition of SnowDrop’s radio show New Moon Grooves uploaded to SoundCloud.

The bottom-up tagging system on SoundCloud might be viewed as different in kind and perhaps more democratic than the top-down system employed on EktoPlazm. Certainly, the former encourages a wider definition of ‘category’ than the latter, allowing for more creative connections to be made between sounds and concepts, and gives users greater control over how these are used. However, more rigid systems of categorization such as Basilisk’s play an important role in musical cultures – these help to give genre concepts much of their signifying power, even where used in other contexts. For example, the meaning and use of a term such as ‘forest’ (see 6.1) on SoundCloud has much to do with how it is defined and used on EktoPlazm. These should not be treated as irreconcilable models of metadata provision but rather as connected or even interdependent parts of a wider cultural

system. In this sense, musical genre on the modern internet has many of the discursive elements which Frith and Negus identify in the earlier popular music industry: that is, it arises from the interlocking, sometimes competing projects and strategies of various actors with differing aims and motives. The key difference is that, on the internet, more participants are able to play a role in this process, and the variety of strategies and motives is therefore wider.

5.5 Conclusion

The two services examined in this section, EktoPlazm and SoundCloud, offer two different models for the use of genre on the internet. The former is a subcultural service designed and maintained by a single webmaster, who uploads music to the service and applies genre tags himself. This has a 'top down' system wherein the tags are limited to a certain set. The latter is a large internet music platform on which music is uploaded and classified by users. This has a 'bottom-up' tagging system where an unlimited number of tags may be invented and applied. EktoPlazm's genre system is the attempt of one individual to make sense of a particularly subtle 'genre complex' (Silver et al., 2016) and to create a meaningfully structured service for his users. The use of genre on SoundCloud, by contrast, is more spontaneous and playful, with musicians drawing on a wide variety of organisational concepts to describe and classify musical information. These are just two examples from a wide range of internet services which producers, DJs and label owners use to share their music. Other services, such as BandCamp, BeatPort, and JunoDownload, have other systems for dealing with genre – sometime are tag-based, whilst others have directory structure. Each offers a different levels and types of control to musical creators, intermediaries, and listeners; each allows different musical strategies to be enacted. It is difficult to interpret any of these systems according to Thornton's notion of 'subcultural capital', as suggested by McLeod (2001). Rather, there is a more complicated 'naming process' going on here in which cultural knowledge is used to organise and make sense of musical material. This is at times a

process of classification, helping users to sort and search through large collections of musical information, and at other times a process description, allowing the musician to explain their output stylistically. Genre, here, is not 'exclusive' (designed to keep outsiders from accessing the culture) but rather *formative*, creating the links which give rise to the musical network. This network is constantly shifting, evolving and changing around its constituent parts – it is not stable enough to be interpreted as a 'field', and there is no 'mutually agreed set of standards' (Hodkinson, 2002) by which statements about genre might be validated. Rather, the compatibility of genre terms, musical concepts and materials, and other parts of a musical system are continually tested and re-tested through their use by participants. It is this process which shapes today's complex musical landscape, both on the internet and in the physical world of music-making.

6 Chapter 6 Genre, Production and Performance

The previous chapter focused on words, looking at the way genre terminology is used to organise and describe music on the internet. This chapter looks at the wider set of musical, visual and thematic resources associated with two particular musical genres, 'forest psytrance' and 'psy dub', which are produced by Krosis and Globular respectively. These are relatively new kinds of music, both emerging as distinct categories within the last fifteen years, and have not yet received much attention from scholars. As such, this chapter also acts as an introduction to these genres and their position in the PEDM spectrum.

The practical aspects of genre in music-making, much like the use of genre terminology, can be interpreted in terms of field theory. As noted in Chapter 5, McLeod (2001) suggests that genre terminology is deployed in a 'naming process' (p.60) by which subgenres of EDM are recognised and the cultural capital of participants is determined. A similar approach has been taken to music-making more widely with reference to psyculture: Lindop (2010) uses 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995) as a means of explaining the 'psychedelicisation' process by which non-psytrance EDM styles are made suitable for psytrance events:

The process of *psychedelicisation* is analogous to the means by which knowledge, style and taste generate "subcultural capital" among participants. By adapting a given style to the expectations of a psytrance party crowd, the music takes on a greater level of authenticity. (Lindop, 2010, p.121)

Lindop argues that producers and performers must adopt a specific sound in order to gain access publishing and performing opportunities in psyculture. His evocation of 'subcultural capital' suggests that there is a culturally-recognized set of standards relative to which creative contributions are evaluated, as explained by Hodkinson (2002). However, I have argued that psyculture is internally complex and has multiple stylistic spectra relative to which musicians position their output: for example, slow vs. fast, organic vs. technical, etc. (see 0.3.1). The field is not as simple nor as stable as Lindop suggests.

A more nuanced theory of genre in EDM is needed which allows for the creative use of genre concepts and the imaginative way in which musicians position themselves in a music scene. Madrid (2008) does this successfully in his study of Nor-tec music in Tijuana: he argues that Nor-tec 'should be understood as a strategy based on the social signification of an aesthetic idea' (p.10), and that genre is 'used to identify the specific niches in which these artists want to fit within the international cosmopolitan community of electronic music' (p.77). This gives the musician more scope for creativity, and the ability to imagine *how* their output will give them access to a given cultural sphere. In terms of PEDM, this provides a better description of how musicians experience and make use of genre, and a better way of understanding the intersection between individual creative contributions and the wider set of projects and strategies which constitutes a music scene.

The following sections of this chapter will look at the music of two PEDM producers in Bristol, Krosis and Globular. In the first instance, each artist is taken as the 'unit of analysis' rather than a particular style of music, allowing for an exploration of the range of generic concepts which they use and the means by which they position their output within the PEDM genre spectrum. The discussion will then focus on the genres which these musicians produce, forest psytrance and psydub, analysing their music in search of genre-specific characteristics. Details will also be given on some of the group projects with which the producers have been involved, including club nights and compilation albums, and the role played by genre in the execution of these projects. Finally, the use of tags and descriptive writing is analysed, both by the producers and by other participants, for its conceptual and strategic purpose.

6.1 Krosis

Krosis produces several different genres of psytrance, with a focus on the darker styles and sounds. At the time of writing he has three musical projects: 'Krosis' itself, which is dedicated to the genres dark, full-on night and forest psytrance; 'Final Form', which is for faster 'hi-tech' music; and Murk Squad, which is an experimental collaboration combining psytrance with hip-hop and trap music. These projects overlap in some ways, notably by drawing on many of the same software tools and musical devices. However, they represent quite separate creative endeavours on the part of the producer and require him to engage with different discursive strands within psytrance.

The music associated with 'Krosis' might be described using the terms 'full-on night', 'dark psytrance' or 'forest psytrance'. These are the faster, darker styles of psytrance intended for performance during the dark hours of an outdoor party (Vitos, 2009; St. John, 2011). To an outsider, 'full-on night' and 'dark' might seem like very similar kinds of music – they both use the standard psytrance bass pattern (KBBB), they use FM lead sounds, and they have a tempo between 145 and 155bpm. However, there are some subtle distinctions which give meaning to these terms. For example, full-on night is on average slightly slower (145-150bpm is typical), whereas dark is faster (148-155bpm). The lead patterns in full-on night are more 'melodic', meaning that distinct pitches are audible and occasionally form a melodic figure. The lead sounds in dark psytrance, by contrast, are less-clearly pitched due to their high frequency content – as such, they are used rhythmically rather than melodically. (Krosis refers to his leads as 'saws', evoking both their underlying waveforms and their tearing or shredding effect.) Both styles make use of the standard psytrance bass pattern, a four-to-the-floor kick drum with a bassline articulating semiquavers in between beats; however, dark psytrance tends to have a 'machine gun' bassline which stays on a single note throughout the track, whereas night basslines have a 'funky' or 'groovy' quality created by syncopated leaps onto other bass notes. Finally, dark psytrance often has a 'spooky' or 'scary' atmosphere engendered by ambient soundscapes which accompany the rhythmic and melodic elements.

Forest psytrance is a more specific category than either 'full-on night' or 'dark' psytrance. Although in theory a subgenre of dark psytrance, it tends to have a slightly slower tempo (147bpm-150bpm) and funky, melodic basslines rather than a single-note drone. Forest is characterised by 'organic' sounds which contrast with the 'technical' sounds of most psytrance – these sounds burble, squawk and chirp rather than buzz, bleep or glitch. These sounds are rarely acoustic in origin but are normally generated using software synthesis. Argentinian dark psytrance producer Megalopsy explains:

Forest is oozing, organic music that crinkles and crackles, and crunches all the way thru. The name says it all, its really all about using the music to create an atmospheric feeling, almost like being swallowed by the forest itself, showing you the dark and bright aspects of nature, nature as a force itself, sometimes you dont need to put birds singing, sometimes you can make a synth 'become' a bird. There are a lot of 'becomings' in forest music, synths are turned into leaves, branches, water, etc.

(Megalopsy, n.d.)

In addition, forest is associated with 'atmospheric' sound effects which are achieved through the use of extensive reverb and delay. For these, Krosis often uses animal sounds which have been treated in various ways (e.g. a moose sound with stereo delay and reverb). The intended effect is that of being lost in a deep, dark woodland, surrounded by nocturnal creatures and magical occurrences. These themes are further explored also through track titles, album artwork and event decorations, which often evoke foliage or living creatures (Figure 6.1). Trolls, elves and other aspects of Scandinavian mythology are also popular.

There is no aspect of forest psytrance (except the bass lines) which is not encompassed by the term 'dark psytrance' – the two terms almost always appear in conjunction, especially on websites with a tag system. Forest is perhaps an example of a 'modifier' or 'metagenre' which has eventually become a standalone or 'actual' genre over time. On EktoPlazm it is always used in conjunction with the tag 'darkpsy' and is never used on its own. (Basilisk states that 'Forest music has a particular vibe that you will learn to recognize over time but most of it will forever remain somewhat hard to distinguish from

regular darkpsy'.)⁹³ 'Forest' emerged as a distinct term in the mid-2000s, with many participants citing Derango's album *Tumult* (2007) as the genre's point of origin. However, the concept has a longer history dating back to the mid-1990s, in which many Goa trance and early psytrance parties were held in forested environments. Here it was discovered that abstract, trippy sounds were more suited to the environment than the kind of melodic, uplifting tracks that were played at beach parties (Aittoniemi, 2012; Vitos, 2017). Forest producers and DJs maintain that the best listening environment for this music is in woodlands at night, where the listener can imagine that they are surrounded by unusual psychedelic creatures.

There are a number of parallels between forest psytrance and the heavy metal subgenre 'black metal' – indeed, many forest producers enjoy and/or have performed black metal. (Krosis was in a black metal band for several years before becoming a PEDM producer.) Both are cited as a Scandinavian or Eastern European invention, although they are appreciated and produced around the world. Thus, although these genres draw on themes and imagery which are seemingly specific to the forested regions of northern Europe, they are interpreted within a range of cultural frameworks.⁹⁴ Like black metal, forest psytrance is 'heavy' music: many scene participants find it too fast, too texturally dense and too scary to be enjoyable.⁹⁵ It is mainly appreciated by devoted fans who will actively seek it out at PEDM events.

Hi-tech, the genre to which the project Final Form⁹⁶ is dedicated, is an easier musical style to define than forest psytrance. This music is very fast, normally around 160-190bpm. Rather than organic or

⁹³ <http://www.ektoplazm.com/style/forest>

⁹⁴ See, for example, Baulch's (2007) study of black metal in 1990s Bali in which this European imagery is reinterpreted by young Indonesian musicians.

⁹⁵ See Berger (1999) for a discussion of 'heaviness' in heavy metal music.

⁹⁶ The name 'Final Form' is a reference to anime and videogame culture in which powerful antagonists must often be defeated numerous times by the hero before victory is secured. Each time they are defeated, the foe is resurrected in a more powerful and less corporeal form; the 'final form' is the most ethereal incarnation of the character and signals impending doom for one or both parties. Such conflict is often very psychedelic, with

atmospheric sounds, hi-tech features digital-sounding timbres and clipped, tidy sound design. A different set of descriptive terms are used to describe this music including ‘fun’, ‘bouncy’, ‘zany’ and ‘frantic’. Krosis once described it to me as ‘like plugging your brain into the internet and trying to download everything at once’.⁹⁷ It may be understood as a relative of other very fast four-to-the-floor EDM variants which gained popularity in the mid-1990s, such as happy hardcore and gabber (Reynolds, 2013). Perhaps for this reason, hi-tech is becoming popular at major EDM festivals in the UK which are not otherwise oriented around full-on psytrance, including Boomtown.



the various forms of the antagonist appearing increasingly abstract or bizarre. This feature is found in the closing stages of the *Final Fantasy* videogames and the anime series *Dragon Ball Z*, for example.

⁹⁷ See Ngai (2012) for a discussion of ‘zany’ as an aesthetic category. Ngai states that zany ‘evokes the performance of affective labor—the production of affects and social relationships—as it comes to increasingly trouble the distinction between work and play’ (p.7). This ties the discussion of labour and the internet in Chapter 4 with Krosis’ description of hi-tech, which occupies an uncertain position between work and play, fun and gruelling exhaustion.



Figure 6.1 - Some album covers from Ektoplazm, with albums tagged 'hi-tech' in the top row and albums tagged 'forest' in the bottom row.

Forest psytrance and hi-tech could be seen as two halves of psyculture's exploration of the semantic/affective possibilities of FM synthesis, focusing on the organic and technical sounds which it can generate respectively. The simultaneous emergence of these two genres perhaps suggests a relational interpretation – the organic sound is organic because it is 'not technical', and vice versa (Fabbri, 1999; Brackett, 2015). In other words, forest and hi-tech depend on each other for their semiotic/affective properties. The lack of a crossover form should be noted: there is no such thing as 'forest hi-tech'. This is significant in an environment which encourages a combinatorial approach to musical genre.

There are parallels here with contemporary video games, which may have 'organic' or 'technical' qualities depending on their thematic content, although both are rendered using the same virtual tools. For example, two popular series of video games today are *The Elder Scrolls* and *Fallout*, which are both produced by the U.S. company Bethesda Softworks. These games are very similar in design and gameplay but are distinguished by their fantasy and sci-fi settings respectively: *The Elder Scrolls* features mountains, forests, swords and dragons, whereas *Fallout* features ruined urban landscapes,

guns and nuclear radiation. Here, the same development environment – including people, hardware and software – has been used to realise organic and technical environments, objects and events respectively. Many psytrance producers (including Krosis) are video game players and will be familiar with these contrasting possibilities in game design.

Krosis' third project, Murk Squad, is a collaboration with one of his housemates. Finished tracks have yet to emerge at the time of writing, but the duo commits an evening every week to working on new music. The project is an act of genre transgression combining elements of dark progressive psytrance with those of hip-hop and trap. These elements clash strongly: one track opens with a long 'skit' in the style of a hip-hop album, complete with sirens and gunshots, before arriving at a more conventional psytrance section with 'ethnic' and 'spiritual' samples juxtaposed against rolling synthetic hi-hats and airhorn blasts. The effect is comedic, poking fun at both the spiritual pretensions of PEDM and the gangsterism of much contemporary hip-hop. The Murk Squad project is very much tongue-in-cheek, but is also underpinned by serious musical endeavour: the 'joke' must be reinforced by a high level of production, or it will fall flat.

6.1.1 Dark Psytrance in Bristol

Dark psytrance has a strong presence in the South of England. It is particularly associated with squat parties in London, where it is the 'default' form of PEDM (much like full-on psytrance at more 'mainstream' psytrance parties and festivals). It is also very much present in Bristol, notably through a dedicated room at the event Tribe of Frog, which takes place in the venue Lakota (see 2.5.1). I have already given a brief overview of the division of genres at Tribe's monthly event – here, I will expand on what takes place in Rooms 1 to 3 in order to contextualise Krosis' activities as a resident DJ, and to locate darkpsy and forest in the PEDM genre spectrum. (Room 4 will be examined later in the chapter in the context of Globular's music.)

There are normally four rooms at Tribe of Frog. The largest of these is Room 1, which takes up most of the ground floor of Lakota. On a typical flyer the music in this room is simply referred to as 'psytrance' (Figure 6.2), but the genre presented here is more specifically 'full-on' and 'progressive' psytrance.⁹⁸ These genres are considered relatively 'mainstream' and some attendees will find the music in this room overly simple or cheesy – it is very melodic and tends towards stock musical devices. For example, tracks in these categories have a tendency to break into triplets for a few bars instead of the usual semiquaver pulse, a device which is considered a cliché by discerning participants. However, there is rarely any suggestion that these genres should be replaced by something else – full-on and progressive psytrance are the central focus of any psytrance festival, so it is considered proper that these should take centre stage at Tribe of Frog.

⁹⁸ DJ Basilisk gives the following definitions of these styles:

Full-on: 'Full-on psychedelic trance! High-energy music for peak moments. There are a bunch of related styles that we use to distinguish between different varieties of full-on: twilight (dark), morning (light), and uplifting (overly melodic and a bit cheesy to some). Rougher and heavier music can be found under darkpsy whereas if you are looking for funkier and more playful beats you might want to check out Suomi.'
(<http://www.ektoplazm.com/style/full-on>)

Progressive psytrance: 'Deep soothing beats, funky rhythms, and "slow-burning" sound development. Progressive psytrance takes time to build and typically clocks in anywhere from 130 to 142 BPM. Related styles: techtrance (darker, more mechanical), techno (deeper, sometimes less psychedelic), and morning (for progressive releases with that morning vibe)'. (<http://www.ektoplazm.com/style/progressive>)

Tribe of Frog

THE FREAKS COME OUT! IT'S THE LEGENDARY TRIBE OF FROG UV HALLOWEEN MONSTER BALL! GET DRESSED UP FOR A MISCHIEVOUS SAMHAIN SPOOKTACULAR WITH PRIZES FOR THE MOST CREATIVE AND RIDICULOUS HALLOWEEN COSTUMES!

PSYTRANCE -- PROGRESSIVE PSYTRANCE

FAGIN'S REJECT
WILDOATHINGS RECORDS

HEADWORKS
BOIT SHANKA MUSIC

PSIBINDI
RPHD RECORDS

F'DA F'DA
TRIBE OF FROG

PSYCHOSONIC
TRIBE OF FROG

DR.G
TRIBE OF FROG

TECHNO -- TECH-HOUSE -- TECH-FUNK

MEAT KATIE
LOWERING THE TONE

DOPAMINE
LOWERING THE TONE - DENISUS SOUND

PIEMAN
TRIBE OF FROG - BROKEN

GEO
TRIBE OF FROG - DIGITALAUDIO

HEMP
TRIBE OF FROG

ELECTRO SWING -- GLITCH HOP -- BALKAN -- GYPSYDEIC

DUTTY MOONSHINE
ROCKSTAR RECORDINGS - GHETTO FUNK

HOWLA
GHETTO FUNK

MARY MISS FAIRY
BROKEN - LUNAWAY

AAA BADBOY
BOOMTOWN FUNK

DJ POD
TRIBE OF FROG - HIPNOTICIZER

HITECH -- FOREST

NILKANTH
WOO-DOG RECORDS

FRACTAL MIND
LUNATIC ALIEN RECORDS

ALLYCAT
LUNATIC ALIEN RECORDS

MODULAR
SPIN ORILL RECORDS

CYBERNETIC GHOST
WOO-DOG - BROKEN RECORDS

NECESSARY NOISE
BROKEN RECORDS

4 ULTRA-IMMERSIVE UV HALLOWEEN THEMED PARTY ENVIRONMENTS - 4 SOUNDSYSTEMS - HALLOWEEN FANCY DRESS COMPETITION
MULTI LASER & LIGHT SHOWS - FIRE PIT - IMPS UV DANCERS - UV BODY PAINTING - LARGE OUTDOOR AREA - CAFE

LAKOTA . 6 UPPER YORK STREET . BRISTOL . BS2 8QN . 10pm until 7am

TICKETS: £5 EARLY BIRD at WWW.TRIBEOFFROG.COM - £10 / £12 (+booking fee) from the following outlets

WWW.LAKOTA.CO.UK - BRISTOL TICKET SHOP, BRISTOL - 0117 929 9008 - KATZE, BRISTOL - 0117 942 5625 - COOSHTI, BRISTOL - 0117 929 0850 - HAPPY DAZE, BATH - 01225 789 795

Tribe of Frog

TRANSDIMENSIONAL INTERGALACTIC SPACE FROG!
SATURDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 10PM-7AM
GET IN ORBIT ON BOARD OUR FROGADELIC STARSHIP AND JOIN US FOR A SPACE-THEMED INTERGALACTIC ADVENTURE OF COSMIC CHAOS AS WE BLAST INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION!

PSYTRANCE -- PROGRESSIVE PSYTRANCE

HYPNOCOUSTICS
LIQUID RECORDS

CHAMELEON
MAHARETTA RECORDS

LIQUID ROSS
LIQUID RECORDS

PSYCHOSONIC
TRIBE OF FROG - TIMEFEST

NATZAN
TRIBE OF FROG

DR.G
TRIBE OF FROG

PSYBREAKS -- TECH.FUNK -- GLITCH.HOP

BAD TANGO
BROKEN ROBOT RECORDS

BROKEN EYE
BROKEN ROBOT RECORDS - ADAPTED RECORDS

ALGORITHMIC
VLM RECORDS

SCAPEGOAT
MIXCLOUD.COM/DERREN-OMEGA-FLIGHT-NUTTALL

MR MIRRA
BROKEN RECORDS - ANIMAL TRAX

DJ POD
TRIBE OF FROG - HIPNOTICIZER

PROGRESSIVE ELECTRONICA -- TECH.HOUSE -- DOWNTempo

TRIPSWITCH
IDOGA RECORDS - SECTION RECORDS

LITTLE THOUGHTS
DACHSHUND RECORDS - TECHYES - HAPPY DAZE

MILES METRIC
MYTHICAL MENAGERIE

HEMP
TRIBE OF FROG

MARA LEFAY
SOUNDCLOUD.COM/VEVE-MARA

PIEMAN
TRIBE OF FROG - BROKEN RECORDS
BOIT SHANKA MUSIC

FOREST -- DARKPSY

FRACTAL SPIN
SHUNYATA RECORDS

PSYCODE
WOO-DOG RECORDS

GRADUAL
GRANDWELL RECORDS

3ON DAY
WOO-DOG RECORDS

KROSIS
TRIBE OF FROG - WOO-DOG

F'DA F'DA
TRIBE OF FROG

FOUR ULTRA-IMMERSIVE ULTRA-VIOLET THEMED ENVIRONMENTS - SPACE & SCI-FI FANCY DRESS THEME - AZTEC LASERS
LARGE OUTDOOR AREA - FIRE-PIT - IMPS DANCERS & PERFORMERS - UV-BODY PAINTING - UV STALL - CHAI CAFE

LAKOTA . 6 UPPER YORK STREET . BRISTOL . BS2 8QN . 10pm until 7am

TICKETS: £5 EARLY BIRD at WWW.TRIBEOFFROG.COM - £10 / £12 (+booking fee) from the following outlets

WWW.LAKOTA.CO.UK - BRISTOL TICKET SHOP, BRISTOL - 0117 929 9008 - KATZE, BRISTOL - 0117 942 5625 - COOSHTI, BRISTOL - 0117 929 0850 - HAPPY DAZE, BATH - 01225 789 795

Figure 6.2 - Two flyers for Tribe of Frog in 2017.

Room Two is located on the first floor and presents music that is somewhat slower than full-on psytrance but otherwise similar in terms of rhythm (i.e. mostly four-to-the-floor) and sound design. The genres featured vary from month to month, but five terms are used recurrently on the flyer: techno, tech-house, progressive psytrance, tech-funk, electro and psybreaks. This selection represents a wider trend in psyculture for the integration of techno-style musics into the alternative stages of psytrance events; as such, some of the performers featured here may be 'outsiders' to the psytrance scene, and their presence represents the wider set of styles which are considered adjunct to psyculture. Room Two may therefore appeal to a wider EDM audience in Bristol who enjoy psytrance events but do not particularly appreciate psytrance music itself – this has perhaps contributed to Tribe's popularity and longevity as an event.

Room Three mainly presents only three types of music: dark psytrance, forest and hi-tech. This is where Krosis plays his music, and where his duties as a resident DJ lie. It is a room for psytrance enthusiasts and attendees with a specific interest in higher-tempo music: other attendees will struggle with the high tempo of the music, the scary atmosphere and the claustrophobic environment. In keeping with the dark theme of the music, the room is lit only with UV light, giving it an especially otherworldly quality (Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.3 - Room 3 at Tribe of Frog with some more 'organic' decorations.



Figure 6.4 - Krosis performing in Room Three with some more 'technical' decorations.

Most Tribe of Frog events will feature some forest and some hi-tech, although one sound or the other is normally emphasised. At an event where the two genres are presented together there is a sharp contrast between the organic spookiness of forest and the digital zaniness of hi-tech, but the shared elements of sound design give an overall coherence. Two distinct sets of decorations are used which reflect this contrast: a hand-painted set consisting of UV paint on black cotton which features fantasy imagery, including scenes from *The Hobbit* and *Alice in Wonderland*, and a machine-printed set which features human anatomy combined with computer circuitry (Figure 6.4). These could be thought of as homologous to forest and hi-tech psytrance respectively. However, the decorations do not necessarily correspond with the music presented on stage, nor are they ever combined. (This perhaps reinforces the relational interpretation – the organic decorations are ‘not-technical’ and vice versa.)

As a resident at Tribe of Frog, Krosis performs in Room Three on a regular basis. Sometimes he will play as Krosis, in which case he will play dark and forest psytrance, whilst at other times he will play as Final Form, in which case he will play hi-tech. The Krosis sets can sometimes be very fast, exceeding the range of 147-152bpm which is typical of forest – however, they do not normally exceed 160bpm, which is his ‘cutoff point’ between the two projects. Final Form can go up to 190bpm but is unlikely to exceed this extreme tempo (at which point it would cross over into the genre of ‘psycore’).⁹⁹ At other times his Krosis sets can be much slower, approaching the range of tempi typical of progressive psytrance (130-140bpm). The tempo at which Krosis performs is partly decided by the other performers on the lineup: his job as a resident is to complement the acts brought in from outside, and he therefore has to be flexible in terms of what kind of music he plays.

Two smaller nights emerged during my research period offering the faster variants of psytrance which are normally found in Room 3 at Tribe of Frog. The first was Cosmic Vomit, run by a young crew ‘Forest Chavs’, which took place in July and October of 2015 at the Trinity Centre. Artists were brought to

⁹⁹ Psycore is extremely fast psytrance music, often between 180 and 220bpm. At this speed the music does not necessarily sound fast but may rather sound ethereal or even relaxing.

Bristol from overseas for these events and a décor crew called Flowers of Life was brought in from Helsinki to provide decorations. The event was described on Facebook as follows:

bringing to bristol a night of psychedelic forest trance 4.4 neo shamanic sounds for ecstatic trance dance in your urban jungle .at a really nice venue the Trinity center bristol .a converted church too venue with 18k of opus sound .bringing in international djs from Denmark and ha wales{parvarti records} pluss eye twisting visuals.get ready 4 deep stomping..... and raw chocolate¹⁰⁰

(Forest Chavs, Facebook 2015, original spelling and punctuation)

Like Planet Shroom (another night held at the Trinity centre) there was only one stage, and so attendees could only listen to one kind of music. Cosmic Vomit was not quite as well attended as latter event – this was quite noticeable in the Trinity Centre, which is a large space to fill. As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, however, bringing artists in from other cities or countries is considered an important way of building the local PEDM scene, and promoters are willing to take the risk of losing money in order to do this (see 2.5.2; 3.2). For local musicians like Krosis, this event was a good opportunity to make new connections and find a wider audience.

The second event was Brain Drill, a two-stage event featuring hi-tech and dark/forest psytrance which took place on May 13th, 2016 at Basement 45 and March 11th, 2017 at the Blue Mountain. The crew for this event gave a rationale for their event on Facebook:

An increase in BPM has been a long time coming for Bristol's Psytrance scene... A small collective of hi-tech lovers decided it was finally time to speed things up a bit!!!

(Brain Drill, Facebook 2016)

The Brain Drill parties were well-attended, filling these smaller venues almost to capacity. In the first event artists were sourced entirely from the UK, and the genre was limited to hi-tech; in the second

¹⁰⁰ There was indeed raw chocolate at Cosmic Vomit, which was provided by the crew.

event, an artist was flown in from abroad and a second room was added for forest psytrance. Krosis performed a Final Form set at on the main stage at this event.

What is interesting about these high-tempo events is the positioning of forest and hi-tech as the 'central' style rather than full-on, which we would normally expect at a psytrance event. In the context of Bristol, this subversion of the normal PEDM genre-spectrum hierarchy contrasts with the hierarchical genre structure of Tribe of Frog. From a 'genre-as-rhizome' perspective (see 5.2) we could say that events like Cosmic Vomit and Brain Drill create a new 'centre' to which other musical styles become peripheral. For producers of these niche dance music styles, such events in turn help to reconfigure their musical careers and output in relation to the local event culture by creating networking opportunities – namely, the ability to connect with other artists and an audience for their music.

6.1.2 'Profane Geometry'

This section looks at the title track from Krosis' EP *Profane Geometry* (2015). On SoundCloud, Krosis has marked it with the principle genre 'psytrance' and the additional tag 'forest', suggesting that it contains features typical dark psytrance, forest psytrance, and possibly full-on night. Here, I will analyse the track in search of these devices.

'Profane Geometry' begins with a minor chord voiced by strings and sung vocals sampled from a scene in the 1999 movie *Eyes Wide Shut* depicting a clandestine magical ritual. Under this introduction, a standard psytrance bass pattern is gradually introduced, establishing a tempo of 150bpm, which is typical of dark psytrance. Although the pattern articulates semiquavers, it is not a 'straight-sixteenths' bassline, but instead has a stop-start feeling (Figure 6.5). After a brief fill, in which one of the bass notes is extended to create a prolonged buzzing sound, the first lead pattern is introduced at 00:00:12. The lead sound has a wide frequency spectrum, with FM synthesis giving it a 'shredding' or 'tearing'

quality. Although a pitch is evident, it does not vary – as such, it is a typical darkpsy lead, and has a rhythmic rather than melodic function. A stereo delay effect has also been added allows the lead to echo into the empty spaces between phrases. This is typical of forest psytrance and helps define the track as such. (The echo is absent from my transcription, being one of the many digital effects which is not conducive to Western classical notation.)

Musical score for measures 1-4. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass line on a single staff with a double bar line. The grand staff has a whole rest in the treble clef and a complex rhythmic pattern in the bass clef. The separate bass line consists of eighth notes with stems pointing up.

5

Musical score for measures 5-8. The score continues with the same three-staff format. The treble clef staff has a melodic line with eighth notes and a half note. The bass clef staff continues with its rhythmic pattern. The separate bass line continues with eighth notes.

9

Musical score for measures 9-12. The score continues with the same three-staff format. The treble clef staff has a whole rest. The bass clef staff continues with its rhythmic pattern. The separate bass line continues with eighth notes.

13

Musical score for measures 13-16. The score continues with the same three-staff format. The treble clef staff has a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note. The bass clef staff continues with its rhythmic pattern. The separate bass line continues with eighth notes.

Figure 6.5 - Krosis, 'Profane Geometry', 0:13 – 0:39

Lead 1

Lead 2

This system contains measures 1 through 4. The top staff (treble clef) features two melodic lines: 'Lead 1' and 'Lead 2'. 'Lead 1' starts with a whole rest in measure 1, followed by a quarter rest in measure 2, and then a series of eighth notes in measures 3 and 4. 'Lead 2' begins in measure 3 with a sixteenth-note triplet, followed by eighth notes. The middle staff (bass clef) has a consistent eighth-note accompaniment. The bottom staff (percussion clef) features a steady eighth-note pattern with occasional accents.

5

Bleeps

This system contains measures 5 through 8. The top staff (treble clef) has a melodic line that ends with a long note in measure 8, marked with a hairpin and the word 'Bleeps'. The middle staff (bass clef) continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The bottom staff (percussion clef) continues with the eighth-note pattern.

9

Lead 1

Lead 2

This system contains measures 9 through 12. The top staff (treble clef) shows 'Lead 1' and 'Lead 2' with various rests and melodic fragments. The middle staff (bass clef) continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The bottom staff (percussion clef) continues with the eighth-note pattern.

13

Lead 1

This system contains measures 13 through 16. The top staff (treble clef) features 'Lead 1' with a melodic line that ends in measure 13. The middle staff (bass clef) continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. The bottom staff (percussion clef) continues with the eighth-note pattern.

Figure 6.6 - Krosis, 'Profane Geometry', 1:04 – 1:29.

At 1:04, after a second fill marking the start of the next 32-bar section, two more lead sounds enter the musical texture along with hand drums (Figure 6.6). These fill the gaps left by the first lead, entering into a three-way 'call and response'. This antiphonal effect is again typical of forest psytrance, giving the impression that the synthetic lead sounds are communicating with each other. An LFO-modulated sin wave also fades in and out creating a contrastingly digital 'bleeping' effect. A third lead enters in the next thirty-two bar section, adding material to the 16-bar 'hypermeasure' (Butler, 2006) which has developed thus far. Krosis enters these shorter, more precise rhythms by hand using Ableton's MIDI editor – as a drummer, he has an advanced sense of rhythm, and can hear the parts before writing them. This process is largely conceived in terms of the combination and re-combination of short rhythmic cells of one to two beats in length. However, Krosis also frequently makes use of polyrhythms and extended syncopations which go across the beat. (He attributes these to the influence of singer-songwriter/harpist Joanna Newsom, who uses such devices extensively in her music.)

Meanwhile, a similar additive process is taking place amongst the ambient sounds. The first of these, beginning at bar 9 (00:13), is a detuned synthesizer tone with a descending filter to which echo and reverb have been applied. Over this, a second sound with a sharp onset and a long tail which bends downwards in pitch, with similar 'spatial' effects applied. (Krosis achieves these effects by loading a sound into a virtual sampler, such as the Simpler instrument in Ableton Live, and altering the pitch using the pitch bend on his MIDI controller.) A third ambient sound follows shortly (00:18), a male vocal tone sampled from the same source as the introductory sequence. There are no further ambient sounds for another five bars – this space in the texture gives the sounds 'room to breathe', allowing them to echo into the darkness. As the track progresses, more sounds are added, until the 16-bar hypermeasure is saturated with interlocking leads and FX.

Having built up this long pattern of interlocking sounds, the track under goes a pronounced change in the second half. After a short break from 4:41 to 4:48, the bassline drops to Eb and takes on a more

relentless, driving tone. New lead sounds and patterns are introduced along with atmospheric effects. At 5:39, a sample of Bulgarian singing enters, dominating the musical texture. It is this feature in particular which leads Krosis to describe the track as an example of 'full-on night' – this is 'cheesy morning singing' (in his words) and thus too melodic for dark or forest psytrance. However, it is juxtaposed against some shredding saws and other forest-y sounds – there is ambiguity, a contrast between dark and light, which characterises much of Krosis' music.

As demonstrated in this analysis, rather than simply looping the same measure or hyper-measure throughout the track, Krosis varies the set of musical ideas presented. This characteristic is valued by PEDM participants who often describe musical time in terms of a 'journey' or 'voyage'. Thus, as argued by Butler (2014), although the basic components of EDM are loops and cycles, at the higher formal levels of the track and the mix EDM displays linear or even 'teleological' characteristics (p.203). This is especially true of PEDM – by adopting this approach to musical form, Krosis makes his music particularly suited to the psychedelic dancefloor.

6.1.3 Descriptions of Krosis' Music.

In the previous chapter words were considered as 'taxonomic resources' for the organisation of musical experience, an approach which is particularly useful when looking at tags on internet music platforms. Here we will look more closely at words as 'semiotic resources'; that is, as a means of indicating particular features in a given piece or collection of music. Again, the internet gives musicians plenty of scope for appending their output with verbal descriptors, including tags, captions and titles as well as longer passages of descriptive writing. These may also be provided by third parties such as label owners or distributors. In each case, these words provide clues as to how the music is understood by scene participants, and the kinds of musical strategies which they are trying to enact.

Often, it is not clear whether tags are being used to organise music, or if their function is more descriptive. The tags used by Krosis on his SoundCloud page are a good example. For the most part, he gives ‘psytrance’ as the principle genre for his tracks, with various uses of ‘twilight’, ‘night’, ‘forest’ in the ‘additional tags’ (Figure 6.7). A recording of a set at Tribe of Frog is marked ‘forest’, but this tag has been applied by Jason Frog; a mix made to demonstrate Krosis’ stylistic focus is marked ‘Forest/Twilight’ by the producer. (It is interesting that mixes are marked ‘forest’, here, but not individual tracks. This may suggest that certain generic concepts are more easily expressed through mixing, which can highlight continuity within a body of work and demonstrate the *range* of ideas which fit with a genre concept, than through production, which commits the artist to limited set of sounds.)



Figure 6.7 – The track ‘Ancient Agnostic’ on Krosis’ SoundCloud page.

Longer passages of descriptive writing demonstrate how Krosis views his musical output, making use of the extended vocabulary associated with dark psytrance music. The following description appears on his SoundCloud page and artist profile on the Blue Hour Sounds website:

Krosis is a DJ and producer born from the vibrant Bristol Psytrance scene with a background of extreme metal. Blasting a twisted blend of gnarly, yet groovy styles, he is intent on bringing a variety of soundscapes to the scene. With tracks ranging from chunky, high-energy groovers to squelchy and organic darkness, he creates tracks that twist and turn, taking the listener on a journey.

Apart from ‘psytrance’, explicit genre terminology is not used here. Rather, a number of other ideas are employed, including rhythmic concepts (‘groovy’, ‘high energy’) and textural descriptions (‘squelchy’, ‘organic’). Those familiar with high-tempo psytrance will infer that this is dark psytrance

with some aspects of forest and full-on night; it is not likely to be hi-tech, progressive or full-on morning psytrance. Such terms might in this sense be understood as relational, standing in opposition to concepts such as ‘technical’, ‘glitchy’, or ‘upbeat’.¹⁰¹

One of Krosis’ track ‘Ice of Phendrana’ is marked ‘Tundra :P’ on SoundCloud, with an emoticon indicating playful intentions (Figure 6.8). This term is Krosis’ own invention: it is not used by anyone else, although similar imagery may be found in the album titles, artwork and track names of other artists. It refers to bell-like leads and ‘icy’ pads (both largely comprised of simple tones with a few noisy harmonics) in the track which the producer finds evocative of a cold, barren landscape (Figure 6.9). (Like the ‘forest’ in forest psytrance, the image of the frozen boreal landscape is also found in heavy metal culture, notably in the black metal and power metal subgenres with which Krosis is familiar.) Similar musical elements such as sung melodies, bell parts, and tonal pads and atmospheres can be found in Krosis’ other tracks, distinguishing his music from that of other darkpsy producers. Thus, although Krosis is not serious about establishing tundra as a genre category in the wider psytrance scene, he finds the concept valuable as a way of describing and understanding his own compositional practice.



Figure 6.8 - ‘Ice of Phendrana’ on Krosis’ SoundCloud page.

¹⁰¹ I have taken these last three terms from Basilisk’s descriptions of hi-tech and morning psytrance. See www.ektoplazm.com/style/hi-tech www.ektoplazm.com/style/morning .



Figure 6.9 - A transcription of the icy bell part at 3:41 – 4.34 in 'Ice of Phendrana'

Krosis' idea of tundra psytrance is similar to another unusual concept, 'morning forest'. This is a seemingly contradictory idea: forest connotes dark, organic, and fx-driven, whereas morning suggests upbeat, technical and melodic. However, Krosis finds a certain style of dark psytrance – forest leads and fx with morning pads and atmosphere – to be evocative of the transitional hours between night and day at a psytrance party. Krosis compares the beautiful morning weather at a continental festival with that of a typical British event, suggesting that morning forest is 'forest for drizzly grey mornings, for British sunrises'. Most DJs will play overly cheerful music at this time, such as 'morning' progressive psytrance with upbeat, melodic characteristics:

K: The amount of times I've had a booming hot sunrise and morning prog – there's been a few, but mostly it's grey miserable sunrises with triumphant morning prog and, nah, sometimes you need some more misanthropic kind of grey-weather forest for the people that don't quite want to slow it down yet but do still want some melody.

The 'morning forest' concept crystallized for Krosis in 2015 when he discovered the Italian psytrance label Blue Hour Sounds, whose name refers to the colour of the sky in the twilight hour just before

dawn. Their compilation *The Dark Side of Dawn* (2015) explicitly draws together these two disparate genre concepts – this is explained in the description of the VA on Blue Hour’s BandCamp page:

Blue Hour Sounds artists and passionate DJs Robin Gaiana and Peyo selected these stunning sonic sculptures, searching for music that can forge a bridge from dark foresty nights into mystical misty mornings.

Expect serious rolling basslines, deep atmospheres, crunchy leads and dense forest sounds, with just a hint of color to call out for the coming of day.

(Blue Hour Sounds, BandCamp 2015)

Discovering this VA marked a turning point for Krosis, who knew of the label but hadn’t fully registered the nature of their project:

K: I’d never quite clocked that Blue Hour was morning-y forest. I just never really had, I hadn’t looked into it that much. And after that it was like, whoa, this is the perfect VA for me to get on. This is ideal.

Soon afterwards, Krosis created a mix for SoundCloud explicitly developing the idea of morning forest, partly in hope of drawing the attention of Blue Hour Sounds. This included several of his own tracks and some others which he felt were representative of the concept. A suitable picture was chosen for the thumbnail: a few solitary trees on snowy ground with a distant church looming in the mist (Figure 6.10).

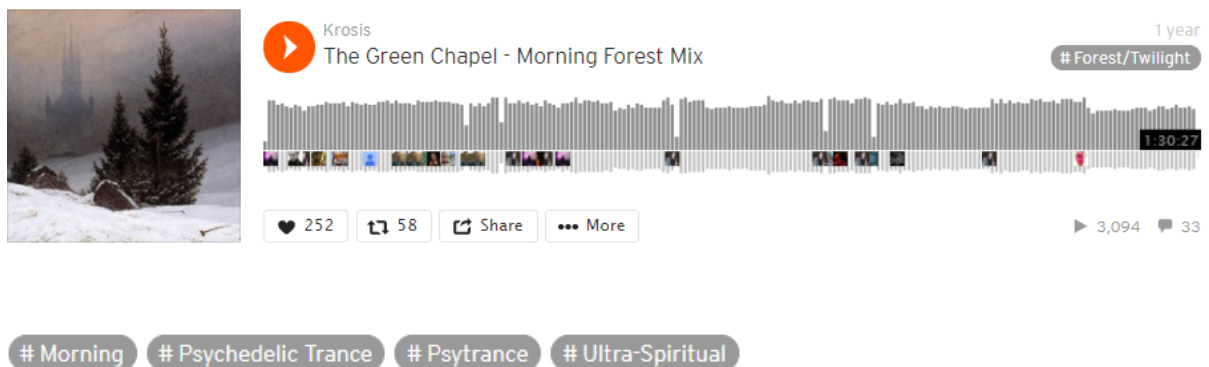


Figure 6.10 - Krosis’ morning forest mix *The Green Chapel* (2016) on SoundCloud.

Krosis' mix did attract the attention of the label, and shortly afterwards they asked if he would like to join as a producer. This was an important moment in Krosis' musical career, a recognition of his unique sound and an opportunity to position his output within a wider stylistic project. The creation of *The Green Chapel* was thus an effective scene participation strategy bringing together musical, visual and conceptual resources and resulting in a new relationship. This has not signalled the end of his relationship with Woo-Dog Records, however: this is still a suitable channel for his less morning-oriented works, and one of his tracks has since appeared on a Woo-Dog compilation. Psyculture is normally thus amenable to artists who wish to pursue multiple creative projects.

6.2 Globular

Globular writes a kind of music known as 'psydub', which combines the stylistic attributes of psytrance music with those of dub reggae. This is his only project and it is dedicated entirely to this kind of music. As such, the musical world he inhabits is in some ways narrower than that of Krosis, who has several projects. However, the network of genre terms which surround psydub is wider than that of dark psytrance, and the musical style has a history which incorporates artists from outside PEDM spectrum altogether.

Although it inhabits a range of tempi, psydub is understood to be a kind of 'downtempo' music.¹⁰² Within the psytrance scene, 'downtempo' has a meaning roughly synonymous with 'chill-out', referring to slower forms of electronic dance music intended as much for listening as for dancing

¹⁰² DJ Basilisk's description of downtempo is as follows: 'Downtempo: Broken beats, ambient soundscapes, chilled vibes, and slower music with a wide variety of moods and approaches. There are many related styles including psy dub (downtempo with an emphasis on dubby bass), deep trance (more of a steady beat and trance focus), psybreaks (more uptempo but still broken beat), and ambient (typically beatless). Peripherally related: bass music, glitch, and IDM.'

(Brewster & Broughton, 2007; Reynolds, 2013).¹⁰³ Slower music is considered an essential part of psytrance by most participants, who place value on having a range of moods and tempi at a psytrance event. As a result, psytrance has developed an internal downtempo 'sub-subculture' to cater for the lower end of the tempo spectrum. The subset of downtempo which is specific to psytrance is often referred to as psy downtempo, psybient or psychill. Psychill music is normally made by producers within the psytrance scene; it has specifically psychedelic musical characteristics, with some artists even incorporating the 'KBBB' pattern into their music.¹⁰⁴ However, the genre has roots outside of psytrance. The ambient music of Jean Michel Jarre and Brian Eno, and the downtempo dance music of The Orb and Aphex Twin, are crucial forerunners (Reynolds, 2013). Because of this shared history, psychill acts as a point of contact between psytrance and other EDM cultures, as well as the wider popular music industry. For example, a number of psychill artists are famous beyond the PEDM scene. (Shpongle, Ott and Entheogenic are good examples.) Psychill has also demonstrated commercial applicability in terms of films and video games: one of the best-known psychill labels, Ultimae Records, is home to several artists whose music has been used in this context.¹⁰⁵ (Similarly, Globular's music was licensed for use by the science education centre @Bristol for their 3D planetarium shows in 2015 and 2016 – a usage far removed from the PEDM festival scene.) Thirdly, many psychill artists also contribute to a wider music scene focused on 'ethnic' sounds. These artists – Kaya Project, Desert Dwellers and Hilight Tribe, for example – are noted for their use of live instrumentation, and their music is presented in a range of contexts which pertain as much to 'world music' or 'transformational'

¹⁰³ In the UK, 'downtempo' has historically had a specific meaning roughly synonymous with 'trip-hop' (see 0.3.4), referring to electronic music using acoustic samples and breakbeats, jazz harmony and soul vocals. Artists in this category include Massive Attack, Bonobo and Boards of Canada. This is not how the term is used in psytrance, however.

¹⁰⁴ Aes Dana is one famous psychill artist who uses the psytrance bass pattern in their music.

¹⁰⁵ For example, the artist Solar Fields scored two major videogames by Electronic Arts, *Mirror's Edge* (2008) and *Mirror's Edge Catalyst* (2016).

culture than psyculture, such as the transformational festivals popular in the US and Australia (Schmidt, 2015).

Lindop's assertion that "psychill" is perhaps the most coherent and fully formed style within the psytrance "meta" genre' (2010, p.125) must be challenged at this point. Rather, the contested nature of the generic terms 'psychill' and 'psybient', the inclusion of artists from outside of the psytrance scene in downtempo performance practice, and the degree of crossover with other forms of music-making (including band-format concerts, film and videogame licensing, and other music scenes) suggest that psychill is a more porous area of musical activity than the high-tempo psytrance detailed in the previous section. I believe that this is indicative of a wider trend in today's underground musical cultures: high-tempo genres have a tendency to 'intensify' (Toynbee, 2000) creating very pure musical styles, whereas lower tempi tend to engender hybridisation and often encompass both underground and mainstream modes of production. However, psyculture is perhaps the only musical system in which we can observe both ends of the tempo spectrum co-existing and both processes taking place simultaneously.

Psydup is a specific type of psychill which combines musical elements from psytrance, including trippy sound design and emphasis on filter resonance and saw waves, with elements from dub reggae, including the offbeat chords (or 'skank'), shuffling percussion and low, sustained bass notes. The 2002 album *In Dub*, in which noted producer/engineer Ott remixed several pieces by the psytrance artist Hallucinogen, is widely seen as the genre's point of origin.¹⁰⁶ However, the lineage of the style can be traced back to the ambient dub music of groups such as The Orb and The KLF, who were active in the UK in the early-to-mid 1990s. Some more recent artists have been incorporated into the psydup

¹⁰⁶ The nature and centrality of the album *In Dub* would suggest that psydup music is created by applying a 'dubbing' process to psytrance; however this is not normally the case. Rather, psydup is a kind of 'designer dub' (Veal, 2007) in which the musical materials are conceived as dub from the outset. *In Dub* was preceded by a number of similar projects, including Shpongled's debut album *Are You Shpongled* (1998), Celtic Cross' *Hicksville* (1998), and Entheogenic's *Entheogenic* (2002) which also contain music which is 'designer dub' by this definition.

canon, such as Dreadzone and Pitch Black, who do not write PEDM music in the sense outlined in 0.3.1 (i.e. their musical lineage cannot be traced back to the Goa trance movement), but their music is appreciated by scene participants and they are occasionally booked to play at PEDM events. As such, psydub is not a 'pure' genre of PEDM like full-on, forest or hi-tech – it has considerable overlap with other kinds of music, and its boundaries are not clear.

Globular's music is unusual for contemporary psydub. More so than his peers, he has retained the melodic writing established by early artists, and the simple bass sounds (either a bass guitar or a low-filtered saw wave) which leave a space for these melodies within the musical texture. For this reason his music is often compared with that of Ott and other downtempo artists who rose to prominence in the 1990s and early 2000s. Globular's label-mates on Shanti Planti, by contrast, make heavily effects-driven music focused on elaborate and multi-layered bass timbres.¹⁰⁷ Globular feels that their music is 'better-produced' (i.e. more texturally nuanced) than his, and better suited to the modern psytrance scene in which intricate synthetic sound design is highly valued. However, it is evident from comments on YouTube and SoundCloud that his fans do not see his music as too simply-produced, nor as a throwback to a previous era; rather, they appreciate that few producers are able to make this kind of music, and that Globular provides a continuation of a style which otherwise has few representatives.

Globular has adhered closely to the psydub genre throughout his musical career, with only occasional excursions into related subgenres. The fact that he was the only participant in my study whose primary income was performance fees and digital music sales may be related to this fact: he only has one musical project, and does not promote, DJ, or run a record label. However, belonging to the downtempo sub-scene within psyculture has drawbacks. Psydub is rarely the main attraction at a psytrance party, and it is hard to develop a large fanbase when constantly relegated to the alternative stages at events. Globular is not a fan of psytrance music itself and has often expressed a wish for a

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, music by Quanta, Landswitcher, Akasha, or Tribone.

separate psychill scene with its own events. Many of the strategies in which he was engaged were thus directed towards ‘scene building’ and the development of an audience for downtempo music – for example, his involvement in the collective Shanti Planti (4.5.1.2) and the club night Psychedelic Jelly (2.5.3).

6.2.1 Psydub in Bristol

Globular rarely has an opportunity to play his music in Bristol, for several reasons. Firstly, local and urban events dedicated to psychill or psydub are a rarity. This music is mostly played at PEDM festivals, where it is found on secondary or alternative stages. (By contrast, there are numerous events dedicated to dark, forest and hi-tech psytrance in the UK.) Secondly, Globular is a live performer and not a DJ. This means that certain DJ-specific strategies such as residence and affiliation are not open to him (see 3.3). Thirdly, as a relatively famous producer signed to a prestigious booking agency, Globular’s performance fees are relatively high (around £800 for an appearance). Thus, although some events in Bristol do have an alternative stage for downtempo music, they are unable to book him on a regular basis.

Despite the lack of dedicated psychill events there are some opportunities to see this kind of music performed in Bristol. The most notable is Tribe of Frog which often hosts downtempo music in Room 4 on the top floor of the venue Lakota (see 2.2). Although often referred to as the chill-out room, this space features a wide range of styles and tempi. The specific generic makeup changes from event to event: ‘dub’, ‘drum ‘n’ bass’, ‘eclectic downtempo’, ‘chilled grooves’, etc. can be seen on event flyers (Figure 6.2). ‘Old school’ or ‘classic’ PEDM music is also presented here, a category which includes Goa trance and acid techno. (These are generally slower than today’s full-on psytrance and therefore make a good accompaniment or replacement for downtempo music.) Snowdrop played in Room 4 several times during my research period, and Globular played his live set on one occasion in September 2015.

The room also has two resident DJs who played a wide range of music, and each event features at least one musician brought in from outside the city. Tribe of Frog thus offers a small number of performance opportunities to psychill musicians in Bristol but does otherwise constitute much of a 'scene' for this kind of music.

Some one-off events in Bristol also had downtempo stages. One example was the Psychedelic Melting Pot event detailed in section 3.1, which had an upstairs 'attic' area for chill out music. Again, although some high-profile acts were booked for this space, it was very much peripheral to the main stage which was playing full-on psytrance. In addition, a large-scale downtempo event occurred on 21st of November 2015 in which the Planet Shroom crew arranged a live performance from the famous psydub producer Ott. (On Facebook, Lurk joked that the night was 'Planet Shroom at half-speed'.) This was performed with a full band including a drummer, guitarist and vocalist, bass guitarist, and Ott himself on synthesizers, laptop and melodica. Globular was booked as a supporting act – a good opportunity for him to meet the celebrated musician and gain some fans. The event was very popular and sold out, but it was very much a one-off occurrence, and therefore not conducive to the development of the local downtempo scene.

Bristol's first dedicated psychill event, Psychedelic Jelly, emerged towards the end of my research and quickly established itself as a semi-regular club night. As noted in 2.5.3, this was quite different from a normal PEDM event. The music was entirely downtempo and there were even live instruments before and after the DJ sets (Figure 6.11). The promoters were keen to provide more performing opportunities for local DJs, but also performed the much-valued function of bringing noted artists in from other cities and countries. Their actions were thus aimed at the creation of a new 'centre' for downtempo music within the wider network of psychculture in Bristol.



Figure 6.11 - A live jam at the first Psychedelic Jelly event.

The emergence of Psychedelic Jelly was a significant development for Globular. Whereas he had largely spent his career playing at events focused on psytrance, a type of music that he does not particularly enjoy, this party hinted at the possibility of a self-contained downtempo scene with its own event culture. He decided to waive his fee for the first event and promised to help promote any future iterations. This gambit paid off: Psychedelic Jelly quickly became a regular event, with further parties taking place in November and January of the following year. Globular himself was booked to play in May 2018 as a headlining act. Psychedelic Jelly thus contributed to the development of the local downtempo scene in a way which one-off events and second stages could not, helping to connect performers with a local audience and event infrastructure in a long-lasting relationship.

6.2.2 'Synchronicity City 3.0'

'Synchronicity City 3.0' is the first track on Globular's second album *Magnitudes of Order* (2013). It is one of Globular's most popular tracks, and a mainstay of his live set. It has been uploaded to YouTube several times by channels focusing on psychill music (often with fan-made videos or slideshows) and by the artist himself, accruing tens of thousands of views.¹⁰⁸ It is a good example of Globular's musical style and of psydub more widely. Here, I will analyse it in search of features which pertain to the metagenre 'psychedelic' and the specific genre 'dub reggae'. This will allow for comparison with Krosis' forest psytrance music, which, although very different on the surface, has several elements in common.

The track opens with a recorded soundscape featuring human voices, calling to mind an outdoor scene in a marketplace, and a high flute playing a pentatonic melody. Ambient sections like this are typical of psychill music, which is intended for listening at home and on headphones as well as the dancefloor. (Globular often preserves these sections in his live performances, leading to significant 'downtime' where dancers are waiting for the beat. This can be very effective if the crowd is attentive and engaged with the performance, but it may also allow the music to be drowned out by neighbouring stages. This is one of the reasons why Globular is so enthusiastic about downtempo-only events.) At 00:24, a diving bass tone announces the beginning of a new section, with hand percussion and synthetic pad outlining the tempo and tonality of the track. Acoustic instruments enter at 00:49: a guitar with a delay effect, a wooden flute, and female vocals. The soundscape until this point is thus largely acoustic, although digital delay and phasing effects are used.

¹⁰⁸ See 4.3 for a discussion of YouTube channels. The channels which routinely upload Globular's music include Psybrations and The Psychedelic Muse.

Musical score system 1, measures 1-4. The score is in 4/4 time. The right hand (RH) plays a series of chords: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4. The left hand (LH) plays a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs.

Musical score system 2, measures 5-8. The RH continues with the same chord sequence: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4. The LH continues with its rhythmic pattern, featuring more sixteenth-note runs and triplet figures.

Musical score system 3, measures 9-12. The RH continues with the same chord sequence: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4. The LH continues with its rhythmic pattern, featuring more sixteenth-note runs and triplet figures.

Musical score system 4, measures 13-16. The RH continues with the same chord sequence: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4. The LH continues with its rhythmic pattern, featuring more sixteenth-note runs and triplet figures.

Figure 6.12 - Globular, 'Synchronicity City Version 3.0', 1:14 – 2:04.

System 1 of the musical score. It consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The top staff contains a series of chords, mostly triads and dyads, with some notes marked with accents. The grand staff below features a complex rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, including triplets and syncopated rhythms.

System 2 of the musical score, starting at measure 5. It follows the same three-staff layout as System 1. The top staff continues with chords, including some with ties and slurs. The grand staff continues with intricate rhythmic patterns, maintaining the 4/4 time signature and B-flat key signature.

System 3 of the musical score, starting at measure 9. It maintains the three-staff structure. The top staff shows a progression of chords, with some notes tied across measures. The grand staff continues with dense rhythmic textures, including various note values and rests.

System 4 of the musical score, starting at measure 13. It concludes the section shown. The top staff features a final chord with a long note and a slur over a group of notes. The grand staff ends with a complex rhythmic figure. The key signature and time signature remain consistent throughout.

Figure 6.13 - Globular, 'Synchronicity City Version 3.0', 8:03 – 8:53

A pronounced change occurs at 01:14. The acoustic instruments fall away, and the track's primary musical material is introduced (Figure 6.12). This has three parts. The first is a bell-like synth sound articulating a sixteen-bar melodic figure. Beneath this, a second melodic sound fades in, playing a syncopated figure which accompanies the melody. (This is a typical 303-style lead, inherited from acid house, consisting of saw waves with a resonant low-pass filter.) A bass guitar fades in with the lead, played by Globular himself – this is the first indication that we are listening to a reggae-style track. The drums enter at 02:03, establishing a laid-back groove with syncopated kick and prominent snare on beats two and four of the bar. Although programmed, the drums are sampled from acoustic sources: they sound 'real', and the part could conceivably have been played by a drummer. At 02:54 a guitar and organ add an authentic-sounding reggae 'bubble' and 'skank' to the track. By now the texture is somewhat full, with a sound falling on almost every semiquaver – this is similar to the additive process seen in 'Profane Geometry'.

Like Krosis, Globular varies the sounds and patterns used throughout the duration of a track rather than simply looping the same patterns over and over. In Globular's music this often takes the form of a 'development' rather than a 'replacement' of sounds: that is, the same synthesizer patches and instruments are used to explore different melodies or rhythms rather than being superseded by new sounds altogether.¹⁰⁹ This particularly noticeable in *Synchronicity City 3.0* in which the bass part is used to reharmonize the melody in the final part of the track. Whereas for most of track's duration the bassline alternates between chords i and iv of D Minor, at 7:51 the pattern changes, instead suggesting chords i, III, iv, VI and Vb via the bass notes D, F, G and Bb (Figure 6.13). The bell and lead parts also change subtly at this point to reflect the new harmonic progression. This kind of reharmonization is a favourite technique of Globular's; it helps to give his music a structural and

¹⁰⁹ See Butler (2006; 2014) for in-depth discussion as to how musical material is developed in EDM. Butler notes that in techno and house music certain sounds will articulate certain melodic or rhythmic figures and do not significantly deviate from these, especially if the sounds in question are sampled.

emotional impact, and to differentiate it from much contemporary psytrance and psydub music which has a drone-like approach to harmony.¹¹⁰

Much like 'Profane Geometry', 'Synchronicity City 3.0' has linear characteristics which contrast with the cyclicity of its constituent elements. Indeed, the changing bass pattern at the end gives it a teleological quality reminiscent of classical music or progressive rock.¹¹¹ Globular thus demonstrates that the use of loops 'does not mean[...] that EDM is somehow nonteleological, that musicians and dancers are uninterested in growth, motion towards goals, climax, and the like' (Butler, 2014, p.205). By providing listeners with a musical journey, Globular situates his music within a wider field of psychedelic and progressive musics which emphasise development and variation over relatively long periods of musical time.

Other musical elements besides structure are also held in common between psydub and the various genres of psytrance, such as forest psytrance. One is the prominent use of delay or 'echo' on lead sounds and effects, particularly syncopated delay (e.g. 3/8 of the underlying pulse). However, the semiotics of this device are different in the various PEDM genres. For example, in forest psytrance delay is understood primarily as a spatial effect signifying a vast, dark woodland. In psydub, by contrast, delay signifies the genre's historical connection with dub reggae and its offshoots, which have made prominent use of the effect (Veal, 2007; Henriques, 2010). As a shared musical resource, therefore, delay therefore has various uses to which it can be put by PEDM producers. A similar argument can be made for the timbres generated by FM synthesis and resonant filters: these too are shared between the various forms of PEDM, although they are used in different ways in each genre. For example, in forest psytrance they are used to generate variably-pitched 'organic' sounds

¹¹⁰ A similar technique is found in Globular's tracks 'Infinity Inside' (*Digging & Building*, 2014) and 'Temple of the Pollinator' (*Holobiont*, 2016).

¹¹¹ Two of the scene's most famous producers, Raja Ram (Shpongler) and Merve Pepler (Eat Static) played in progressive rock bands before writing electronic music. Progressive and ambient pop music (e.g. Pink Floyd and Brian Eno) also influenced the development of ambient dub in the early 1990s (e.g. The Orb, KLF), which later gave rise to psydub.

reminiscent of animal calls, whereas in psydub they are used to generate more melodic figures, as we have seen in the previous analyses. Such devices may be understood as nodes which hold together the wider musical network: it is the sharing of these resources which gives rise to the psychedelic meta-genre and gives psychculture its musical coherence.

6.2.3 Descriptions of Globular’s Music

We have already looked at Globular’s use of tags on BandCamp, noting the various types of metadata incorporated including geographic locations, the name of the artist and album, and a variety of generic terms (see 5.2). For example, on SoundCloud, Globular tends to use ‘psydub’ as the principle genre of a track whilst using additional tags for a range of other generic terms and metadata (Figure 6.14). Occasionally, other pieces of information are used in place of the principle genre. A recording of his set at Boom Festival in 2016 is marked ‘Boom’; a track which appeared on the Shanti Planti charity compilation *Middle Peace* (2014) is marked ‘Middle Peace’ (Figure 6.15). Once again, genre terminology is placed alongside and interchanged with other kinds of musical and extra-musical information.



Figure 6.14 - Globular’s track ‘The Intralocuter’ on SoundCloud.

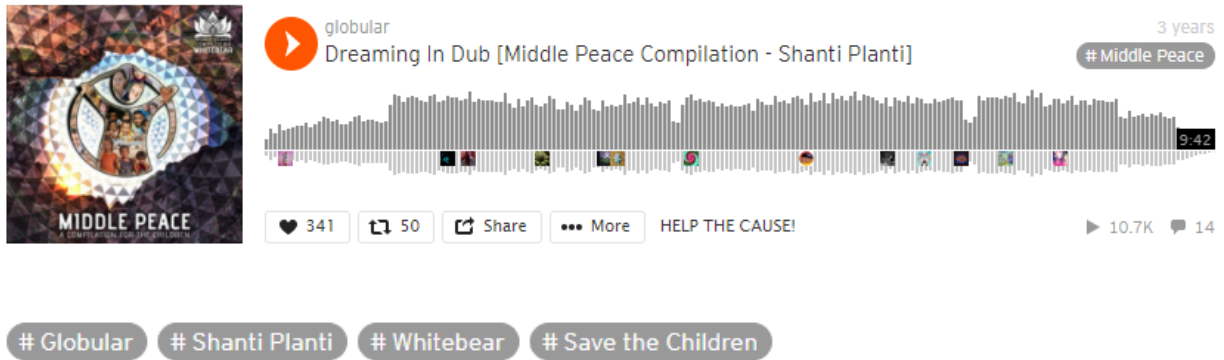


Figure 6.15 - Globular's track from the Shanti Planti Compilation Middle Peace.

Like forest and hi-tech, psydub is surrounded by a vocabulary of musical concepts which are specific to the genre and not necessarily applicable the wider PEDM spectrum. These mostly pertain to the musical features inherited from dub reggae, notably the prominent bass line: for example 'deep', 'dubby', 'wobbly', etc. Others pertain to the wider history of downtempo and chill-out music. For example, in Figure 6.14 the terms 'ambient', 'downtempo', 'electronica', 'ethnic' and 'glitch' used by Globular to describe his music. In the terms suggested by Silver et al. (2016), these tags are the 'outer edges' of psychedelic downtempo on SoundCloud – they connect Globular's music with other kinds of music outside of psyculture. Here we see the permeability of downtempo PEDM with non-psychedelic genres, which I have suggested is higher than that of psytrance.

Similar musical concepts are used in extended descriptive passages accompanying Globular's music. The following description is provided on Globular's SoundCloud page, also appearing on the Shanti Planti homepage and his artist profile on the SofaBeats website:

Globular is psychedelic dub producer from the South West UK. His music is a bubbling mass of virtual sounds designed to stimulate the ears, tickle the brain and move the body. Deep dubbed-out bass lines provide the bedrock for the harmonic intricacies and grooving melodies that typify the Globular sound. The aim is to take listeners on a journey of their own choosing, encouraging all who enter to create their own stories and to dance their own dance...

In this passage, Globular emphasise harmony, melody, and musical form as well as sound design.¹¹² The notions of ‘journey’ and ‘story’ are also prominent. Descriptions like this are quite typical of psybass and psydub culture. (We might even say that such passages are a genre ‘rule’ within downtempo PEDM.) The above description might be compared this with a similar passage taken from the EP *Quest* (2017) by another Shanti Planti artist, Wolf Tech, who lives in Wales but often plays in Bristol:

Wolf Tech’s *Quest* EP deposits us in a shimmering realm of progressive tech rhythms, vivid synth textures and crisp, prismatic beats. Blending the organic forms of reality with the warped and ephemeral tones of psychedelic bass, this elaborate collection of sprawling soundscapes tests the boundaries of what can be conjured in a visionary space. Supported by rich dub roots and a hyper-sensory approach to sound design, Wolf Tech’s invigorating tonic of refractive effects and grounding synthetic instrumentation is a melodic journey through the sonic prism into the liminal division between night and day.

(Wolf Tech, BandCamp 2017)

Here there is extended use of genre terms, descriptive terms, and other language which helps the artist to position their music within the PEDM genre spectrum. These ideas are subtle and do, as McLeod (2001) observes, require considerable cultural knowledge on the part of the reader. However, as a ‘naming process’, their purpose is not to exclude – the artist is not trying to discourage sales – but rather to establish common purposes and strategies, and to create a sense of collective endeavour among downtempo musicians operating alone in different geographic regions.

¹¹² ‘Bubbling’ has several connotations: in reggae music, it refers to an electric organ part which articulates offbeat semiquavers with a ‘shuffling’ feel; more recently, it has been used as a way of describing the dense synthetic textures made available by digital synthesis and contemporary DAW software – see, for example, Tipper’s album *Bubble Control* (2011). Thus, although it has ‘organic’ implications, it is most often applied to sounds which are electrical or electronic in origin.

6.3 Conclusion

Krosis and Globular create niche genres of PEDM and thus occupy a relatively marginal position within the musical ecosystem of psychculture. This has disadvantages and advantages: it often means that there are fewer performing opportunities at major events (such as Tribe of Frog), particularly at the local level; however, support is also available from labels and event crews which specialise in these genres, who may put on smaller events. By placing their work within the stylistic range accepted by these groups, Krosis and Globular are able to make use of the resources that they offer, including distribution and performance opportunities. Various efforts are made to place these peripheral genres at the centre of attention, notably through club nights such as Cosmic Vomit and Psychedelic Jelly, which draw an audience of dedicated fans. Curiously, this activity hasn't fragmented the PEDM scene. Rather, these disparate genre-concepts are still understood as falling within the same cultural sphere, even though many participants actively dislike one genre or the other. This, I have suggested, is due to the sharing of musical resources between the genres, which gives an overall coherence to psychculture's musical spectrum.

Although these producers organise their activities around fairly stable and well-recognised genre concepts, they also manage to sustain a degree of creativity. Krosis blends contradictory notions ('forest' and 'morning'), and light-heartedly employs genre concepts of his own ('tundra'), in order to create an expanded generic matrix within which his tracks might be positioned. Globular's music goes against a dominant trend in psydub music which favours complex FM timbres and static, drone-like harmony, instead focusing on melodic and harmonic development. These creative acts cannot be easily read in terms of 'intensification' or 'transgression', as Toynbee (2000) suggests. Rather, each results in an assemblage of conceptual elements from different sources combined more or less precarious ways. Genre tags, I have already suggested, are the best way of capturing this combinative logic. Internet services which have this property are thus attractive to underground musicians, for whom genre concepts are a key means of engaging with the community and its distributive networks.

Although I have used the term ‘position’ to describe what musicians do with genre, this should not be read in terms of a fixed field relative to which they place their musical output. Rather, the deployment of genre concepts – by producers, DJs, labels, crews – is *formative* of the arena within which musical careers take place. Furthermore, I suggest that the value of a creative contribution is determined by the way that it relates to the activities of other participants and groups, notably record labels or event crews, as we have seen in this chapter. (For example, in the relationship between Krosis and Blue Hour Sounds, or between Globular and Psychedelic Jelly.) These relationships are constantly emerging, changing, or disappearing: there is no stable ‘field’ or universally agreed set of standards within psyculture against which the value of a producer’s output might be measured. Rather, a more immanent understanding of musical genre is required which takes into account the state-of-play at a given moment, and the strategic decisions which musicians make in response to their musical environment.

7 Chapter 7 Learning and Teaching

This final chapter looks at the acquisition and transmission of musical skills by participants in psycculture. In terms of musical learning, UDM cultures are largely independent of the state (here referring schools and other aspects of state-funded music education) and the market (referring to private schools, colleges, universities, publishers and manufacturers). Many participants are self-taught, although they draw extensively on resources provided by other scene members. In this chapter, I highlight the existence of 'grassroots educational resources' which musical participants in EDM cultures use to structure their learning endeavours. The creation of such resources constitutes an increasingly central participation strategy, one which may be monetized, and may therefore provide income as part of a wider musical career.

Within the literature on music education a distinction is made between formal music education, referring to teacher-student relationships in a state- or market-supported educational institute (as well as private tuition in the classical music model), and informal learning practice, referring to self-directed learning through trial and error (Green, 2001; 2008; Philpott, 2012). It is widely believed that popular music-making falls into the latter category, although ethnographers of popular music culture have not gone into much detail on the topic (e.g. Cohen, 1991; Fornäs et al., 1995; Baulch, 2007). There are exceptions: Finnegan ([1989] 2007) compares the formalised music education of classical and choral music in Milton Keynes with the informal learning of rock and pop music, finding that the latter 'presents a striking contrast to the classical model and, despite outsiders' derogatory assessments, can be recognised as another system in its own right' (p.136). The extent to which self-teaching can be considered a 'system' is not clear, however, and it is not immediately evident that different musical practices can necessarily be described in terms of 'formal' or 'informal' learning methods.

A few scholars have looked more closely at how popular musicians learn. Lucy Green (2001; 2008), for example, has done ethnographic research into the learning practices of school-age rock musicians. Crucial to Green's account is her notion of 'enculturation', referring to 'immersion in the music and musical practices of one's environment' (2008, p.5). However, she finds that 'most young popular musicians in Western or Westernized musical cultures are not regularly surrounded by an adult community of practising popular musicians who they can talk to, listen to, watch and imitate, or who initiate them into relevant skills and knowledge' (p.6). In rock music, musical skills are normally acquired through listening to records ('self-learning') and through group rehearsal in which musical techniques and generic norms are reinforced between musicians at the same level of ability ('peer-supported learning'). This contrasts with classical and jazz music, which emphasise a formal teacher-student relationship in which a specific repertoire and set of skills is passed from more-experienced to less-experienced participants.

Green's work has been influential on the field of music education, notably leading to the development of the Musical Futures initiative which encourages the use of informal learning techniques in the classroom (Green, 2008). This has been accompanied by a rising scepticism in the value of formal educational practices in musical development (e.g. Swanwick, 2012; Lines, 2017).¹¹³ However, although important, this work has directed scholarly attention towards how musicians *should* learn rather than how they *actually* learn, and has situated the classroom as the central site for research in this area. By looking only at amateur and school-age learners, Green fails to demonstrate the actual relationships between learning practices and subsequent musical careers. More widely, there seems

¹¹³ Swanwick (2012) states that 'It is not at all clear that formal education (schooling) will always provide the optimum environment for musical development. [...] The future of musical education may depend not so much on schools as we know them but on opportunities in local communities and the various musical communities on the 'web'' (p.79); Lines (2017) warns that formal music education 'can limit and narrow a musical subject's vision and concept of self through ascetic pedagogical practices' (p.123).

to be little interest in the impact of formalised music education on real-world popular music ecosystems.

Green's emphasis on self-directed and peer-supported learning has also drawn attention away from teaching activity in popular music cultures. I suggest that this has increased in recent years: many popular musicians who do not possess formal education in music are taking up teaching as part of a wider musical career. The internet has played a central role in this development, allowing musicians to advertise their services to a geographically-dispersed, niche audience interested in learning a very particular musical style. Furthermore, online communities form around musical learning where teacher-student relationships and peer-to-peer learning coexist and interact (Waldron, 2011; Miller, 2012). This kind of teaching challenges the established distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' learning which has characterised the music education literature. Indeed, it is now evident that teacher/student relationships are not necessarily exclusive to 'official' (i.e. state-recognised) music education infrastructure, and do not necessarily involve exams, curricula, or qualifications.¹¹⁴

A strategy- and resource-based understanding of musical cultures may help us to address the issues identified thus far. Both teaching and learning can be conceived of as strategic activities involving the deployment of various resources in the hope of a particular outcome – in this case, further engagement with a particular musical culture. The primary resource for popular music learning, in Green's account, is the recorded text; however, she does not take into account the wider variety of resources which are deployed in the course of popular music learning, and the way in which musical participants access and combine these resources, which may include the musical text, their peers, school music lessons, musical family members, and other more explicitly didactic resources such as

¹¹⁴ Looking at the forum-based website Banjo Hangout, Waldron (2011) writes that 'As music educators, we have much to learn by examining successful music communities of practice that lie outside of our "regular" scope of school music and school music genres, and this includes teaching musical skills necessary to be active participants in other genres besides those perpetuated by school music. Neither have we fully understood or utilized the power of the Internet in facilitating informal music learning in online communities' (p.53).

books or videos. These may be associated primarily with other musical systems: it is through use that they become part of the musical network of the learner.

A project- and strategy-based approach also helps to address the conflation of 'self-directed' with 'informal' which has underpinned much of the literature on music education (Folkestad, 2006; Phillpott, 2012). Whereas learning outside of the classroom has often been depicted as unstructured and haphazard, it can in fact be very methodical and may involve the use of structuring devices. For example, self-taught musicians make use of various material or virtual resources to structure the learning process, including books, videos, websites, and the tutorials which come with music software. These are of varying provision: some are created by companies such as publishers or music technology manufacturers, whilst others are created by individual scene participants acting alone. The latter, which are the focus of the present chapter, may be understood as 'grassroots educational resources', namely resources created and circulated within a musical community as a means of facilitating self-directed learning within a particular style of music. Today, these are most often created and distributed using digital technology, taking the form of written instructions, video tutorials, or project files which are shared via social networking platforms, streaming services, and internet forums. Web 2.0 platforms thus 'provide new channels for teaching and learning, for transmitting practical knowledge and drawing together communities of practice' (Miller, 2012, p.17).

At first glance this activity would appear to be a digital-era extension the kind of peer-supported learn observed by Green (2001; 2008). However, there are crucial differences between the two. For example, there is normally a contrast of ability between the content provider and the user of the content, the former being a more experienced musician and scene member, which resembles a teacher/pupil relationship. Secondly, these resources may play a role in a monetized participation strategy for the creator, although this monetization is not necessarily direct nor immediately apparent to the observer (see 7.2.2). As such, although ostensibly a type of self-directed learning, the use of such resources bears some similarities with formal music education.

The producers and performers in my study of PEDM in Bristol had learned most of their musical craft before I met them. As such, my study is not, like Green's, an account of the early stages of skill acquisition among self-taught musicians. However, many details about early careers and the learning process were given in interviews, and continuous learning of new software, hardware and musical techniques was evident throughout my study. All of these participants had either used or created grassroots educational resources, including video tutorials, internet forums, online lessons and face-to-face tuition. Their activities shed light on the nature of skill acquisition in an environment of continuous technological and musical change and demonstrate the role of teaching in today's digital musical careers.

7.1 What EDM Producers Learn

Studies of learning practice among popular musicians have focused on rock music (e.g. Green, 2001; 2008), with few exceptions (e.g. Thompson, 2012; Egolf, 2014). I suggest three reasons why scholars of education have avoided writing about electronic popular music cultures. The first is that it is not immediately clear what is being learned. The centrality of timbre in EDM, for example, make it difficult for music education specialists to meaningfully discuss the acquisition of musical competence in this area (as opposed to melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic competence, with which they are more familiar). The second is that the technological basis of the music suggests that it is the domain of music technology or computer specialists. This is not necessarily the case: even the most advanced hardware and software is designed for use by 'ordinary' musicians and may be grasped by an attentive music scholar. A third reason is that electronic musicians often begin learning at a later age than other kinds of musician (normally late-teens or early-twenties) and therefore evade the attention of education specialists who are focused on school-age learners. As a result, there is little information on what it is that EDM musicians need to learn nor how these skills are acquired. The present section will outline some of the basics of EDM production, focusing on timbre and the use of virtual instruments.

Firstly, dance music production is always learned in the context of a particular genre of EDM. There is no 'general' way of learning to make this kind of music: the necessary technological and musical competency is acquired within the web of stylistic and aesthetic expectations which characterises a particular style of EDM (e.g. house, techno, or psytrance). Each brings with it particular challenges and normative solutions to these challenges; it is these solutions which constitute the bulk of the cultural knowledge associated with dance music production, and which differentiates genres in terms of the production process. An EDM genre is therefore not just a collection of musical resources deployed by producers, but also the set of processes by which those sounds are generated.

In all EDM genres, and especially in PEDM genres, timbre presents the greatest compositional challenge. Timbre is widely cited as the central musical parameter in EDM, taking precedence over melody, harmony, and perhaps even rhythm in terms of musical significance (Madrid, 2008; Garcia, 2015; Auricchio, 2017).¹¹⁵ It is thus the object of most learning and teaching endeavours for EDM producers. Here I use the term 'timbre' to encompass both the qualities of individual synthesized and sampled sounds and the overall effects achieved when these are layered together. Participants use the abstract noun 'production' to refer to the timbral qualities and to the overall effect of a track, often in the context of a value judgement (e.g. 'the production in this track is incredible'). What constitutes 'good production' is somewhat variable, pertaining as it does to sounds associated with particular EDM subgenres. However, it is necessarily a result of both the timbral qualities of the individual sounds and the ways in which these are placed together in a track. Thus timbre is a key issue throughout the production process, from the initial selection or construction of synthesizer patches and samples, to the final mixdown in which the various elements are blended together. (Mastering

¹¹⁵ Madrid (2008) describes 'innovative timbres and textures' as 'the elements in which electronic musicians and producers are really interested and where the complexity of the music lies' (p.8); Garcia (2015) writes that 'EDM engages with tactility through beats and bass, timbre and flesh, grain and texture[...]' (p.73); Auricchio (2017) states that 'In EDM the creation and morphology of timbre can often be more important to the composer as a tool to aid the manipulation in the listener than tonal events' (p.11).

might also be considered a timbral process, although this is separate to producing and mixing and is normally carried out by a third party: see 4.5.2.3; Nardi, 2014; Shelvelock, 2012.)

A comparison between two genres described in the previous chapter, forest psytrance and psydub, helps to illuminate the specificity of the knowledge involved in PEDM production, the problems encountered by producers as they attempt to produce genre-specific sounds, and the variety of solutions made available by software instruments and effects. These are very different types of music – one is very fast, one is much slower, and they have quite separate genre histories. However, both are part of the PEDM spectrum, and so their differences reflect the variations which can occur within a shared cultural framework. Certain aspects of sound design are shared between the two whilst other musical elements are markedly different, as demonstrated in the previous chapter.

In all EDM genres, the low end of the frequency spectrum presents the most important challenge for producers, as this is the focus of attention for dancers. In psytrance (including forest psytrance) this takes the form of the ‘KBBB’ pattern in which a synthetic kick sound is followed by three short bass notes. There are numerous ways of generating and processing this sound, including various combinations of synthesis and sampling, compression, EQ, and saturation or distortion, each of which has different timbral results. Key issues, here, are the relative separation of the two sounds, the extent to which they occupy the same or different parts of the frequency spectrum, and the prominence and similarity of the transients (‘click’ sounds) at the onset of each note. Myriad techniques are used to balance the kick and bass, such as the use of side-chain compression to ‘duck’ the bass notes after each kick¹¹⁶, or the addition of a separate transient layer which gels the two sounds together.

¹¹⁶ Side-chain compression is a variant of audio compression in which the signal determining the action of the compressor is separate from the signal to which the compressor is being applied. This is normally used to create an inverse relationship in volume between two sounds – when one sound is loud, the other becomes quieter.

Psytrance producers value software and hardware which gives them very precise control over these elements (Figure 7.1).

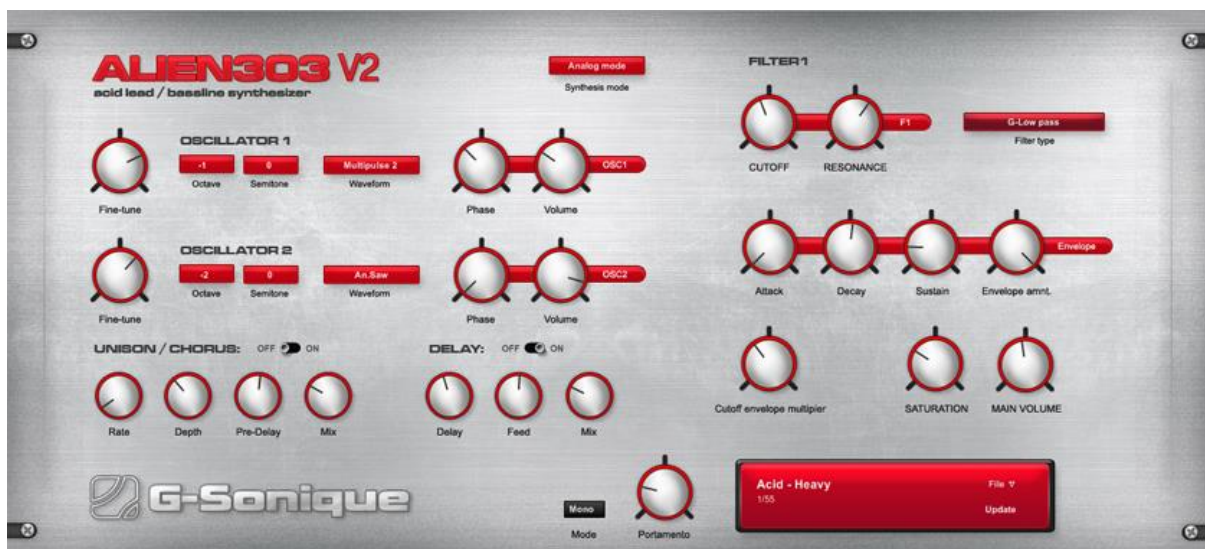
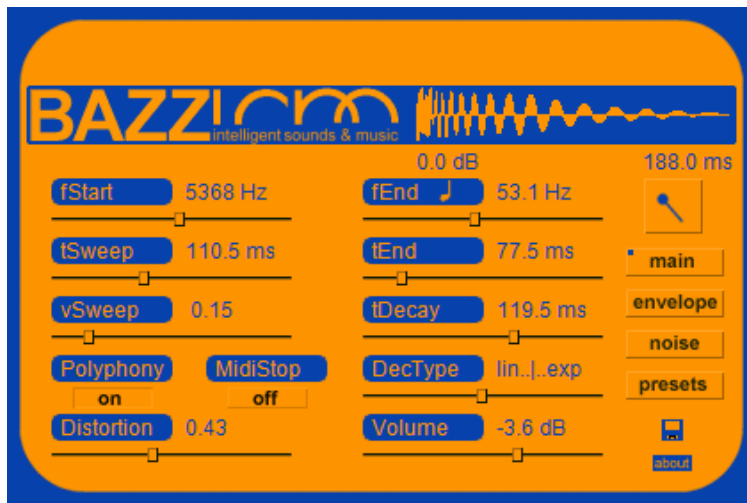


Figure 7.1 - The VST instruments Bazzism and Alien303.

The mid-frequency sounds or 'lead' parts in psytrance are often generated using FM synthesis. This is considered a very difficult form of synthesis to master (Born, 1995; Chadabe, 1997). Here, timbre is controlled by the specific relationship between two oscillators, the carrier and the modulator, very

slight alterations in which produce very different sounds.¹¹⁷ With regards to dark psytrance, the key issue here is how 'digital' the resulting timbre is, a variable which I have suggested depends on the stability of the pitch produced. That is: tones which have a very steady pitch, resulting from mathematically simple and close relationships between carrier and modulator, sound digital; tones which audibly vary in pitch, resulting from a complex relationship or a great discrepancy in frequency between carrier and modulator, sound 'organic'. This has semiotic implications: for example, forest psytrance is differentiated from other kinds of dark psytrance music by the 'organic' nature of its FM leads, which often seem to emulate animal or bird sounds. By contrast, a FM lead with a 'digital' sound will be associated with full-on night or hi-tech psytrance. A resonant filter and various effects – distortion, chorus, phasing, flanging – are normally applied to an FM lead, adding further nuances and complications.

Psydup music presents an entirely different set of compositional problems. For a start, the kick is not so intimately tied with the bass sound, but instead is integrated into a wider set of percussive sounds which imitate a full drumkit. Greater importance is placed on the snare which is very prominent and will have a strong presence in the mid-to-low frequencies. (The snare sounds in psytrance, by contrast, have less presence in this area, as they are supported by the kick.) Psydup snares often consist of many sounds layered together – these may include recorded samples of snare drums, but other sounds are also used, including rim shots, synthetic snares, and sometimes other less percussive sounds. Variety can be created by rebalancing the different layers, or by creating two or more different snares with different constituent elements.

¹¹⁷ This subtlety was viewed as an important advantage of digital FM synthesis in the early stages of its development. John Chowning, who patented the form of digital FM synthesis used in Yamaha synthesizers such as the famous DX7, states that FM 'means that you get control over a very large tonal space with very few knobs' (Chadabe, 1997, p.117).

The bass part in a psydub track tends to consist of sustained notes which imitate the bass guitar parts in dub reggae. As such, it tends to consist of sustained notes rather than short stabs, unlike the bass in the 'KBBB' sound. Interesting sustained bass tones may be created using FM synthesis, although particularly complex timbres are likely to be underpinned by a separate 'sub' part which allows the low end to maintain its prominence and consistence.¹¹⁸ Key issues include the interaction between the kick and the bass parts (which often sound at the same time, unlike in psytrance music, and will sound 'muddy' if they interfere with each other), between the kick and the snare (which don't necessarily sound at the same time, unlike in psytrance music), and between the sub and the upper bass layers, which may be rhythmically and melodically separate. A greater degree of integration between the low and mid-frequencies is thus typical of psydub music, affecting the way in which it is produced and performed.

The musical issues outlined in the preceding paragraphs demonstrate that even relatively similar kinds of EDM, making use of similar software and synthesis techniques, necessitate a different compositional approach, and therefore entail a separate learning process. Certain skills are transferrable; however, the ability to write in one style does not automatically confer the ability to write in others. As such, learning always takes place within a particular system, even where shared or 'common' techniques are the object. Conceiving of musical cultures as overlapping networks with shared components or 'boundary objects' (see 1.2), we may state that producers from different EDM genres may encounter or make use of the same resources, but always apprehend them from the point of view of a particular musical system. For example, forest psytrance and psydub producers may both use the same VST instruments, but they will see different 'affordances' (Gibson, 1979; Clarke, 2003) in this software according to the musical conventions, challenges and solutions associated with those genres.

¹¹⁸ This production technique became typical in jungle and drum 'n' bass – another reggae-derived music – in the 1990s.

The initial learning process for producers is normally focused on the creation of generically typical sounds, such as the KBBB and FM lead sounds in psytrance or the dub reggae drums, skank and FM bass in psydub, until these can be generated quickly and with relatively little effort. Once armed with a set of solutions to genre-specific compositional problems, an EDM producer will tend to stick with these until they encounter something better. (This observation helps to explain the longevity of certain pieces of software in a constantly-evolving software environment which normally promotes redundancy. Indeed, producers will tenaciously use out-of-date software instruments long after the creator has stopped supporting them.)¹¹⁹ Within a given production culture there will be a certain degree of homogeneity in terms of how normative sounds are generated. This homogeneity has perhaps increased in recent years: whereas previously producers had to own particular pieces of hardware – often expensive, limited in number, or otherwise hard to obtain – in order to make particular EDM sounds, within the virtual realm there are few barriers to obtaining a particular configuration of instruments and effects. A piece of software, no matter how obscure, expensive or obsolete, can almost always be obtained from the internet in some way. As a result, producers of a given genre will often adopt the same procedures for the generation of particular sounds. For example, among psytrance producers, the KBBB pattern is often generated using Bazzism for the kick, Sylenth1 for the bass, and the multiband saturation effect Quadrafuzz to ‘gel’ the two sounds together – all of which are old pieces of software long since superseded by more powerful equivalents.

However, there is also a certain amount of variation within each EDM production culture, even with regards to the creation of generic sounds. This is partly to do with the concealed nature of EDM production, in that producers do not know exactly how certain sounds have been created previously, and often attempt to recreate them using the ‘wrong’ techniques. Other factors include stylistic preferences, available hardware resources, and the constant deluge of new hardware and software

¹¹⁹ Some older pieces of software that were still popular during my study included Synth1 (released 2002), Sylenth1 (2007), Albino 3 (2007, discontinued in 2012).

products on the market, all of which ensure a basic level of variation. As such, although I have described an EDM genre as a collection of processes as well as a collection of musical sounds, these processes are not clearly defined, and change over time.

In addition to generic sounds, producers also aim to create original timbres and textures. In psyculture, it is the originality, weirdness and 'psychedelicness' of these original creations by which a producer's output is judged (Taylor, 2001; Lindop, 2010). Creating original sounds involves trial and error, hours upon hours of work and a willingness to continually discard sounds that don't fit with the style in question. This might be interpreted by way of field theory: for example Toynbee (2000) describes musical composition in terms of a 'radius of creativity', a space of 'creative possibles' (p.40) generated by the intersection of the individual musician's habitus and the musical field in question. Following this line of thought, the creation of novel timbres in EDM might be understood as a kind of improvisation guided by a producer's conscious and subconscious (or embodied) knowledge of a particular musical genre, their experience of performing at and attending events, and their relationships with various musical entities such as record labels. Like other forms of improvisation, this skill is learned partly as a conscious understanding of the theoretical principles involved and partly as a practical knowledge of the hardware and software at hand. It is as much a bodily process as a mental one – experienced producers can make sounds very quickly, their hands, eyes and ears intuitively exploring the available options in the software or hardware, with little in the way of reflective thought to slow their progress. Composing at a computer is, in this respect, much like composing on an acoustic instrument such as a piano or guitar.

For the most part producers strive to create their own synthesizer sounds from scratch, whether these are generically-standard sounds or more original creations. This gives the artist the greatest possible control over the individual elements of a track and the texture of the music as a whole, and in the long run helps them to establish their own personal sound. However, producers also use presets (the sounds which are pre-loaded onto a digital instrument by its creator) and patches created by other

producers in their music. Most producers use readymade patches throughout their career, and most finished tracks contain a mixture of pre-made (albeit tweaked) and original sounds. Using premade sounds also contributes to the learning process: by opening these up and looking ‘under the hood’, producers gain insight as to which combinations of basic elements (waveforms, filters, modulations) produce certain effects. In this way, patches provide one means by which stylistic devices can be passed from producer to producer. For example, at the beginning of his career as a forest psytrance producer, Krosis received a large collection of patches for the instrument Albino3 (an FM synthesizer plugin) from a friend who was already an established dark psytrance producer. Krosis used these patches directly in many of his early tracks; however, he also opened them up to try and understand how the sounds were created. This allowed him to better understand FM synthesis and later to make his own lead sounds in Albino3 and similar instruments.

Alongside, EDM producers must also learn how to use samples – that is, pre-recorded segments of audio taken from a variety of sources – in their tracks. Musical knowledge here consists not so much in *how* to sample, but *what* to sample. In certain electronic cultures, such as hip-hop, this knowledge is aesthetically paramount (Schloss, 2004; Williams, 2013). In hip-hop culture, for example, producers have been expected to go ‘digging in the crates’ (Schloss, 2004), that is, to find obscure funk and soul records to sample, so that the resulting composition is unique and evinces a deep understanding of hip-hop’s cultural roots. In other musical cultures, however, the source and originality of a sample are of less significance. Psyculture is perhaps an extreme example of a culture in which participants are happy to use the same sources over and over and have little concern for authenticity or originality. For example, the voice of ethnobotanist and psychedelic advocate Terrence McKenna appears in many PEDM tracks, to the extent that he seems to be the culture’s primary spokesperson (Baldini, 2010; St. John, 2012). Much like the ‘Amen’ break in jungle/drum ‘n’ bass music, McKenna’s voice is a central musical resource the use of which helps to define music as PEDM. Furthermore, the use of sample packs is not particularly frowned upon in psyculture. For example, certain samples of Indian singing

from the Spectrasonics sample collection *Vocal Planet: World* have appeared in countless downtempo PEDM tracks.¹²⁰ In each case, the same melodies are placed in new musical context, re-harmonized, processed, glitched, and otherwise ‘tweaked’, sometimes to the extent that they are unrecognisable.

Mixing, the process by which sounds are layered together and balanced within a track, is perhaps the hardest skill for a producer to learn. This is a lifelong endeavour requiring many thousands of hours of practice. Mixing is very much culture specific: different kinds of dance music are mixed in different ways, placing emphasis on different aspects of the musical texture. However, certain qualities are widely valued across a range of EDM cultures, including clarity (separation of layers), width (stereo separation) and punchiness (bass presence and impact). Mixing involves the use of effects such as EQ, compression, panning to achieve these desired qualities. Unlike acoustic genres such as rock, jazz or classical music, EDM producers do not normally mix their music after writing or recording the parts. Rather, they place each sound carefully into the overall mix as it is generated. This is an extremely time-consuming and often frustrating activity: it can take months or even years to write a PEDM track, and many projects will be discarded altogether if their constituent elements prove ‘immiscible’.

In order to mix well, a producer must have the ability to hear nuances in recorded sound at a level far above that of the average listener. For example, they must be able to identify which part of the frequency spectrum a particular sound (or part of a sound) inhabits so that they can layer it into the mix. Conversely, they must be aware of which parts of the frequency spectrum are lacking, so that these might be boosted by extra musical layers or by equalisation. These abilities are learned through a slow process often referred to as ‘ear training’ – that is, through years of combined practical experience and theoretical study, a producer learns to hear musical sounds in great technical detail.

¹²⁰ See, for example, the use of the song ‘Aao Huzoor Tumko’ from the Hindi film *Kismet* (1968) in Shpongled’s ‘Monster Hit’ (*Are You Shpongled*, 1998), Ott’s ‘Smoked Glass and Chrome’ (*Blumenkraft*, 2003) and Entheogenic’s ‘Pagan Dream Machine’ (*Spontaneous Illumination*, 2003). This song was originally composed by Omkar Prasad Nayyar and sung by Asha Bhosle; however, the sample used in the above tracks was taken from Spectrasonics’ sample CD *Vocal Planet: World* wherein it was sung by a different singer.

Software can provide visual feedback to aid in this process. For example, a spectrum analyser can show which frequencies are present in which proportions. However, experienced producers will often dissuade newcomers from relying on visual aids, at least initially, in favour of developing good aural abilities. Ear training is less genre-specific than other musical skills: it can be transferred to other areas, opening up various means of participating in other musical worlds. For example, Colin OOOD's ability to work as a mastering engineer, which involves working with musicians from many different genres, arose from the aural skills he acquired as a psytrance producer (see 4.5.2.3). As such, ear training is not necessarily a form of 'enculturation' (Green, 2008) but may be understood as a technical skill which is learned and deployed in a cultural context. Such hearing is believed by participants to be 'objective' – that is, accurate to the truth of a sound and unclouded by perceptual error – and thus beyond cultural factors.

Ear training must also be understood in relation to how musical equipment is understood in electronic music cultures, notably the concept of 'reference', 'accuracy' and 'flatness' in monitor design. These terms refer to the truthful, unbiased reproduction of sound of which this equipment is supposedly capable. (The opposite concept is 'hype', which refers to the ways in which commercial audio systems alter musical sound to make it more exciting and appealing, such as boosting high and low frequencies.) However, the fact that EDM is produced and listened to through equipment of varying quality complicates the issue. Producers and mastering engineers will normally listen to a track on as many different sound systems as possible – headphones, car stereos, club systems, mobile phones – to look for potential issues which may arise when the music is played in these environments. Here, the ear must work hard to incorporate equipment occupying a wide range in terms of quality and accuracy.

What I have described here may appear to be largely compatible with Bourdieu's field and habitus, and Toynbee's 'radius of creativity' which builds on these concepts, suggesting a stable cultural arena within which musical learning takes place. However, although certain aspects of musical learning may

be understood with reference to the habitus, others are more difficult to reconcile with Bourdieu's theory, notably those pertaining to the use of audio equipment, which are dependent on access to accurate listening environments (for example, a studio with high-end monitors and acoustic treatment). More widely, I suggest that the human brain and body is not necessarily the sole repository of musical knowledge, nor is the acquisition of conceptual resources (i.e. knowledge, embodied skills) necessarily the sole object of musical learning. Rather, the brain must be understood as part of a wider network which includes many technological elements. This is especially true in the case of EDM production, in which a producer's collection of hardware, instruments, effects, patches, and samples determines what sounds they are able to produce. Moving forward, we will see that many of the educational resources which EDM participants use to structure the learning process are also accompanied by materials which can be integrated into a musical project. There is thus a blurred line between virtual and conceptual resources, and between competence and possession of (or access to) these resources. This, I suggest, creates complications with regards to existing theories of musical habitus (Bourdieu, 1992; Toynbee, 2000) and enculturation (Green, 2001; 2008).

7.2 How EDM Producers Learn

7.2.1 Instruments and Musical Skills

I have suggested that EDM musicians are normally self-taught, although, as noted by Green (2001), this way of learning often has a peer-directed element.¹²¹ More so than other kinds of musicians, they are subject to rapid technological change, with each generation having to adjust to a new set of available technologies. This rate of change may be partly responsible for the fact that there is little in the way of 'formal' education in EDM culture: skills are just as often shared 'horizontally' between

¹²¹ Green (2001) states that '[S]olitary learning is likely to be prominent in connection with purely synthesized dance musics, but this does not mean that group learning practices are totally absent' (p.10).

participants who are at a similar stage in their career as ‘vertically’ between older and younger participants. In other words, participants learn how to use new technology together.

A key issue for musicians wishing to learn EDM production is the concealed nature of the craft. It is not clear to the listener how sounds are made, nor how a new producer might re-enact the stylistic decisions made by other producers. Kühn (2013) observes that ‘[p]roducers often have particular musical “secret recipes” [*Geheimrezepte*] that serve as an essential part of their public-commercial identity. They create a sound that only they can repeatedly produce in a specific manner, such that it becomes an economically-relevant trademark’. It is not apparent whether the veiled nature of dance production is a result of secrecy, as Kühn suggests, or results from the fact that EDM cultures have historically lacked any formal means of transmission. Either way, the novice must either have direct contact with a producer (either in person or through didactic materials) or must resort to trial and error in order to discover how particular sounds are made.

Issues of melody, harmony and rhythm seem to be approached intuitively by producers. Psytrance, like most styles of EDM, tends to stick to a single mode per track and has little in the way of harmony or modulation. The music is mostly four-to-the-floor, with only the lead and FX layers expressing complex rhythmic patterns. It is conceivable that such music is improvised on MIDI equipment with little need for advanced instrumental ability. However, as noted earlier, PEDM producers almost always have prior experience with another kind of music and play at least one acoustic instrument – these skills play an important role in composition and production process. The creation of new electronic sounds is always improvisatory, and even music written entirely ‘in the box’ (i.e. using only software) requires some degree of interaction between the body and a physical interface. The MIDI keyboard is still, even at the time of writing, the preferred way of sending physical information to a computer, and the various knobs, dials and sliders which accompany this kind of instrument are used to encode timbral parameters. In addition, many synthesizer VSTs use the keyboard as part of their graphical user interface (see Figure 7.2) Krosis and Globular both emphasised the centrality of the

hardware MIDI keyboard essential to their production process, even though neither can otherwise play a keyboard instrument. However, their previous experience as a drummer and guitarist respectively has shaped their approach to musical improvisation and production. Given these observations, I would suggest that the oft-iterated statement that EDM producers conceive of themselves as engineers rather than musicians (e.g. in Brewster & Broughton, 2007; Reynolds, 2013) is not necessarily true, and has possibly deflected attention from the previous musical experience of dance producers and the role that this plays in their studio practice.

Indeed, from my observations, EDM producers almost always seem to learn EDM as a ‘second language’ having already established a degree of musical competence in another musical system. This was true of my interviewees: Globular played guitar and bass in a punk rock band as a teenager; Krosis was a drummer and vocalist in a black metal band in his late teens and early twenties; Colin OOOD had keyboard and bass lessons as a teenager, and played in psychedelic folk and rock bands during the 1990s and 2000s; Nervasystem was also a guitarist, playing his first gigs in Bristol as a teenager; Snowdrop had learned several classical instruments, including brass and voice, and studied music at university for a year before switching to sociology. This suggests that the educational practices of other musical traditions may have played a role in their musical development.



Figure 7.2 - Sylenth1 and Serum, two VSTs which use the piano keyboard as part of their GUI.

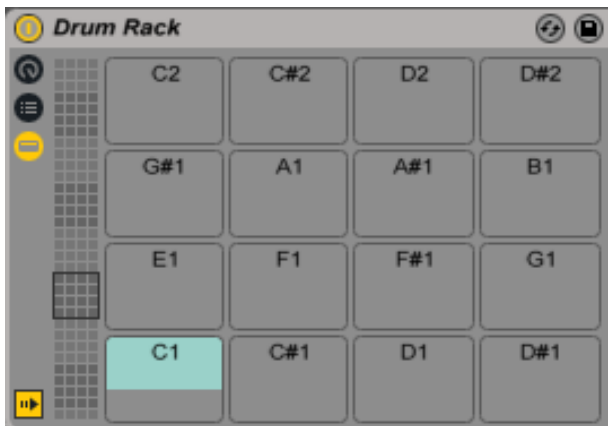


Figure 7.3 - Ableton's 'Drum Rack' instrument.

Certain pieces of equipment are specific to electronic music, such as the drum machines and samplers which rose to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, entailing a new set of musical competencies which can only be learned within the context of an electronic music culture. Such devices are less common today, as home computers can perform the same functions, but their continuing influence can be seen in the design of contemporary software and hardware for music production. Where MIDI is used to control percussive sounds, for example, this may involve rendering the chromatic scale as a grid rather than a keyboard, in a manner reminiscent of early samplers. Ableton's 'Drum Kit' instrument demonstrates this in software form (Figure 7.3). Many controllers have a similar layout, allowing producers who are not keyboard players to take advantage of this flexible configuration of MIDI notes. As detailed in Chapter 3 (3.3), Globular bought an Ableton Push (Figure 3.4) so that he could use its pads to play MIDI instruments during his live performances. The Push can also be 'filtered' such as that the device highlights notes in a particular mode. As a guitarist rather than a keyboard player, Globular finds this design advantageous, and now uses the device in his studio as well as onstage. In this way, controllers create a new type of musical knowledge, and a new performance practice, which is more in keeping with the skills of EDM producers.

One finding of my research was a general belief in 'music theory' in psyculture which shaped my participants understanding of, and approach to, their own musical knowledge. In everyday use, this

term refers to the compositional rules of Western classical and jazz music as taught in schools, colleges and universities around the world. However, the applicability of the term to EDM music is unclear. In this context, it seems to refer to a knowledge of notes, scales and chords, rather than other elements such as rhythm, form or acoustic instrumentation which are also part of the ‘music theory’ curricula in the UK. Throughout my research, various producers and DJs expressed a wish to learn more about music theory, often in the context of a discussion about keys, scales and chords. However, they seemed largely unaware that the kind of music theory taught in schools and universities has little relation to the harmonic and melodic language of PEDM, which makes little use of the chord inversions, cadences, and modulations of classical music. (Some famous PEDM acts have used ‘classical’ harmony in their music, but these are a minority.)¹²²

The assumed knowledge implicit in musical software, and the general interest in ‘music theory’ prevalent in EDM culture, raises questions about the extent to which formal music education – i.e. the kind associated with schools and universities – is useful to EDM producers. I have suggested that the ability to play a musical instrument is prerequisite to becoming a dance producer and that this is seemingly always learned in the context of another musical culture. However, the specific skills needed to be a dance producer are learned in the context of a specific EDM genre-network. Music production courses are now taught in colleges and universities in the UK, and many of these have an ‘electronic music’ component which is geared towards EDM production. Among my participants, however, only Globular had taken a music technology course. The others had learned their musical skills on the job, from peers and on their own, and from educational resources on the internet. It is therefore not clear whether qualifications in music technology give any particular advantages to producers wishing to create UDM music.

¹²² The album *Classical Mushroom* (2000) by Infected Mushroom makes explicit use of classical-sounding harmony and instrumentation.

Musicians may have other, less-direct relationships with formal educational structures which are also deserving of study. This was true of several of my project participants: Colin OOOD, Lurk, Snowdrop, for example, developed their early careers as EDM musicians whilst studying non-music subjects at university and college; Globular encountered downtempo psychedelic music whilst studying music technology at college, although the course in question was not EDM related. The value of formal education for popular musicians may therefore have less to do with what is taught and more to do with establishing connections between individuals and local music scenes in which their careers can progress.

7.2.2 Video Tutorials

Video tutorials have become a normative way of learning EDM production in recent years and are now a crucial means by which novice producers formalise their self-directed learning practices. These are often filmed in home studios and tend to take the form of a 'screencast' (a direct recording of a computer monitor's output) of a music production session. These tutorials may illuminate a particular aspect of the production process or they may demonstrate the creation of a complete track; they may be self-contained or part of a series.

Certain producers have become well-known in the PEDM scene for the creation of video tutorials. The two most prominent examples are Mr Bill and Tom Cosm, two downtempo producers from Australia who create videos on psychedelic music production for users of Ableton Live software. The videos can be purchased on a one-off or subscription basis; some are free, acting as a 'taster' for the full product. The videos demonstrate features of the software which are not immediately apparent to the user, including alternative uses for standard functions. (For example, Mr Bill demonstrates that Ableton's warping function can be used to generate glitchy, granular sounds – Globular often uses this effect in his music.) As such, they are valuable for both new and experienced producers. These artists do not

write conventional PEDM music: their music could be described as ‘psytrance’ in a very loose sense, but is in fact closer to IDM, glitch, or hip-hop music.¹²³ Nonetheless, producers of all sorts find their educational materials useful, and these are widely shared within the scene.

Some larger companies and brands make use of individual producers’ knowledge in the creation of educational resources. One example is the website producertech.com, which sells tutorial videos for a range of EDM styles. Among these is a series of tutorials on psytrance production by the English psytrance producer Re:Creation, who is listed as one of the website’s ‘tutors’. According to the website, these tutorials provide ‘all the knowledge needed to create your own futuristic psytrance tunes from scratch’.¹²⁴ (The topics covered include kick and bass, lead sounds, arrangement and mixing, among others.) The videos are accompanied by project files which can be opened by owners of Logic Pro X software. Altogether the materials are priced at £29.95, which is relatively affordable. A second set of tutorials by the same tutor, the ‘Producer’s Guide to DIY Mastering’ offer help for those wishing to perform the functions of a mastering engineer. Again, the tutorials are accompanied by project files which can be opened in Logic X and Ableton Live, although the learner will also need access to a specific set of third-party plugins in order to make use of these. Priced at £19.95, the mastering series is cheaper than the psytrance series, but also shorter in duration. It is likely that Re:Creation has been paid for his services, either in advance or as a percentage of subsequent sales – either way, this is almost certainly a monetized aspect of his musical career.

Other arrangements between producers and companies are possible, leading to complex interlocking strategies involving multiple parties with different aims. For example, in August 2017 the famous

¹²³ Giving online tutorials appears to be a normal activity for artists within the psybass/glitch-hop genre. Other examples include Ryanosaurus, ill.Gates and Hedflux, all of whom teach Ableton Live. These producers have a strong classical music influence, suggesting that they have experience as students within a formal music education framework.

¹²⁴ <http://www.producertech.com/product/68/41/psytrance-production-in-logic-pro> [Accessed 27/09/17]

psybient producer Solar Fields¹²⁵, in collaboration with the music technology company Steinberg and the magazine Future Music, released two videos on YouTube giving a behind-the-scenes look at the production of one of his new tracks, 'Parallel Universe'.¹²⁶ These are not 'tutorials' *per se*, but would be of great value to a producer wishing to learn how to make psybient music. The videos are hosted on YouTube and are free to watch. Steinberg's software is used conspicuously and liberally throughout the track, and Solar Fields gives generous praise for its capabilities. It is not clear to what extent this accurately reflects the producer's studio process. (What products does he use from rival companies, for example?) However, the videos clearly demonstrate some of Solar Fields' musical and compositional processes and, as such, may be useful as an educational resource.

As demonstrated by these examples, video tutorials are an easily-monetized strategy, especially for well-known musicians. However, a great number of videos are created by those who are less well-known, or associated with relatively obscure genres, and are made available for free on video streaming platforms such as YouTube. These tend to cover very specific aspects of PEDM production, often detailing the creation of a particular sound suitable for a particular subgenre. Some producers will create an entire series of such videos demonstrating the assembly of an entire track. Even with revenue from advertising, this activity will generate very little income for the creator; however, it may contribute to a wider monetization strategy. For example, Globular, who does not otherwise teach or create educational resources, used video tutorials as a reward during the early stages of his Patreon campaign (see 4.5.2.1). Access to these was stipulated as a reward for those pledging \$8 or more per month; these were hosted on YouTube with a private link so that only members of the Patreon group could access them. The videos were filmed and uploaded every month and covered a range of

¹²⁵ Solar Fields' work came to the attention of the general public when he contributed to the soundtrack of the popular videogame *Mirror's Edge*, which was released on PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 in 2008. He also wrote the soundtrack to the sequel, *Mirror's Edge Catalyst*, which was released in 2016,

¹²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Pz1jXpdZgY>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEg-lpj70wM>
[Accessed 28/09/17]

techniques and processes. Globular found this reward overly time-consuming, so he discontinued the videos after the first seven iterations; however, the existing videos are still available to patrons, including newcomers, and might eventually make their way into wider circulation.

7.2.3 Internet Forums

Although it is possible to learn EDM production from pre-existing resources, such as video tutorials, most producers will at some point wish to ask for advice pertaining directly to their own music. Internet forums have provided a way for producers to do this since the 1990s, and still play a crucial role in EDM production culture. A forum website will tend to have a special section dedicated to music production which is kept separate from other topics such as event promotion, album reviews or general discussion (Figure 7.4). Here, producers can ask questions, enter discussions, or share their findings in an informal environment.

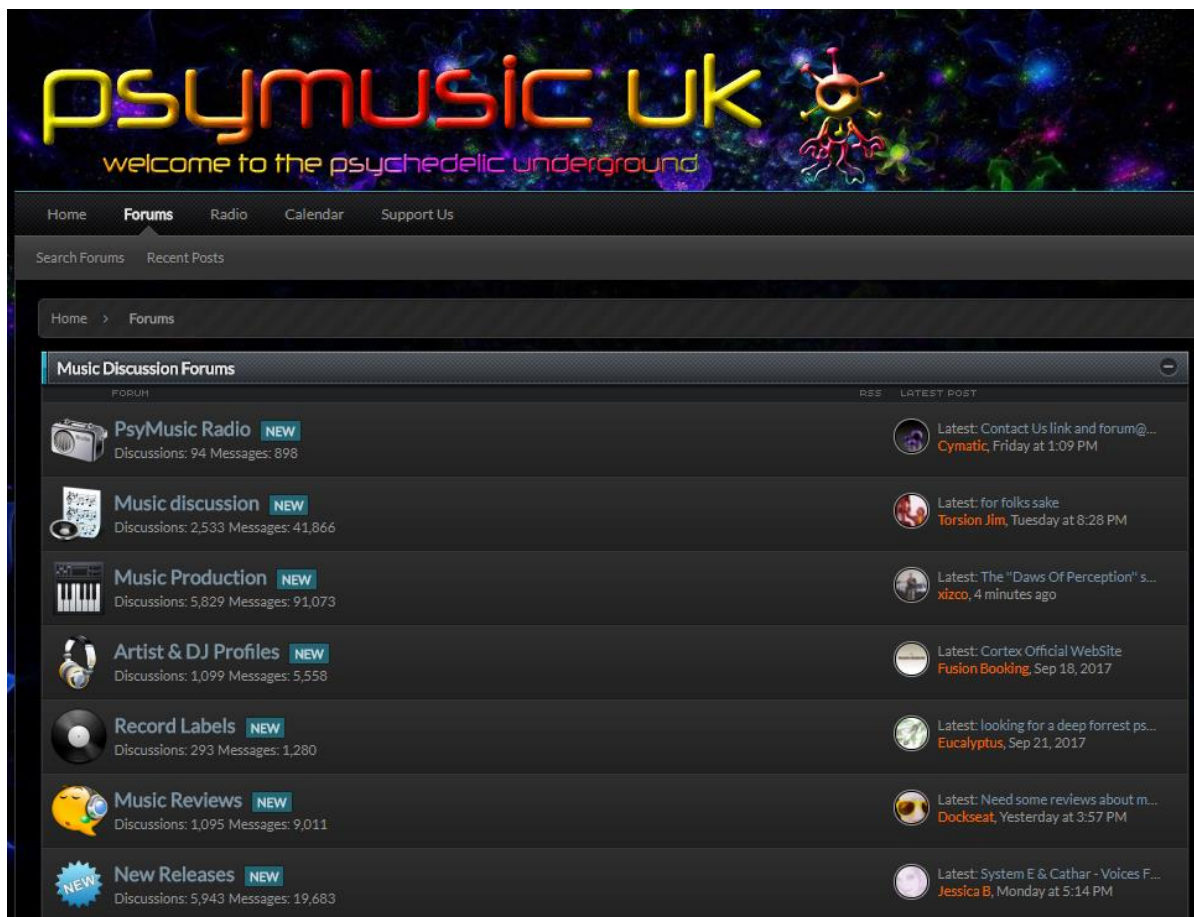


Figure 7.4 - The Forum(s) at psymusic.co.uk.

The topics covered in a production forum are diverse, from advice on basic synthesis (the psytrance KBBB pattern is a perennial favourite) and music theory to form and structure, hardware configuration, and room correction. Often a query will have been answered in a previous discussion, and regular forum users will direct the novice to a pre-existing resource, such as an archived forum post. The constant barrage of simple, previously-answered questions can cause some exasperation among veterans: 'Use the search function!' is a common plea. One strategy for dealing with this issue is to collate previous answers and make them easily available to newcomers. For example, on the 'Music Production' forum at PsyMusicUK, Colin OOOD has created a 'Music Production FAQ' which provides links to various resources on the internet, including posts from the forum itself (Figure 7.5). (Colin's FAQ was posted in 2005, but updates were added until 2011.) In this way, a thread can be used to gather a body of knowledge about psytrance production which novice producers can

incorporate into their own regime of self-directed learning. It is not just the webmaster, but also the users of the forum, who are responsible for providing this educational resource.



List of online resources for synth programming
Soft Synths
What monitors?
Psy collective sample bank
PC sound cards
Music Technology degrees
Help with drums and percussion
Essential plugins
CD decks
Compression
Compression #2 - including compression and mortgage advice from Ott
General Psytrance production tips
Mastering
Updating Cubase SX v2 and v3
Sending demo CDs
Mixing in-the-box vs. external summing
Kick and Bassline EQ
How to get a full bass sound - also Speakafreaka's Sawtooth Basses Made Simple posts [here](#).
Everything you ever wanted to know about FM Synthesis (and a good deal you didn't)
Sample download links
Studio Ergonomics - back pain, RSI etc.
Tank FX - a non-virtual reverb unit
Kick tutorials
MIDI files of Classical Music
Acapellas
Psy-Muri's Psy-Tech Sample Library
Music Theory For Beginners
Performing Live Sets With Ableton Live
Mixdowns for Beginners v1.01
Ableton Live Keyboard Shortcuts
Teh Disco Trash Fizzy Make Shit Sound Better Manual 0.71
Making Pads and Atmospheric Sounds
Music Production on Linux
Online Tutorials

Figure 7.5 - The list of topics in Colin OOOD's Music Production FAQ

On a music production forum, new producers will often want to post a link to a work-in-progress (normally hosted on a music platform such as SoundCloud) in order to solicit feedback or to ask for help with a specific issue. However, this is frowned upon in most forums, and banned in some, a situation which may be surprising to outsiders and newcomers. Left unchecked this behaviour becomes rampant and drowns out other discussion. Posting work-in-progress can also be viewed as a kind of self-promotion, another kind of behaviour which is discouraged. As such, a producer may be reproached, ignored, or even banned if such behaviour continues. (Thus the 'trial-and-error' approach necessary for self-directed learning is not always compatible with the networked worlds of social

media.) Solutions are available: for example, a 'sticky'¹²⁷ thread might be put aside for those wishing to post links to their own music. The music production forum at PsyMusic.co.uk has a thread titled 'The Feedback Thread' for this purpose. This was started by user Phillax on May 20th 2009; as of July 2017 it has nearly 3000 replies. The majority of these are users requesting feedback on a work-in-progress hosted on a SoundCloud page. However, genuine responses from other producers are sometimes given, offering technical advice and words of encouragement.

These PEDM forums might be compared with the teacher forums identified by Miller (2012) which are owned and maintained by individual online music tutors. Miller notes the importance of peer-to-peer interaction as well as teacher-student interaction (although she suggests the term 'amateur to amateur' or 'A2A' instead), stating that 'the forums constitute virtual communities' (p.184) where students can learn from each other as well as the tutor. However, in PEDM forums there is no official figure of authority presiding over the discourse and dispensing wisdom. Here, explicitly didactic relationships arise between participants operating initially at the same level, who determine between themselves which figures are authoritative. In most cases, a few users become known for their musical experience and willingness to give advice, such as Colin OOOD in the PsyMusic UK forum. These individuals adopt a similar position to the teachers identified by Miller (2012): their presence is invariably part of a wider set of participation strategies which interlock in complex ways, and may be monetized. Colin OOOD's status as a technical expert willing to impart his knowledge online has no doubt increased his popularity as a mastering engineer, for example.

During my research period, it was apparent that forum websites were becoming less popular and were largely being replaced by social media platforms. Forum-style pages for music production began to emerge on Facebook around 2014 and have since grown in popularity. Particularly prominent is the 'Psy Producers Forum', a well-populated Facebook group in which producers can ask questions and

¹²⁷ A 'sticky' thread on a forum is a post which always stays at the top of the page, even if more popular threads are subsequently created. If comments are permitted then it can normally be added to indefinitely.

receive answers from a large community of users. These questions are asked in the form of a post and answered by way of comments, a structure similar to a thread on a traditional internet forum. The page has strict rules resembling that of other music production forums largely aiming to discourage self-promotion, piracy and the endless re-iteration of basic questions. The Facebook equivalent of a sticky thread, a 'pinned post', has been created to outline these rules, and to direct new users to pre-existing answers to common requests (Figure 7.6). Psy Producer's Forum can only be joined with an invite from an existing member, and subsequent permission from an administrator. Many high-profile musicians are active on this group; however, the page is also populated by a large number of inexperienced producers, so the conversation is not always as sophisticated as it might be. (Questions about kick and bass sounds are endlessly re-iterated by new members, to the frustration of the more experienced producers.) Nonetheless, the moderators strive to achieve a balance between basic and more advanced discussion.



Johnny Reverb

Admin · 4 February 2016

!! RULES - READ BEFORE POSTING !!

1. Post a link to your track - deleted/banned.
2. General Language is ENGLISH
3. Post a link to your page, label, release or party asking people to download it/like it/share it, attend it - BANNED.
4. NO WAREZ/LINKS/CRACKS/TALK - INSTANT BAN
5. Behave maturely
6. You can't sell your stuff here, or advertise that you're selling stuff.
7. "The scene is dead", "The psy community has gone to shit" and related posts will be deleted. If you want to have that conversation, go read the archive - it's all been said before.
8. Technical Requests and Questions about Configuration and Installation of hardware/software will be deleted.

Rocky Lectosoul Ajnasoul started a "Psy Producers Music" forum where you can share your sounds:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/918980644855699/>

Maitreya Sathya & @Dash also did set up a little Wikipage with some good and helpful starting points regarding psytrance production:

http://wiki.psospace.net/en/Main_Page

We have gathered the most asked questions and topics as a helping point in a collection. The Idea is that if you make a statement or have a question, you make a reply on those threads below. All comments related to that then go as replies on that comment. It's not something we are going to or can rigorously enforce, but if everyone can try play along we will have a nice solid organised information repository on each of those topics. 😊

Kick/Bass:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/psy-producers-forum/the-kickbass-thread/1334517249935905/>

Synthesis:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/psy-producers-forum/the-synthesis-thread/1334517716602525/>

Mixing:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/psy-producers-forum/the-mixing-thread/1334520096602287/>

Percussion:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/psy-producers-forum/the-percussion-thread/1334518603269103/>

Please note: As we always enjoy helping out with technical issues, one thing to consider is that everyone's system is different, and may behave differently. We highly recommend first consulting the manual, or contacting your DAW's/Synths/VST's technical support team for any issues you are having!

Enjoy your stay, happy producing, and remember: there are no bad questions, only bad answers!

Forum Admins:

Figure 7.6 - The rules of Psy Producers Forum (Shared with permission from Johnny Reverb)

Other, smaller pages exist on Facebook, dedicated to specific PEDM subgenres such as hi-tech and psybient. However, these are less populated and do not have the same number of high-profile members. These are likely to grow in popularity, with new pages being created to support emerging musical styles and practices. For now, though, Psy Producers Forum acts as the most prominent point of contact between experienced and novice producers of PEDM music, allowing them to share ideas and techniques across geographical and musical boundaries.

7.3 Private Tuition and EDM Production

As noted in the previous section, EDM producers tend to be self-taught; they also learn by way of peer-networks which, today, are largely internet-mediated. As such, there is little in the way of a formal educational practice in EDM culture. However, some schools, colleges and universities in the UK have integrated EDM into wider audio production syllabi. In Bristol, for example, it is possible to study for a degree in Electronic Music Production at dBs ('Deep Blue Sound') music school, which is oriented towards popular musicians; there is also a degree in Creative Music Technology offered by UWE, although the syllabus is oriented towards classical electronic music. These courses are 'extracultural' in that they do not pertain to any specific kind of music. They focus on general technical skills rather than the specific musical skills required for participation in particular electronic music scenes (unlike, for example, courses in classical or jazz music, which impart culture-specific musical skills).

Face-to-face lessons in production, conducted in 'real life' rather than over the internet, are somewhat unusual in PEDM culture. Where these do occur, they tend to be one-off lessons focused on a particular project rather than ongoing tuition. (In this sense, they are reminiscent of the 'consultation lesson' model in classical music, in which a student approaches a particular teacher for only one or a handful of lessons.) Colin OOOD has taught in this way: for example, in 2016 a novice producer came

to stay at his house for five days to work on a track. The finished product was deemed to be of a high quality and was later released on a compilation.¹²⁸ Although this does not represent a normative teaching method in psyculture, it demonstrates that some students find face-to-face lessons valuable, and are prepared to travel to find the right teacher. Colin also teaches a music technology class at a college in Glastonbury one day a week. It is possible that some of his students may wish to learn psytrance production in this context, but these will be in the minority. As such, it is his wider set of technical skills which is called upon in this context rather than his specific knowledge of PEDM music.

Some producers offer one-to-one lessons over the internet by way of VOIP or video conferencing software. Again, these tend to follow a 'consultation' model, with the student bringing their own work to the lesson to be workshopped and moulded into a finished product. My interviewee-participant Snowdrop sought online lessons from Scottish psybass producer Hedflux during the early stages of her career in psybass music, in which she was interested in producing psybreaks music. A four-part tutorial service is advertised on Hedflux's website as 'Psy-Jedi Training'; focused one-off sessions on sound design and career development are also offered (Figure 7.7).¹²⁹

psy-jedi Training

A 4-part tutorial series going deep into the many aspects of psychedelic sound design. Based in a structured workflow-oriented methodology, the aim of the course is to leave you with a whole suite of custom made instruments, FX and tools, and a streamlined workflow toward creating the music in your mind's ear. Learn how to:

- Customize and control your plugins for greater playability and psychedelic expression
- Make fat snappy drums and groovy multi-layered bass lines
- Develop tools and techniques for generating complex, ever-changing musical patterns, phrases and scenes
- Build advanced MIDI mappings for live arranging, automating and creating totally twisted transitions
- Harness EQ and compression, referencing and analysis techniques for making your mixes shine
- ALL CONTENT CREATED IN WORKSHOP IS YOURS TO KEEP!

¹²⁸The track in question is '100 Billion Neurons' by Goa Travellers and Colin OOOD from the VA *Cascades of Life*, which was released on Ektoplazm on May 19th, 2016.

¹²⁹ <http://hedflux.com/learn/> [Accessed 3 November 2017]

psy-jedi Counsel

Full review of your music and music career, with positive counsel and constructive strategies to help you grow, upgrade your sound, and take your whole artist game to the next level. Send me your current music and anything you'd like feedback on, as well as some information about where you're at, and where you want to be. I will review it all and meet with you for **90 minutes** to discuss:

- Technical and creative feedback on your music
- Sound design and production techniques catered to your sound
- Career guidance: goals, challenges and accountability
- Building a vision for your future, knowing where to focus your energies
- Strategies to manifest abundance through music

sound design sessions

Looking to level-up your sound quickly, and dive deep into particular aspects of music production? Book a single 90-minute Sound Design Session, and tell me what you want to know. I'll answer all your questions and explore in depth the topics of your choice:

- No course structure, just 90 minutes of sound design and Q&A
- Focus in deep on specific sounds, techniques or plugins
- All patches/samples/content created in session is yours to keep

Figure 7.7 - Hedflux's 'Psy-Jedi Training', 'Psy-Jedi Counsel' and 'Sound Design Sessions'.

Genre is clearly a crucial issue here: we may assume that Hedflux's potential students are familiar with his music, and that they wish to produce in a similar style. The term 'psychedelic' is used in the descriptions above, and it is emphasized that materials will be generated during lessons – including project files, synthesizer patches, and various hardware and software configurations – which can then be used by the student in later creative work. Again, looking to broaden Green's notion of 'enculturation' (2008), we could suggest that the wider network surrounding the individual, including the hardware and software used to produce music, is also to a certain extent 'taught' during this encounter.

Snowdrop also had lessons from psydub producer Quanta (a member of Shanti Planti), travelling to Cornwall for this purpose in 2014. This was a similar arrangement to her lessons with Hedflux although

conducted in person rather than over the internet. I asked if her previous experience as a student of classical music may have given her the idea to seek private tuition:

C: You've had instrument lessons before. Were they similar lessons? [...]

S: No, not at all. That's the thing, if I didn't already have the head start of having had a musical education, then I probably wouldn't have even considered getting – well, I probably wouldn't have been interested in it to be fair! Well, I might have been, but, yeah, I think that's the thing, it was far more of a technical education in terms of learning with Hedflux and Quanta.
(Snowdrop, 2017)

The distinction between musical and technical learning suggested here is interesting, especially since Snowdrop has demonstrated considerable technical prowess in the creation and execution of her website and online radio station, New Moon Grooves (see 4.5.2.2). She learned the necessary technical skills for this from online resources, largely in written form:

S: I've gone about this in an age where it is fairly simple to go on the internet, and as long as you've got the right kind of way of thinking about things, you can easily learn how to do stuff like that. There's generally going to be, like, instructions, tutorials, and I suppose that's how a lot of people learn how to make music, isn't it? [...]

C: Do you mean like YouTube and stuff?

S: Yeah, although I suppose there's more of that kind of thing for making music, because that makes sense, because it's an audio kind of learning thing, whereas if you're learning how to do websites you can read about stuff.

Snowdrop's story would suggest that technical skills and musical skills are conducive to different ways of learning, the former being amenable to learning through self-teaching resources, and the latter benefiting from interpersonal contact. As noted in the previous section, what counts as a 'musical' or

a 'technical' skill in EDM culture is not entirely clear; nonetheless, Snowdrop's experiences suggest that musicians will draw on different kinds of resources in different contexts and may find different ways of learning to be better-suited to different aspects of musical participation.

Snowdrop's strategy highlights one particular advantage of applying the private tuition model to EDM culture: it can give female producers access to a studio environment which is often limited to exclusively male peer-networks. This is not to accuse the male producers in the psybass scene of intentionally excluding her. However, much of the 'studio time' which producers spend together tends towards or arises from casual socialising among friends of a kind which is often limited to same-sex social networks, and thus excludes women (Farrugia, 2010, 2012; Olszanowski, 2012, Gadir, 2017). Private tuition models, although not entirely egalitarian (in that women may have to pay for a degree of access that men have for free), may help to address this situation. Snowdrop has yet to publish any of her own music, perhaps because her DJ career has set her musical standards very high; it remains to be seen if her lessons will help her realise her long-term creative goals. However, she has certainly had some degree of contact with established producers and their working methods and may perhaps take this information into other social spheres or other aspects of her musical life.

7.4 Private Tuition and Performance – Tetrasound's DJ Lessons

This chapter has thus far neglected performance in favour of production. There is already some literature on DJ performance which details the necessary skills and how these are normally acquired (Fikentscher, 2000; Butler, 2006; Brewster & Broughton, 2007; Egolf, 2014). These accounts suggest that DJs tend to be self-taught or learn their craft with peers in an informal manner. However, some DJs do teach, and lessons are available from a range of sources. For example, tuition is given at several of the local music studios and music schools in Bristol, such as dBs and Real Sounds; lessons with a local teacher are also available at Basement 45, a small club which occasionally hosts PEDM events.

Elements of DJ performance have also been taught as part of an electronic music course at the Colston Hall, where Globular worked upon first arriving in Bristol. It is not clear how popular these lessons are, nor how many local DJs have learned in this way – it appears to be the exception, rather than the norm, with most DJs learning their craft informally in the context of a specific music scene. (As far as I could determine, none of my participants have ever used these resources.)¹³⁰

When I met Tetrasound in early 2016 he had a strong interest in taking on students as a private teacher. This he conceived not only as a business strategy but also a means of continuing his engagement with EDM culture as his day job and other commitments grew more demanding. On my first visit to his house in East Bristol he explained his plan in detail, asking if I had any advice from my own experience as a piano teacher. Later, a formal interview gave me an opportunity to enquire about his motivations:

T: This is what's really in my heart. I think it would be good to share the knowledge with people who want to become DJ or people who are interested in DJing. I don't know much, but I've played a few gigs here and there so I can show my skills – I can share my skills, I can show some tricks and I know that could make those people happy, and maybe that would be a beginning for something more serious. (Tetrasound, 2016)

I asked if he was aware of other psytrance DJs teaching in this manner:

T: Personally, like me, from home, no. I'm sure there is a few online schools etc. but no like one-to-one teaching so that's also why I thought maybe it's a good idea. I'm sure there is – there's more like friends teaching friends, but I was hoping if I've got this seventeen years of

¹³⁰ As noted previously, live electronic performance cannot be taught in the same manner as DJing, as each performer uses a different configuration of hardware and software, and performs different parts of the music onstage (see Section 3.3). Furthermore, a live set consists entirely of a producer's own music. The technology used is normally identical to that found in a home studio: thus, as it stands the usual resources of video tutorials, forums and technological experimentation are the normative ways by which live electronic performance skills are acquired.

experience maybe it would be worth it maybe to actually make some extra money on this, because why not? I've invested hundreds in music and vinyls and everything altogether, so, yeah, it would be good to get some small reward. But the bigger reward would be to hear my students mix, which would be full of energy, positive vibes, and that person would be super happy. That would be the biggest gift after all, because the money obviously is important, but I want to see somebody's face and smiling and doing what that person really wants to do.

Tetrasound is the owner of a company which designs and fits bathrooms. As such, earning money is not his primary motivation for teaching. Rather, he defines his teaching strategy in affective terms: his reward is a sense of personal and professional satisfaction from passing his hard-won skills on to a new generation of musicians. Assuming that his students are mostly psychculture participants, this could be considered a kind of 'scene building' (see 3.1).

As a novice local DJ with an interest in playing at psytrance events, I was an ideal candidate for Tetrasound's tuition, and therefore gladly volunteered to be his first student. My first and only lesson took place at his house in East Bristol in January, 2016. This was to be conducted on vinyl and CD: I therefore could not prepare for this lesson, as I had none of the necessary equipment at home. We began with beatmatching by ear, a skill which I was lacking due to my reliance on the visual cues provided by DJ software. Beginning on vinyl, Tetrasound selected two tracks from his collection with a four-to-the-floor beat and a similar tempo, and I practised mixing back and forth between them. Each time he would scramble the controls (the gain, pitch adjust and EQ) before I attempted to bring in a new record; thus I had to adjust rapidly, a good emulation of real-world circumstances, as each mix requires a different configuration of the controls. This worked well, and after an hour or so I was just about able to beatmatch two records on vinyl. The exercise was then repeated on CD. Whilst I was practicing, Tetrasound took a few promotional photos, one of which he shared on Facebook (Figure 7.8). Although lacking a formal model to emulate, Tetrasound seemed perfectly able to plan

and execute an effective instrumental lesson and had a clear vision of how his lessons might be advertised.



Figure 7.8 - The researcher taking a DJ lesson at Tetrasound's house.

In exchange, I was to give Tetrasound a lesson on the piano, an instrument which he had wanted to learn for many years. He had use in mind for this skill: it would allow him to use his MIDI keyboard for music production, an activity which he found frustrating and did not feel that he had practiced to a satisfactory level. However, our exchange was cut short when Tetrasound decided to go travelling in the summer of 2016. I did not see him again until September 2017. In the interim, he had performed extensively around Europe, but had not yet begun to teach formally.

Tetrasound's plan raises issues with the application of the private music tuition model to EDM performance. Firstly, if a physical format is being taught (i.e. CD or vinyl), the student must have access

to the necessary resources, including two decks, a mixer, speakers, headphones, and a large collection of music. More so than an acoustic musical instrument, this requires considerable expenditure on the part of the student, who must also have access to a large amount of storage and practice space. Historically, this DJ equipment may have been dispersed within a peer network, as is often the case with young rock musicians (Cohen, 1992; Baulch, 2007), thus reducing the burden on the individual. How this system might translate to a private tuition model is unclear, but it seems likely that it will generate more complex material arrangements than acoustic instrumental tuition.

Secondly, questions about musical genre are raised. It is likely that Tetrasound's students will have a range of stylistic preferences, even if they are exclusively participants of psyculture. For example, I wanted to play forest psytrance and psydub, neither of which are the kind of music that Tetrasound normally plays. Although the technical skill of beatmatching and EQ mixing is the same, aesthetic considerations such as programming and set structure require considerable exposure to a particular style, and these may not translate well to the 'lesson' format – especially given that a set is usually ninety minutes long. As a DJ experienced in a range of styles, Tetrasound should be able to accommodate for this diversity, providing general tuition for participants engaged in a variety of music scenes. How he might advertise this to potential students is unclear: the normal channels for PEDM music may not provide the wide exposure needed to maintain a thriving teaching studio.

Finally, it is not clear whether DJing requires prolonged periods of tuition in the same manner as an acoustic instrument. A DJ's value as a performer lies in their ability to select new and exciting music (Brewster and Broughton, 2006); this suggests a different approach to repertory than, for example, the classical music model, which is characterised a stabilization of the performing repertoire to a limited set of 'classics' which are passed from teacher to student. Without the transmission of a repertory, DJ tuition is likely to focus on technical skills rather than interpretive considerations, a task which may not require an extended period of contact between teacher and student. It therefore seems likely that EDM performance tutors will have a higher turnover of students than teachers of

acoustic instruments. A similar issue might also apply to private tuition in EDM production: here, the rate of generic and technological change is so fast that obsolescence may prove an obstacle to long-term student-teacher relationships.

Despite these issues, private tuition presents a possible avenue for the development of an educational system in EDM performance. As noted previously, this is particularly amenable to underground culture, allowing musicians to pass skills directly to their peers without recourse to schools, colleges, or other 'supercultural' elements. Private tuition might also allow for genre-specific skills to be imparted, such as the programming and structuring of a set in a particular style. Researchers of underground musical cultures might look for similar developments in future.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at learning and teaching in PEDM culture starting with the assumption that such musicians tend to be self-taught. I have demonstrated that this kind of self-directed learning is more formal than is often assumed, with participants drawing on a variety of resources to structure the learning process. Furthermore, I have noted that producers tend to have previous experience of another musical system and have normally attained a degree of ability on an acoustic instrument before engaging with EDM production. As such, certain musical skills are picked up 'outside' of EDM culture and may even be acquired by formal means. By contrast, technical skills (largely pertaining to timbre and sound design using software tools) are learned later in the context of a specific EDM genre. Further studies might establish whether prior musical experience is typical of EDM cultures more widely, or whether it is a characteristic of certain genres.

Conceptualising musical activity in terms of networks, projects and strategies may help us to understand skill acquisition in EDM cultures, and the nature of learning and teaching today's underground music scenes. Many participants engage in the creation of educational resources which

are shared on the internet, for example, an activity which may be conceived of as strategic. These resources may be conceptual in nature (musical ideas or the solutions to specific problems) or material (video tutorials, synthesizer patches and project files). Some musicians make money from these activities whilst others offer their time and knowledge for free. Thus, as in other musical cultures, didactic endeavours have a complicated relationship with professional musicianship and what it means to be a 'musician' more widely.

A strategy-oriented perspective on popular music careers may also help to illuminate the relationship between formal music education and emergent grassroots teaching practices. Many schools, colleges and universities in the UK offer tuition oriented towards a 'popular' music career, some of which relates specifically to EDM. (For example, the music electronic production courses offered by dBs music college in Bristol.) However, many of the best producers and DJs do not have formal teaching qualifications: these individuals are more likely to be employed as visiting professionals or 'community musicians' rather than salaried teachers. Furthermore, they are likely to be accustomed to a self-directed learning style, meaning that there is a disparity between they have learned and how they their students are learning. There is no historical model for tuition in these genres and so musicians must create new ways of teaching from scratch. Future research could look at how such individuals and/or their output are integrated into the emergent sector of popular music education and how this kind of teaching activity contributes to an overall career in electronic popular music. Similar attention must be paid to the career pathways of graduates, whose engagement with higher education implies a drive towards professional musicianship, a notion which becomes complicated when applied to underground musical cultures.

Another issue for further consideration is the value of musical tuition for individuals who do not wish to become professional musicians, for whom music-making is primarily a leisure activity (see 1.2). In the UK and many other countries it is widely believed that learning a musical instrument is a valuable pursuit in itself capable of improving personal well-being, and many adult learners engage with formal

tuition as part of musical leisure (Hallam et al., 2017; Keene & Greene, 2017). However, it is not clear that the same development will take place in EDM culture or other forms of computer-based music-making: it may be that resources for self-teaching, crafted by actively performing and composing musicians, are a better way for individuals to realise this music's potential as a leisure activity in this context. At the same time, participants may create novel ways of teaching EDM skills which have an appeal as leisure activities beyond their didactic elements. These could potentially reconfigure musical learning as a leisure activity within EDM cultures and electronic musical cultures more widely.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Musical Careers

Whereas previous studies have depicted musical participation as a linear process using metaphors such as a ladder (Cohen, 1991), a pathway (Finnegan, 2007), and stepping stones (Miller, 2016), I have argued that musical careers in today's underground electronic music cultures today are increasingly non-linear. There are more ways to engage with a music scene than ever before, and participants are more empowered to make creative decisions about their careers and how these are conducted. Although a professional career is still seen as something to be desired, underground musicians appear to have a broader conception of what this might consist of and how it might be achieved. Many aim for 'sustainable semiprofessionalism' (Miller, 2016) rather than a full-time career. Among my participants, Krosis, Tetrasound, Fractal Forest, Lurk, and Snowdrop exemplified this approach: each had a non-musical career, but also made money from their musical activities, which occupied a significant portion of their free time. The solitary nature of EDM production and performance and the ability of artists to inhabit multiple identities, including group identities, without having to make intense commitments in terms of time or material resources makes the genre conducive to this approach – other musics are not necessarily as accommodating, as Miller (2016) demonstrates in her study of heavy metal and folk music.

This move towards semi-professionalism may be indicative of wider changes in musical labour. Today's underground musicians seem to be more oriented towards a 'portfolio' career than the popular musicians studied by Cohen (1991) and Fornäs (1995) (0.1). 'Portfolio' has historically referred to careers in classical and jazz music which contain a mixture of performing, composing, conducting, arranging and teaching; in the context of UDM cultures it may refer to a combination of producing, performing, event promotion, running a record label, and various internet-based activities such as crowd-funding, forum moderation and the creation of tutorial videos. Having a musical career with

multiple fronts is difficult, however – these musicians have to find time for numerous activities which may conflict with their principle musical aims and interests, notably social networking on internet platforms, an activity which may constitute a form of ‘affective labour’ (Suhr, 2012).

The portfolio approach is particularly compatible with internet-mediated underground musical cultures, which employ grassroots methods of production, distribution and event organization, with individual participants taking on multiple roles. One characteristic of this environment is casual relationships between scene participants – formal contracts are increasingly unusual. This can serve to reduce the level of risk for musicians by comparison with the historical popular music industry. Indeed, if we consider the financial perils of interacting with major record labels and distributors, which has often resulted in musicians taking on enormous amounts of debt due to contractual obligations, then we may surmise that the consequences of failure for today’s underground musicians are remarkably light. However, although the risks are significantly reduced, so are the rewards. Even the most prolific musicians in underground music scenes make a modest income from their activities, with little in the way of savings to protect them from financial misfortune. The ‘grand’ risks presented by the international music industry are thus replaced by the more minor day-to-day risks of precarious self-employment – an improvement in terms of artistic freedom and flexibility, but hardly conducive to a comfortable living.

More widely, it seems that a full-time producing and performing career is extremely difficult to sustain for musicians, even with help from record labels and event crews. Today’s strategic diversity is perhaps as much a result of the unavailability of a clear pathway as it is a purposive exploration of new possibilities made available by technology. Younger musicians seem to fare better in this environment than older participants: their use of social media, in particular, is more confident and produces better results. I noticed several failed crowdfunding campaigns among older musicians in the UK PEDM scene, for example, which hindered important projects; by contrast, Globular was seemingly able to pluck money out of thin air (see 4.5.2.1), although his ability to do this was in fact due to a high degree

of social media savviness and hard work. Thus, although the internet engenders a cultural production environment in many ways similar to the underground music scenes of the 1980s and 1990s – with net labels, YouTube channels and forums performing similar functions to independent vinyl labels, pirate radio stations and zines – it requires a significantly different strategic approach and is not always welcoming to veteran musicians.

Bourdieu's model of 'cultural capital' and Thornton's 'subcultural capital' fall short in trying to explain this situation. It does not seem to be the case that musical participants are able to use their cultural knowledge, habitus and accumulated material resources to command access to or influence over a cultural sphere, as these writers suggest. Rather, these resources are deployed in circumstances which don't guarantee a return – with artistic and often financial consequences. Furthermore, attempts to mitigate this uncertainty are often predicated on the use of non-subcultural resources: for example, Planet Shroom's use of sponsored advertising to promote their event on Facebook (2.5.2) and Globular's use of Patreon to provide a steady monthly income (4.5.2.1). This is difficult to reconcile with the notion of a 'subfield of restricted cultural production' (Bourdieu, 1996; Reitsamer, 2011).

A better approach, I have suggested, is to view musical systems as networks containing many 'boundary objects' (Star & Griesemer, 1989) which are shared with other networks, including systems of mass distribution. The best examples today are internet platforms such as Facebook and YouTube: these are capable of producing both exclusivity and massive global exposure, and thus defy analysis in terms of the distinctions normally associated with field theory. Music venues, too, are integrated into multiple networks, often occupying an uncertain position between 'subculture' and 'superculture' (Slobin, 1993). Examples in this thesis included the Trinity Centre and Lakota, both of which catered to local UDM scenes in Bristol, but were owned and managed by people who in many ways represented 'official' culture in the city (2.2). The assemblages which arise from music-making activities are thus complex and cannot be explained as wholly subcultural or underground.

By thus removing the co-ordinates provided by (sub)cultural capital, the network approach encourages us to view the value of creative contributions as a property of the immanent relationships between the elements of a musical system. ANT scholars assert that the connections within a social network exist on a single flat plane, and that hierarchical relationships emerge as an effect, rather than a cause, of these connections (Latour, 2005; Michael, 2017). In terms of a musical network, it is the direct relationships between artists, venues, crews, equipment, music, websites which give rise to the effect of 'cultural capital', if it is to be found at all. These relationships are revealed by focusing on the individual and the idiosyncratic; it is this approach which I have demonstrated in the present thesis.

8.2 Projects and Strategies

Building on this network approach to musical culture, I have suggested that musical careers are composed of discrete instances of participation conducted according to the current state-of-play in a musical system. These activities in turn affect the structure of the musical network, creating or foreclosing future opportunities for engagement. Thus I have likened the contemporary music scene, by contrast with the 'chess board' of the Bourdieuan field, as a game in which the playing area is constructed by the players as they make their moves, as in dominoes or modern tile-laying board games such as *Carcassonne* or *Hive*. This has implications for how we understand musical creativity: I argue that the value of a producer's creative contribution is not judged according to a fixed set of cultural standards and expectations, as suggested in existing accounts building on field theory (Toynbee, 2000; Hodkinson, 2002; Lindop, 2010), but is determined by the collective strategies which create a 'niche' for that producer's work. The primary examples throughout the thesis have been the projects enacted by event crews and record labels. Thus a musician must have an output corresponding with the strategic aims of other participants if they are to engage successfully with a

music scene. It is thus the mutuality and compatibility of different participation activities which creates many of the selective pressures in today's musical systems.

The notions of 'project' and 'strategy' have been central to my thesis. These are the activities which make up a musical career, the means by which musicians interact with their chosen scene. The difference between the two, I have suggested, is that the former is aimed at the creation of a product whereas the latter is a continuous way of doing things. However, many of the activities given in the present thesis fall into both categories (for example, the Tribe of Frog club night, Snowdrop's radio show). Thus I have used 'projects and strategies' as a general term encompassing all kinds of music-making activities, whether short or long-term, fixed in extent or indefinite. The advantage of this approach is that it encourages the researcher to look at the different ways in which musicians deploy the resources available to them, the intended outcome, and the ways that these lead on – or fail to lead on – to further activity.

This approach illuminates the inadequacy of the amateur/professional binary in understanding today's musical careers (although these concepts still hold great importance for musicians themselves). Many activities elide these categories in ways which even the term 'semi-professional' cannot convey. These, I have suggested, may be understood in terms of 'scene building': the provision of opportunities for future engagement, either for oneself or other participants. Monetization is often secondary to scene building, even among professional musicians – indeed, they must often strategically balance these two imperatives for long term gain. Furthermore, much of what appears to be 'amateur' musical activity plays a key role in the professional careers of other participants: the 'enthusiast' promoter (Webster, 2011), for example, or the webmaster who creates a vital forum or distribution service. (Ektoplazm, for example, does not generate any extra income for its creator DJ Basilisk.)

Here we return to the idea of music as leisure and Stebbins' (2005; 2017) distinction between project-based, casual and serious leisure. I argue that 'project-based' does not make sense as a separate

leisure category. All music-making is made up of discrete actions carried out within a finite time and space; it is the way that these actions interlock and lead from each other which produces the effect of continuity. Stebbins states that project-based leisure is distinct from serious leisure in that it ‘fails to generate a sense of career’ (p.3), although here I have demonstrated that the topic of ‘career’ in the context of underground music is too vast, subjective and varied to be reduced in this way. The wide variety of musical projects and strategies detailed in the present study supports my claim – many were one-off occurrences, but nonetheless contributed to the musical trajectories of the participants involved and to the scene as a whole. It is thus the case, as Becker (1982) demonstrates, that small and seemingly inconsequential activities contribute to the functioning of an ‘art world’.

Conversely, it may be possible to develop Stebbins’ idea in the other direction: rather than eliminating ‘project-based leisure’ we may theorise ‘project-based work’, re-configuring the temporary, individual and idiosyncratic as central to professional musical careers. This allows us to understand amateur and professional musicianship within the same framework – both can be understood as arising from projects which, although differing in degree of monetization, are otherwise similar in structure and aim (namely, scene-building). It also helps to address the ‘addictive’ aspects of musical participation, ‘to get to grips with what music actually means to and for people who live their lives under its spell’ (Smith, 2017, p.165).¹³¹ Intrinsic motivation, I suggest, is more easily understood when musical participation is broken down into its constituent instances of strategic deployment, of risk and reward.

At the same time, however, we must theorise the continuous as well as the discrete – the pathway as well as the stepping stones. Here it is useful to look at the ways in which musical projects themselves, and the relationships which form around them, create continuity in the lives of participants. This can

¹³¹ Rowlands & Handy (2012) have looked at addiction and careers in film-making. Conducting ethnographic research in New-Zealand, they find that, due to the project-based nature of their work, film-makers ‘tend to oscillate between the emotional highs of work and the emotional depths of unemployment more frequently than workers in other industries’ (p.662). This creates ‘an addictive psycho-social dynamic that repeatedly draws freelance workers back into the industry’ (ibid.) despite difficult working conditions and poor personal finance.

be seen in the case of regular club nights and record labels (which are both projects and social structures) and the formal relationships of 'residence' and 'affiliation' which are offered to performing artists on the basis of their continuing involvement with these projects. In this way, promoters and label owners provide the channels within which musical careers take shape, whether through long-term relationships or individual publication and performance opportunities. Their hard work often goes unnoticed by scholars; more attention needs to be paid to these 'supporting' roles.

For non-producing audience members and fans, these projects also create a continuous means of engaging with a musical culture, and the sense of permanence, community and warmth theorised by Maffesoli in his writing on 'tribes' (1996).¹³² This is clearly signalled in psychculture by the use of 'tribe' as a self-description among event crews and their attendees (St. John, 2009; 2012). Non-musician audience members respond to these opportunities with their own creative participation activities. Many of these may be considered projects or strategies in themselves: making a costume, creating a playlist, handing out flyers. These, too, help to build the scene, and create further opportunities for cultural producers to provide necessary resources (e.g. clothing, music, artwork) and build a meaningful career from these activities. Here, it is not so much the case that producers and consumers are indistinguishable, as Benjamin (1935) and Toffler (1980) predicted – in fact, this distinction remains a strong structuring force in the lives of cultural participants – but that their activities are closely interlinked, each providing the other with further opportunities for cultural engagement.

What I have stated here applies to psychculture and other UDM cultures. Much of it may also be applicable to other underground cultures, such as heavy metal and punk rock, which are organised according to similar principles of independence and self-reliance. However, the underlying changes which have enabled today's participatory musical landscape – notably the emergence of digital music

¹³² 'Permanency and instability are the two poles around which the emotional will navigate' (Maffesoli, 1996, p.12).

technology and social media – are more widely relevant, and so a similar approach may be applied to other kinds of music. The key elements which I suggest researchers should look for are as follows:

- The various projects and strategies which make up a musical career and their attendant risks and rewards.
- ‘Supporting’ projects and strategies such as event promotion, label/booking management, or web development, and the ways in which these enable musicians and create new opportunities for scene participation.
- The ways in which various projects and strategies interlock to produce local pathways and translocal scenes.
- The ways in which genre concepts are deployed by musicians and the ways in which these determine the compatibility of projects through shared aims.
- Strategies which are mutually exclusive (such as live and DJ performance) and thus force musicians to choose one option or another.
- Unique strategies which do not neatly align with the normal categories of composition, performance, event promotion or distribution.
- Emergent strategies, such as teaching, which arise as participants within a culture age and begin to look for greater stability and continuity in their musical careers.

8.3 Future Research

Looking forward, the most pressing concern in the study of musical careers is the nature of musical self-employment in the digital era, and the wider impact that digital technologies have had on relative notions of amateur and professional musicianship. The findings of this thesis suggest that popular musicians in EDM genres have gained access to an ‘everyday’ model of musicianship which incorporates various kinds of musical activity beyond composing and performing, a model akin to the

portfolio careers of jazz and classical musicians. Further research might establish whether this is the case in other genres of contemporary popular music, such as hip-hop, which emerged and developed within a similar time-frame to that of EDM and shares many of its musical and social attributes. The notion of 'sustainable semi-professionalism' which Miller (2016) applies to folk and heavy metal music may also be applied here.

With regards to older popular music styles, such as rock music, modern, digitally-mediated musical careers may be examined in relation to previous research (such as Cohen, 1991; Berger, 1999). Do young rock musicians still follow a 'ladder' or 'stepping stones' towards professional musicianship (see 0.1) or has digital technology rendered their musical careers multidimensional, as it has for electronic musicians? What kinds of musical projects do rock musicians enact today, and how do these differ from the projects of previous decades?

The social connections between musicians are also deserving of further study. With regards to EDM and UDM cultures, more research may be done into the concepts of residence and affiliation (see Chapter 3) which refer to the relationships between DJs, event crews and record labels. These associations are some of the strongest structuring forces in the social life of EDM musicians and may provide a better understanding of today's musical/social networks than more abstract notions such as 'scene' (Straw, 1991) or 'genre' (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). The ways in which these concepts represent or interact with notions of professional musicianship may have much to reveal about EDM as work and as leisure.

Appendix – Permission Form

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CONSENT FORM (Named Participants) Interviews with Members of the Psytrance Scene in Bristol and Beyond

What is the project about? - I will be conducting interviews with members of the psytrance scene in Bristol and in locations related to this scene. Interviews will cover aspects of musical theory, history, studio technique and the organisation of psytrance parties and festivals.

Do I have to take part? – No, participation is voluntary.

Can I withdraw at anytime? - Yes, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What do I have to do? – The nature of the interview will vary from participant to participant, and will be in part dictated by what the participant feels is important to discuss. In most cases, the interview will consist of a set of questions on psytrance music and events, which may lead to other topics. Some participants may wish to show the workings of their studio, or to play audio examples in such an environment. This is encouraged.

How will the findings be used? – Interviews will be recorded on a portable recording device, edited for relevance, and then stored on a secure university server. Relevant findings will contribute to a piece of writing that describes how a psytrance scene operates and the contributions that different people make.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential? – The thesis will detail the work of a mixture of named and anonymous individuals, according to the wishes of each participant. **In signing this consent form, you are agreeing to be a named participant in this study. The name used in the study will be your alias (eg. DJ or producer name) and not your full name. Your full name and any details will be removed from audio data before storage.**

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? – There are no major risks to taking part in the study. Although the interviews are not concerned with illegal activity, and will focus on music production, performance and the organisation of parties in established venues, if participants wish to discuss illegal activity in the interview (such as drug taking or the organisation of free parties) then the resulting data will be edited before storage in order to protect the participant. This data will not be included in the study.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge

	YES	NO
HAVE YOU:		
• been given information explaining about the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• received satisfactory answers to all questions you asked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• received enough information about the study for you to make a decision about your participation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DO YOU UNDERSTAND:		
That you are free to withdraw from the study and free to withdraw your data prior to final consent		
• at any time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• without having to give a reason for withdrawing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I hereby fully and freely consent to my participation in this study

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Name in BLOCK Letters: _____

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee, via Liam McKervey, Research Ethics Co-ordinator (Tel: 0117 331 7472 email: Liam.McKervey@bristol.ac.uk).

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