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THE IDEA FOR THIS SPECIAL ISSUE ON DJ CULTURE came about during a sound system party in Kingston in the summer of 2008. On a lawn in Jamaica the guest editors for this issue met during a cultural studies conference and discovered that we both had been DJing for years. There we were, both DJs and academics, discussing DJ culture on the island where it was born a half-century ago. We discussed our musical passions, our ideas about DJ skills and technologies, our thoughts about DJ history, and our feelings about current trends in electronic dance music. We had each presented papers on DJ culture at the conference and the bottled up DJ concerns we shared on that lawn in Kingston finally resulted in this joint effort. A key impulse uniting us was a desire to perform scholarly work from the perspective of the DJ; to mix together scholarly voices and approaches in a manner that allowed these voices to speak on their own while simultaneously encouraging the emergence of new perspectives through the interactions among them.

Our aim is to stimulate a wider conversation on DJ culture, its influences, its technologies, and its histories. This issue of *Dancecult* addresses itself specifically to the relations of pleasure and power that intersect in the space between the DJ, the dance floor and the rest of the club world. Electronic dance music, and its DJs, producers and promoters have become increasingly central to popular culture in its various spatial configurations; translocally, glocally and transnationally. The DJ has been a key figure in popular music since the 1950s, with today's superstars functioning both as pioneers of musical taste and gatekeepers of the music industry. Together with promoters, VJs and other key figures in club scenes, DJ/producers in EDM have pushed forward musical and technological developments. This issue offers creative and intellectual accounts of DJ cultures, featuring contributions from established DJs/writers situated in various spatial and cultural configurations. We discuss DJs as historians of the future and infrasensual cyborgs. Articles address the technological, commercial and social developments and conditions that constrain and liberate DJs, the power dynamics of music scenes, and their positions in wider socio-historical processes.

First out is Tim Lawrence's historical article on the significant and formative processes in DJ culture that took place in 1980–84 at the legendary club "the Saint" in New York City. Situated at the historical juncture of neoliberalism, consumer culture, identity politics and the AIDS epidemic, Lawrence traces the circumstances that led to the emergence of a white gay male aesthetic at the Saint. He also traces the ways the anonymized Saint's DJs pioneered a style of DJ mixing which would become the dominant practice in house culture: the smooth and extended blending of texturally similar tracks.

Rosa Reitsamer discusses the changing role of DJs in the 1990s and 2000s Viennese

techno and drum 'n' bass club cultures: from background entertainers into a hybrid of producers, promoters, performers and business strategists. She highlights economic and social network strategies in the DIY careers of DJs, and the ways their gendered self representations blur oppositions between art and money in their accumulation of social/cultural/symbolic capital.

The making of EDM scenes as a “masculine” endeavor is crucial to Chris Christodoulou’s discussion of London’s drum ‘n’ bass scene. Christodoulou examines the sonic textures of drum ‘n’ bass from a psychoanalytic perspective, finding in the music (as well as in the discourse surrounding it) an urban “uncanny” grounded in the material economic and social crises that form the backdrop of its emergence in dance music culture. Those crises are marked most visibly in the postindustrial space of the city; its uncanniness is linked to male fears of female sexuality that are tamed with fetishised representations of female cyborgs who are both castrating and reassuring. To its predominantly male participants, drum ‘n’ bass culture—like the postindustrial city from whence it sprang—promises a return to the womb as a place of both safety and danger.

The cyborg also plays a significant role in Sean Nye’s essay, which explores the technology of headphones as a visible icon of DJ culture paradoxically marking both private listening and public performance. The historical emergence of “headphone cultures” is explored and contextualized, with emphasis on the irony of the DJ as a dominant popular representation of listening while not using headphones the same way as everyday listeners. DJ culture is both linked to and contrasted with the “headset” and “jetset” cultures that preceded it in visible headphone iconography; Cold War era “command and control” becomes a metaphor to understand the male-centered world of the performing DJ.

Graham St John explores the ambivalence surrounding psytrance DJ Goa Gil in the historical context from which his dark take on the Goa vibe emerged. St John traces Goa Gil’s musical development from early 1970s jam bands and cassettes to the “ruinous, unrelenting barrage of white label dark matter” that he is known for today. As both a selector and a shaman, Goa Gil provokes controversy, symbolising for some the birth of a communitarian neotribal spirit and for others a depressing descent into self-parody.

Our From The Floor section begins with volume 2 of Anna Gavanias’ compilation series “Nomads In Sound”. The compilation features original compositions from contributing artists Aimnbreak, Bass Trolls, DJ Aroma, Djplaneten, Foona, Gavana, jgb, Kutterfugel, Nuphlo and Ombudsman. This audiotextual project illustrates by means of sound and DJ capabilities the inseparability and multidimensionality of EDM cultures. Words and text are not enough to address the meanings, visions and potentials of DJ cultures.

Several complementary articles address the consequences of the technological transformations of DJ culture, from turntablism to controllerism. First out, Bernardo Attias meditates on the death of vinyl from the perspective of someone who has lived to celebrate its life and the possibilities it has brought to the world. He discusses processes of authentication in relation to DJ formats that have come and gone as well as the “circles of resonance” that legitimize new conditions and standards for what is considered musical

expression and skill. In our Conversations section, Attias explores these themes further in Part 1 of a dialogue with *Dancecult* Managing Editor tobias c. van Veen. The exchange focuses on the difference between vinyl and digital DJ cultures in terms of physical performance and virtuosity. In her article “Turntables of Doom”, Kath O’Donnell gets into these issues as well in the context of DJ battles on hip hop scenes. She discusses turntablist battles as sonic fiction in terms of sounds, performance and the stories behind them. She also addresses post-modern hip hop DJs as crate digging consumers and producers; digging physical crates as urban archaeologists as well as dust free crates on the internet.

Reitsamer’s Viennese EDM scenes correspond to Anna Ostrom’s article on the techno scene of Stockholm from her perspective as a DJ, club promoter and manager of a DJ cafe. In both sites, female DJs tend to be ignored by male centered social networks, which have gate keeping and taste making functions as to the recognition of DJs.

Johanna Paulsson’s contribution discusses pleasure and power at the EBM/Industrial/Synth Amphi Festival in Cologne. She explores the power relation between the DJ and the crowd in combination with the militaristic aesthetics common in these genres. By incorporating taboo and sexual fetishes, the industrial and electronic body music scene creates a playground that both imitates and subverts the power relations and structures of the outside world. Paulsson analyses the Amphi Festival in Cologne as a microcosm of this dark scene, and therefore an ideal place to examine how the relationship between power and pleasure is manifest within the club as a combat zone.

This edition also features two book reviews: Donna P. Hope’s *Man Vibes: Masculinities in the Jamaican Dancehall* (reviewed by Marvin D. Sterling), and Tim Lawrence’s *Hold on to Your Dreams: Arthur Russell and the Downtown Music Scene, 1973–92* (reviewed by Charlie de Ledesma). We’re also proud to feature original cover artwork by Chicago artist Randy Stearns.

Interestingly, these accounts of DJ culture—despite differing temporal and geographic contexts—describe DJ culture as primarily a “masculine” pursuit. These articles bear witness to profound technological and cultural change while nevertheless reminding us that some things have changed little across time, space, format and technology. Another common thread in contributions is technological development and its centrality to power dynamics. As technological conditions transform, actors in DJ culture reassert their positions, ideals and philosophies. These are opportunities for further explorations in DJ culture.

We’re deeply grateful to all the contributors to this special issue, as well as to the hard-working reviewers and editors who helped shape the issue into what it is. And we’re especially thankful to our readers, without whom this is all only noise. As guest editors and DJs we are happy to mix the inspiring voices of our contributors, allowing for endless new approaches, interpretations and conversations.

ANNA GAVANAS and BERNARDO ALEXANDER ATTIAS
GUEST EDITORS, SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE DJ