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**Rebecca Jane Bennet and Angela
Cresswell Jones (Eds.), *The Digital
Evolution of Live Music*. Kidlington,
Chandos Publishing, Elsevier, 2015, 143
pp.
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Defining identity, the body – that is, the relationships between human and non-human throughout music – and different practices of creating and performing music on the internet represent elements of the main topic of the studies in the collective monograph *The Digital Evolution of Live Music*, edited by Rebecca Jane Bennet and Angela Cresswell Jones. The monograph contains an introductory chapter and a conclusion (titled “Introduction” and “Coda”), with ten studies in between. The topics of the studies are connected to the different aspects of the central topic mentioned earlier.¹ Those aspects are related to certain platforms which serve as means of presenting and sharing music online but are also related to events with live music such as music festivals, which are advertised online or which take place in the electronic online space. The studies are connected to:

- The changes caused by the development of digital technologies and their influence on live performances, the audience and changes in the economy

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1 The studies are: Angela Cresswell Jones and Rebecca Jane Bennett, „Introduction“, pp. xi–xv, R. Bennet, „Live concerts and fan identity in the age of the Internet“, pp. 3–15, T. Harper, „Aura, iteration, and, action: digital technology and the jouissance of live music“, pp. 17–27, A. Jones, „What’s my scene: festival fandom and the application of the Big Day Out stage“, pp. 29–40, J. Mulder, „Live sound and the disappearing digital“, pp. 43–54, S. Mallinder, „Live or Memorex? Changing perception of music practices“, pp. 55–70, A. Trainer „Live from the ether: YouTube and live music video culture“, pp. 71–84, M. Kent, K. Ellis, „Live music in a virtual world: exuberant flourishing and disability at Wheelies nightclub in Second Life“, pp. 85–98, S. Gallacher, „The sounds of Skyrim: a musical journey through gaming“, pp. 99–106, F. Cull, „Dead music in live music culture“, pp. 109–121, A. Jones, R. Bennett, S. Cross, „Keepin’ it real? Life, death and holograms on the live music stage“, pp. 123–138, R. Bennett and A. Jones, „Coda“, p. 139. The studies are followed by an Index.

- and cultural industry;
- The question of the identity of the audience (at both the individual and collective level), as a fluid category in the digital age;
 - The transformation of experiencing a live event with the appearance of digital technologies, and by mediating cultural products via the screen, viewed from the perspective of cultural studies;
 - Questions connected to the transformation and the future of popular music festivals (with the Australian festival *Big Day Out* as an example);
 - Questions of music production with digital technologies (fine arts/Avant-Gardes vs. Popular music);
 - The status of live performance via new media – internet;
 - Questions related to YouTube live-streams and problematising that platform as a musical archive/repository on one hand and as a place for free self-promotion on the other;
 - Problematising live performance as an event in virtual space and defining the status of the body within that space (with an example of *Second Life* platform);
 - The question of music in video games (that is, Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games [MMORPG]);
 - The distribution of old music practices in contemporary society via digital music archives;
 - Questions of altered reality in contemporary live performance via digital technologies and holograms.

There are two main claims crucial for understanding these studies. The first is stated in the introduction: “Given the rapid pace of change, especially in the digital era, any book investigating digital culture is a history text by the time it reaches the shelves.” (p. xi, the start of the introductory chapter, and therefore the whole monograph starts with this claim). The second one is stated in the fourth study: “The place of computers in academic music practice has become almost central: computational musicology, music retrieval, acousmatic composition, and digital electronic music production are widespread in research and education. In terms of popular music, digital impact came with sampling and increased control over synthesisers.” (p. 49).

With the first claim, not only the speed of the development of digital technologies, but also their high presence in the contemporary culture, are pointed out to the reader. The authors, of course, are stating that this can be a good thing for the humanities, having in mind that those ‘pauses’ (the time required for published books such as this one to “reach the shelves”, which makes them ‘historical texts’) are crucial for theorists’ reflections on the phenomena which have radically changed our everyday life, mass/popular culture and ‘high’, elitist culture and arts, and to some extent civilisation in total. Also, the meaning of the term “live” has changed;

the authors point out the change in the relationship between music and the physical body of the recipient in the digital age. It is about the changed relationship of the recipients towards the practices of live music, as a process which takes place in real time and which, transmitted via new, digital media – that is, software and platforms – replace (transform) old (analogue) categories of live performance, music production, market, and, in the end, communication with key demographics – the listeners. In other words, it is about a time in which categories such as knowledge or identity are radically changed throughout everyday dealing with the constant flow of information, which represents an integral part of everyday life in the digital age, and implies fluid (hybrid?) identities of both creators/performers (whether they are ‘real’, that is contemporary creators, virtual or computer generated creators, or creators of past times, re-created for contemporary worlds in various ways), and the audience. The knowledge and information which are transmitted via digital media imply digital literacy, and also computational knowledge and fluidity of the computational subject, to use David Barry’s terms from his study *The Philosophy of Software: Code and Mediation in the Digital Age*.²

The other claim is connected to the production of music in the digital age. Johannes Mulder, the author of the fourth study, claims that the experience of listening remains analogue, despite all of the changes in music production: the sound remains analogue, and exists only as such. The author explains this claim more closely with the fact that every sound that is electronically/digitally generated or reproduced must be transformed into a sound by a speaker – that is, in analogue sound waves. Therefore one might conclude that, in music, that electronic/digital aspect in the production and reception, along with possible ways of sound generating, are reduced to their mediation via the internet (all processes assume computational knowledge and digital literacy). Precisely this (digital) acceleration of the process of production and process by which the music reaches its listeners (conditioned by the new technologies) made possible the new, fluid (hybrid?) identities, new social groups, new types of festivals and new notions of reality (via screen and software) in the sphere of music as a social phenomenon, therefore offering new experiences in the reproduction, listening and reception of music.

The aim of this collective monograph is to theoretically problematise contemporary social practices of production and reception of music in the digital space, with a particular focus on situating the question of identity (of the producers and consumers of music in the broadest sense) in the digital space. The monograph is intriguing due to the fact that it includes theoretical discussions of everyday platforms and software, without which the contemporary world would be unimaginable. The readers are given information about different ‘appearances’ of music online (often within different multimedia contexts), and they are made aware that music in online space (that is, with new means of its distribution towards and

² The study is published as: Barry, David M. 2011. *The Philosophy of Software: Code and Mediation in the Digital Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

among consumers) does not lose the value or status which it had in analogue media space. There are only new possibilities, which are, according to the data presented in the studies, unlimited.

In these studies, with clear and understandable language and methodological precision (every study is divided into a significant amount of precisely titled chapters and sub-chapters), the various phenomena, as case studies, are defined and discussed. This contribution from the domain of media theory and cultural studies is useful and valuable for musicology. It represents a foundation for further research of both 'popular' (mostly explored in the monograph) and 'high' music practices, and their place in the contemporary, digital media space.

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