
APOCALYPSO DISCO: LA RAVE-O-LUZIONE DELLA POST TECHNO

RICCARDO BALLI

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An absolute insider of the international underground electronic music scene for 20 years or so, Riccardo Balli is the best conceivable Charon for those who weren't there and want to get at least a flavour of what it was—and still is—all about. But beware, Balli is neither a music critic nor a music historian. Rather, a DJ, label owner, composer, novelist, live performer and, above all, a relentless experimenter in every domain of cultural production, Balli has now released a book whose main aim is to *resist* historification—a process which, as anyone acquainted with the Situationists knows, is inherently akin to museification and death (or, worse, sell out).

Apocalypso Disco mixes fiction, autobiographic memories, interviews, recipe books, alchemical hints, sci-fi scenes and philosophical-anthropological asides to cheer up the reader during an intense, disorderly yet coherent promenade to the netherworld of unconventional electronics. One additional clarification: the subtitle of *Apocalypso Disco*, which reads “The rave-o-lution of post-techno”, is best understood as *not* implying that there is something inherently revolutionary about rave music. Far from that. Indeed, the whole of Balli's book can be read as a call to bring the revolution *into* conventional rave and hardcore dance music, which are but the mirror of the zombie culture in which we currently live.

The quintessential embodiment of *décadence* and “postindustrial alienation”, these genres still carry with them a dormant potential of resistance, which can only be shaken by the Nietzschean cry that cuts across the pages of *Apocalypso Disco*: “Noize is politics!”. In a Philip K. Dick-inspired pastiche, “Folly for seven ghettoblaster”, with reference to the short novel *Clans of the Alphane Moon*, Balli fictionally stages such a deadly *meeting of styles*, where delegates from different music tribes—house, gabber, Goa trance, minimal, hip-hop, dub/ragga, jungle—need to face jointly an illegal entry into their territories by a mysterious dr Snorri Sturlason, former researcher at the Rhythm Department and currently suspected of being involved with the no less mysterious Fulcanelli Records. All the tribes are quite aware that, with his load of illicit mixadelic substances, Sturlason poses a grave threat to their society of “Psychic Release” . . .

Such is the allure of the anti-historification exercise entertained by Balli in *Apocalypso Disco*. Contrary to other genres of underground music, Balli claims, electronic music has the potential to directly set “the brainframe” of the dancer—yes, a mind-control talk that comes straight out of a 1950s sci-fi movie. Yet Balli’s emphasis on the directly *affective* experience of the electronic dance floor is well understandable by anyone who has ever attended one of his sulphurous DJ sets: with joyful irreverence, parody, prankish attitude, and a certain nerdish citationist *goût* for obscure trash-pop references appositely mixed with occultist and high-brow sources, DJ Balli routinely serves his mash-up of sounds, a hotchpotch that is the essential counterpart to the theory and analyses outlined in the pages of his book.

So, *Apocalypso Disco* is really a book that comes straight out of lived experience—as the funny slice-of-life sketch about vinyl self-distribution in Central-Eastern Europe makes clear. This is also why a large chunk of the book, nearly half of it, is left to the voices of Balli’s “comrades in arms”, including musicians, machine builders, party organizers, turntablists, innovators of all sorts, who are the undisputed protagonists of the underground electronic music scene since the Dead by Dawn parties at the anarchist 121 Centre in early-1990s Brixton, London. With names such as Christoph Fringeli, Aphasic, Slepicy, Eitherherd and Sansculotte, it is difficult to resist the temptation of historification, yet Balli manages to actually have them talk a lot about music at the technical level and, *ça va sans dire*, at the political level.

GLOBAL TRIBE: TECHNOLOGY, SPIRITUALITY & PSYTRANCE

GRAHAM ST JOHN

Sheffield: Equinox, 2012.

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The culmination of over a decade of research in the field—in the heat and dust of deserts, forests and beaches; the mysticism and anarchy of doofs, burns, eclipses and solstices—Graham St John’s *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality & Psytrance* undertakes a definitive exploration of global psytrance cultures. Beginning with a much-needed history of the Western “traveller” figure that cultivated a life of ecstatic exile on the beaches of Goa, India, St John explores the influence of the Goa scene’s psychedelic aesthetics upon the development of “psyculture” and its frenetic, rapturous and at times spiritual electronic dance music known as “psytrance”. The story of psyculture, St John writes, begins with Western hippie travellers gathering in Goa, where anarchic assemblies of counterculture drop-outs threw psychedelic beach parties that combined mysticism, entheogens and “cosmo rock” music in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, Goa as a place and musical aesthetic slowly transformed itself, shedding jam-band psychedelic rock and embracing the all-night dance rituals of DJ culture. Turning to first-hand accounts from the scene’s founders and figures (including a chapter on Goa Gil as well as earlier progenitors), St John details Goa’s countercultural and musical shifts, describing the progression of cultural conflicts that shaped its eventual turn to electronic music, before becoming the spiritual and symbolic home of the genre and subcultural aesthetic known as “psytrance” in the 1990s. With intensity, passion and an exquisite attention to detail, St John describes how “Goa”, as a signifier for a mythic space and time of privileged freedom for Western drop-outs, became synonymous with electronic trance music, “Orientalist” psychedelic aesthetics and shamanic approaches to DJ mixology and participant dance rituals.

After explicating Goa’s history, St John turns to psyculture scenes worldwide. Crafting an engaging and enlightening journey through its many festivals and events, St John draws upon extensive participant interviews and historical testimony as he unfolds the past and present state of psyculture happenings and festivals. Speaking with dancers, DJs, promoters, producers, writers, artists and travellers, St John reports in from the edges of the dancefloor, describing how psyculture has become an enduring and rich dimension of electronic dance music culture that continues to pursue peaceful, collective living in sonic celebration.

The text ramps up in intensity as St John strives to articulate traveller identity to the qualitative values that emerge from psyculture. Reporting in from over a decade of travels to psycultures events around the globe, St John theorizes the ontology of the traveller, describing how the Western drop-out explores “being-in-transit” by pursuing, and re-creating, the entheonautic exploration of altered states first pioneered on Anjuna beach. The many insightful and often provocative passages of *Global Tribe* are born out of St John’s dedication to being-in-transit as a means of self-transformation and ethnographic exploration.

Drawing upon the language deployed among field participants—in workshops, encounters, flyers and internet forums, but also album and track titles, liner notes and ephemera—St John cultivates an exhaustive conceptual lexicon in which to address and theorize psyculture. The peculiar flavours of the idiom places demands upon the reader, as St John often writes with the impact of experiential shorthand. Concepts such as *neotrance* and *trance carnival*, or that of *being-in-transit* and the various permutations of *(neo)liminality*, undertake the analytical labour in forging precise meanings and contexts for the cultural (and at times political) framework of *exodus*. These and other concepts explore dimensions of psycultural *exile*, wherein participants pursue ecstatic belongings by undertaking transformational reconstructions of the self. By differentiating his theoretical usages from the texts of Mikhail Bakhtin, Hakim Bey, Gilles Deleuze, Victor Turner and Georges Bataille, St John nuances these base concepts and contextualizes their application through experiential ethnography, developing their complex meanings through various contexts, personages and events under consideration as well as positioning conceptual developments within a tour-de-force reading of psyculture music and EDMC studies literature. My only regret with St John’s conceptual arsenal is that it has not been explicated further. Though Turner receives some attention, readers not familiar with the above figures will find themselves seeking context and illustration elsewhere.

St John calls his ethnographical approach that of the “socionaut”, whereby participant interviews but also immersion in the field with the musical and social fabric of psychonautical experiencing is interwoven with media studies approaches to electronic music and art. In short: without judgement or moralism, entheogens are ingested, described and reiterated as integral to the force and form of psyculture belongings and experiences. The resulting textual blend is intoxicating, sometimes dizzying, and the densely packed style of the opening chapters can be a tad overwhelming even to those familiar with the literature and the psycultures at hand. But once St John settles into a mid-tempo groove, particularly in the memorable account of Portugal’s Boom festival—at ~25, 000 souls for seven days, the largest psytrance gathering in the world—his rapid accumulation of observations reveal a wealth of insights that, once unpacked, challenge what might be termed simplistic readings of psyculture, or EDMCs in general. St John challenges readings that would see psyculture as but a consumerist, nihilist or hedonist practice, and dismisses moralising tendencies that mask as critical scholarship. St John also ably demonstrates the uneven but exciting embrace of ecologically sustainable practices and collectivist and environmentalist political ideals by

psyculture festivals like Boom.

St John is, indeed, quite critical of texts that are themselves critical of psyculture. While at times this approach is refreshing, it can lend itself to its own contradictions. I wish to turn to several crucial questions in St John's text while recognising that I do so at the pain of glossing over substantial theorisations of "edge work" and the transformations of "ritual" practice within modern life that are intriguingly analyzed by St John as permutations upon (Turner's) "post-liminal liminality" (163). *Global Tribe* is ambitious in its efforts to outline and delimit psyculture's alternate dreamworlds and collective fantasies of ideal belonging. By immersing himself into the festival-traveller matrix without reserve, and by embracing a shift away from a moral limit towards a physical one (310), St John does not shy away from contemplating the abyssal search for greater meaning in our planetary-bound existence. If I now turn to problematics of race and gender, Orientalism and neocoloniality, it is to raise issues that often trouble the whole of EDMC studies and not just St John's socionautic approaches to psyculture.

St John defines his ethnographic approach as attending to the complexities of the unfolding event, emphasizing the participant diversity of psyculture as resisting grand narratives. The incommensurability of multi-perspectival subjectivities is utilized to denounce theoretical critiques of psyculture for the error of their "one dimensional discourses". This boundary operation is particularly the case with St John's critique of Arun Saldanha's *Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race*, a work that St John critiques as "empirically flawed race reductionism" (286).

Saldanha's research focuses on the viscous grouping of white bodies in Goa as authenticating the subcultural experience of psytrance, arguing that "subculturally pure in Anjuna comes to mean racially pure" (2007: 127–131). For his part, St John critiques Saldanha's ethnography, arguing that, contrary to Saldanha's observations of early-morning dancefloors, Goan psyculture is more ethnically diverse and inclusive than Saldanha claims. But it is at this point that ethnographic observation faces the greater problematic of an institutional whiteness encoded in historical relations of power and privilege. Given the very nature, or rather, construct of "Goa" as a site of privileged exile for Western drop-outs—a point that St John readily acknowledges (73)—it would be amiss not to address the global role of white privilege in establishing (psytrance) traveller cultures. There is some irony to the fact that, in the era of anticolonial struggles and the Civil Rights movement, middle-classed Western whites undertook "elective exodus" from the "maladies of modern life" by jetting off to non-white "developing" countries (73). In a post/neocolonial country like India, where the maladies of modern life present more extreme manifestations than those of the West, white travellers exclusively benefit from a historically-troublesome socioeconomic privilege that underscores the *exclusive* mobility, or "freedom", of the *traveller*—a figure that needs to be counterposed not just to the "tourist", as St John suggests in his boundary work around psyculture, but to the *refugee*. Other privileges in psyculture remain on the periphery to St John's analysis; thus the privilege of (white) males, as DJs and scenesters, is asserted in the otherwise absence of women in psyculture's founding tales.

St John's text also remains ambiguous as to the analytic value of the distinction between psyculture "travellers" and erstwhile "tourists"—especially when the "domestic tourist" stands in for Indian nationals visiting a scenic region of their own country. At times St John appears to champion the Deleuzian definition of "traveller" by Anthony D'Andrea (66)—global nomads whose "smooth space" is contrasted to the "striatic space of dwellers"—while elsewhere he points out how the concept blurs in "vertical/horizontal 'lines of flight'" (332), as the distinction between tourist/traveller, nomad/dweller breaks down in practice (precisely because of privilege). Critics of Deleuze, such as Žižek, would point out that Deleuze's concepts of flow (as embodied in the traveller-nomad) are not resistant to capitalist relations of exploitation but rather are the privileged conditions of them. The crucial issue, as reflected in the work of Saldanha, is that the psyculture distinction of tourist/traveller masks a hierarchy of racialisation that ensures the "subcultural purity" of the "Goan tribe" in what Sara Ahmed calls institutional whiteness. The issue is not that Goan psyculture today is specifically or totally white—Saldanha likewise acknowledges its diverse and multinational characteristics—but, as Saldanha writes, "most *probably* white. Hence psychedelics isn't antithetical to white modernity" (2007: 6). In short, psyculture is, and like globalized (post)modernity, *default white*: it commences from the place of privileged whiteness and extends its hegemony. Like all such projects of white modernity, psyculture unavoidably exhibits what Edward Said called "Orientalist" attitudes of white tourism to the "exotic". St John's position is complex around these issues and far from antithetical to their points—he observes how "the trappings of tripping in the East continue to be deployed to make the hard sell" (332)—thus noting how psyculture is implicated within the "exoticism" of self-reflexive modernity and the very tourism industry that caters to and reinvents the figure of the traveller. At the same time, and understandably so, St John wants to substantiate the experiential claims of psyculture as undertaking an exodus that escapes something of (post)modernity's racialized neocolonialism.

It is from an ethnographical and molecular stance (in the Deleuzian sense of studying dynamic masses instead of molar totalities) that St John critiques Saldanha's ethnography for failing to recognize the ethnic plurality of psycultural bodies (66–71). For St John, Saldanha privileges theory over practice. However, the reciprocal relation between theory and practice raises the question as to how one practices theory, and theorizes practice. Saldanha carefully aligns his analysis within a Deleuzian, biomaterialist construct of racialized "viscosity"; a theory that St John praises for its innovation, though if so it begs the question as to why he doesn't support its observations. For Saldanha, the problem is precisely that of theorising the observation of racialized phenomena: all is not what appears when observing the construct of race. It is theory that problematizes the observer. Saldanha, turning to the molecularity of race as it approaches the molar, points out how a kind of racialized flocking behaviour of whiteness—a "viscosity" of white bodies on the dancefloor, a clumping of whiteness—not just discourages nonwhite bodies from participating in psyculture, but performs the primordial state of its subcultural authenticity. Hence "psychedelic white": a default-white-psychedelia that transcends the *fact* of diverse bodies (Saldanha 2007: 6). Saldanha argues that the *fact* of diverse bodies in psyculture does not

make *psychedelia*, as the “mystical structure of feeling . . . epitomized in the sixties cult of LSD,” any *less* of a white cultural project (6). Whiteness *is* the metaphysics of modernity that schematizes embodied privilege in psyculture.

Countering Saldanha’s claims, St John cites scholarship contending that there are Indian DJs, promoters, “diasporic insiders” and “revered *sadhus*” (67) in Goan psyculture. Yet—and perhaps here we need to raise the question of Gayatri Spivak’s “native informant”, that name for the mark of expulsion from the ethical *subject* of humanity—nowhere in *Global Tribe* do we hear the words and stories of nonwhite psyculture participants. Their narratives are not included alongside those of their white, Western, male progenitors, from DJ Laurent to Goa Gil to Eight Finger Eddie. If Indians are indeed prominent within the Goan scene—as other scholars such as D’Andrea assert—then why are they not also prominent within the ethnographic text, their accounts woven into the history of Goan psyculture, the cadence and rhythm of their voices granted recognition? In the ethnographic field as a whole, there remains a lacunae: a comprehensive account of Goan DJs and *saddhus*, scenesters and locals, but also Indian visitors, tourist operators and spectators—all those others classified as but “tourists”, not real “travellers”—remains to be seen.

The erasure or rather pronounced colouring of race is—as it often is—entwined with that of protecting (white) female bodies from the Other. Here, gender arises as the troubled site of predation. St John cites an account—entitled “Women of Goa” by the anonymous internet handle Lava 303—of how “predatory domestic tourists” (read: non-white Indians) often harass white women. As St John rightly points out, the “ever-present threat of sexual assault” is not “intrinsically Indian (or racial)” (67). Yet, neither Lava 303 nor St John address that such misogyny is faced by not only white women, but *all* women, and overwhelmingly by women of colour. By just pointing out violence against white women in Goa, the threat of sexual assault *that Indian women face daily* is left unaddressed (as is Goa’s sex tourism industry). Lava 303’s account also singles out Israelis for “special attention,” charging that they treat Goa like “their new colony . . . another Promised Land” (in St John 2012: 67). Here, again, is an exception within an exception: why is it that Israelis are singled out but not the Westernized “travellers” who first made Goa into a promised playground for Western fantasies of an exotic Eden?

Something of this question is addressed in chapter seven of *Global Tribe*, in what might be deemed St John’s “critical turn” towards problematic aspects of psyculture in Israeli and Australian (though not Goan) case studies. Various languages and mechanisms of exclusion (in the case of Israel) and indigeneous appropriation (Australia) are discussed, as well as critiques of Israeli psyculture “enclaves” that exhibit neocolonial role-playing (236). Here, “elitism” signifies the hierarchial ordering between insiders/outsideers as travellers/tourists. As St John writes, “ethnic-oriented identifications . . . reveals elitism internal to psychedelic tribalism, where the freak ethos of a ‘global tribe’ competes with the realities of ‘tribal boundaries’ maintained through ongoing acts of distinction” (245). I believe this is a much needed statement, and that its framework demands to be rethought in the context of psyculture’s historical and global project, beginning with the site of its mythical origin in Goa. Also, the ability of “elitism” to encompass the problematics

of race, gender and coloniality above is uncertain. In *Global Tribe*, “elitism” everywhere stands in for *intersectional privilege*—a phrase that bell hooks would amplify to “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”. At the very least, elitism is understood as the convergence of racialisation to gender-inequality in the context of neocolonial relations, and as such, remains somewhat inadequate as an analytic signifier.

St John’s emphasis in *Global Tribe* is on the experiential and the diversity of individuated trajectories as undermining a totalising critique that would obliterate such differentiations. Psychocultural subjectivity is, for St John, simply too many to be ascertained in one conceptual schema. Pointing out the numerous possible experiences of the *Western* traveller, St John acknowledges that some, but not all “other [travellers] devoured the imaginary (Oriental) other in orgies of consumption, while excluding domestic Indians from the party” (69). Yet while acknowledging such exclusion, St John rejects Saldanha’s observations of Goa as embodying, in its viscosity of psychedelic white, precisely this statement.

While psychoculture travellers today include “passport holders from many countries” (201), telling assumptions as to a default Westernized psychoculture are everywhere produced. In the closing chapter, St John quotes a musician describing how his sonic desire is to “rendezvous with the exotic, being intimate with the authentic experience”, what St John elsewhere analyzes as the Orientalist *aesthetics* of psytrance that sample—some would say appropriate—“Eastern and native imagery” (332). In another moment, a psychoculture reveller describes the marginalisation of the psytrance stage at the 2009 Symbiosis festival, writing that: “Very segregated, I almost felt like a black man, in the 50s at this party” (277). Such offhand but telling quotes, as well as the troubled use of “ethnodelic”, signal an unthought default-white privilege that appropriates as well as exoticizes the Other.

In a carefully writ but defensive section, St John seeks to explicate psychoculture’s Orientalism, an *aesthetics* that is all-too-prevalent to anyone that has seen psytrance album covers and their multi-coloured buddhas, shivas and rainbow *saddhus*. However, St John concludes that “while Goatrance has been demonstrated to have had an aesthetic romance with Orientalism, this story does not infuse its ‘neotribal’ mobilization” (69). Psychoculture romanticizes Orientalism without being Orientalist; it is difficult to ascertain how the two can be kept apart. There is little critical value to an “*aesthetics*” if it is to be thought as distinct from the subjectivities of being-in-transit that articulate the ontologies and significations of belonging to psychoculture. It is just as unclear how neotribalism escapes “*aesthetic*” neocolonialism; it cannot be described as entirely “off the grid” of neoliberalism, as St John otherwise contends (163). Psychoculture is very good at consuming and selling lifestyle products designed to facilitate “the self [as] a project, revisable and upgradeable” (172), products that sell you “freedom of choice” (162), the latter a tenet of psychoculture and a classical tenet of (neo)liberalism.

That Orientalism impacts more than *aesthetics* is also on view when discussing the figure of the “primitive” in psychoculture, or what St John calls the “soft primitive” as the “visage of the Aboriginal, Amerindian or Amazonian invented as a figure of primal unity” (206). In other discourses, such inventions have been known by the term *noble savage*. In a brief few

sentences—and again, one wishes there was simply *more* on what are troubled topics—St John mentions his attendance at Germany’s “Indian Spirit Festival”, which has “typically deployed totem poles, dream catchers and feathered head-dresses to promote and decorate its vibe” (206). Thieving cultural artifacts from the Other to heighten the white vibe has its canonical representations. Yet St John asserts the complexity of the practice, noting that “when I attended the 2010 edition of Indian Spirit and anticipated a galaxy of Amerindian signs consumed by crowds ravenous for the primitive, my expectations were not met, and could not determine attendance as evidence of one’s complicity in neocolonial practice” (206). How these “ravenous” neocolonial expectations were not met is left unclear. What would meet such expectations if attendance at a festival complicit with cultural appropriation is not enough? The title alone signals the trappings of neocoloniality: no “ravenous” displays are needed if thieving the other’s cultural artifacts as fashion-accessories is *normalized*. It is here that a structural contradiction resonates from an unexplicated ethical assumption: why is it perfectly acceptable for European whites to stage racialized appropriations of Other cultures, but not for India’s “domestic tourists” to watch (with amusement, no doubt) the half-naked, high whites dancing to trance music at Anjuna?

Even as St John is right to critique “one dimensional discourses” that would *only* situate psyculture as *but* an Orientalist project based upon a limited ethnographical encounter, the contradictions resulting from overstating this position suggest that an alternate approach might be found that incorporates the likes of Saldanha’s critical insights. Such a project would not need to deny psyculture’s (undeniable) radical exodus but would rather further it by accelerating escape velocity *from* psychedelic white. “Goa” is constructed out of a history of white traveller privilege that is at odds with the transformational values of the Other cultures that psyculture exoticizes and appropriates. In other EDMC festival cultures, critical moves have been made to counteract such appropriations, based upon consultation with local indigenous populations (such as Canada’s Bass Coast Festival banning “Indian headdresses” in 2014).

When unbound from white privilege, psyculture catalyzes what St John calls a collective “being-in-transit” that abandons ethnonationalist constraints, turning instead to the dreamdancing of cosmic community. Yet this radical abandonment takes as its condition of possibility the ongoing globalization of (white) privilege, one which, if effaced for the purposes of championing exodus, only results in recoding its radical project as (yet another) institutional whiteness. In handling these complex issues around EDMCs, St John offers a provocative, detailed and insightful reading of psyculture that—like the best texts written from the most challenging conditions of the field—poses more questions than it answers.

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THE VARIETIES OF ECSTASY EXPERIENCE:
AN EXPLORATION OF PERSON, MIND AND BODY IN SYDNEY'S CLUB CULTURE
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This monograph is a reprint of Sean Leneghan's doctoral thesis in anthropology, an ethnography of those that consume *3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine*, an illegal amphetamine sold under the name MDMA, or *ecstasy*. The thesis examines narratives by ecstasy users concerning its effects and role in their participation in Sydney, Australia's underground club culture. In the process, Leneghan questions standard bio-medical and bio-psychological studies of ecstasy, arguing that the standard methodology is overly mechanistic and/or materialistic, and ignores the lived experience of ecstasy-altered consciousness. Instead, Leneghan thoroughly documents firsthand narratives of the ecstasy lifestyle in the participants' own idiomatic language, allowing him to take a "holistic organismic" approach to analyzing the overall, lived processes which inform their language. This is termed "processual morphology".

Leneghan situates this process within a methodological framework informed by existential phenomenology, with the work of philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) as the foundation for his analysis, asserting that the Husserlian *Lebenswelt* (Ger: life-world or 'lived experience') concept should be considered when discussing his subjects. More specifically, Leneghan suggests that Stephen Strasser's conception of the *Lebenswelt*, and how a "world arises in dialogue" (37), should be considered in bio-medical investigations of amphetamine-influenced consciousness. Failing to do so essentially reinforces the academic status quo. This current state of affairs, to Leneghan, amounts to a refusal to critically examine bio-medical/psychological pre-suppositions and foundations of the *Lebenswelt*, reinforcing frameworks that "reify the living subject" (210).

More specifically, Leneghan argues that the experience of actually using ecstasy and modifying one's own stream of consciousness is a unique reality, which should be investigated as another lived world, rather than an altered or non-ordinary state of consciousness (209). The language of describing the ecstasy-induced state has, to Leneghan, been ignored or dismissed. In one sense I would agree with that dismissal, as Leneghan's subjects describe this "lived world" after the fact. None are interviewed while actually *on* ecstasy, and thus

their language is not truly based in the actual lived world of ecstasy intoxication, ergo the real language of ecstasy is missing.

Regardless, Leneghan seeks to create a “dialogal ethnography”, which would allow him to “faithfully bring to light and clarify the direct experiential stream of consciousness of ecstasy consumers [sic] mode of being-in-the-world” (209–10). His reportage consists of several themes organized under the rubrics: initial reactions, the rush, PLUR (peace, love, understanding, respect), unificatory experiences, and so on. This context-specific approach to phenomenological ethnography, Leneghan suggests, can make a significant contribution to Australian and international drug research.

Leneghan’s phenomenology is admittedly Husserlian in that experience is considered significant knowledge, though not science in itself. Through the act of “bracketing”, the phenomenologist puts aside *noumena* (things) for the analysis of *phenomena* (how we experience things), isolating objects in order to know what we think they are, and thus understand how we feel while experiencing them. This creates an ontology of experience-as-reality, and not what one might call the “objectively real”; we separate the physical facts of the tree from the experience of sitting underneath it. The potential problem with this, though, is that one can treat what is noumenal as a *parergon*: a supplement, framed out and away from experience, an accessory to experience.

The Greek meaning of *parergon* (παρεργου) is “subordination”, or “what is of secondary importance”. In early Greek philosophy, *parerga* (pl.) are that which have nothing to do with philosophy proper, things that are “not subject to rigorous philosophical investigation” (Krell 2000: 27). Bracketing and separating the material or mechanistic perspective would seem to remove it from the dialectic of ecstasy research, the continuum in which a full dialogue is possible. But Leneghan vigorously argues that bio-medical research brackets the language and *Lebenswelt* of the ecstasy user, discounting its role in a thorough sociological and/or psychological investigation of ecstasy use in Sydney.

In this sense, the materialist *parergon* takes on the Kantian definition; what is not “an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation” of an object (Kant 2007: 57), e.g. the frame on a painting or drapery on a statue. Though Kant’s argument was within the realm of aesthetic judgment, the line of reasoning could also be used to justify ecstasy language not belonging in academic dialogue for aesthetic reasons, that such “aestheticism” has no empirical value in academic research. Indeed, Leneghan states that the two aesthetic reports of ecstasy experience contained in the book are “an example of the user’s imagination augmenting what sense perception takes as given in the empirical world” (115). But are such augmentations true? Do they have epistemological value?

Such augmentation is also at the heart of debate about ontological truth in aesthetics. At the core of the debate is a dialectic that places a Romantic view of art, e.g. August Schlegel (essential truths are known through art, not science), at odds with the post-aesthetics of Martin Heidegger and his assertion aesthetic qualities obscure, not elucidate, fundamental truths. How then do the users augment “what sense perception takes as a given in the empirical world”? In this case, the augmentation comes in the form of the research participants’ language, how they describe their experiences.

Leneghan documents, for example, one user's experience of the negative effects of ecstasy (121). He states "reactions through the digestive system can sometime lead to nausea, cramps, and vomiting", and quotes the user "HeL" who says:

It's like my stomach! It's just so empty ... 'Oohhh' ... and you get 'chemi-guts;' like you haven't eaten in a day an [sic] a half, except for pills and base and things like that; and all your stomach is doing is turning in those drugs and stomach acids and things like that. You just go "arrggg – *I feel sick, need to eat – but can't.*" Cause food is not right – right now (121).

The description does not speak to a unique ecstasy reality though, but rather the common effects of adverse gastrointestinal reaction. Thus Leneghan is utilizing bio-medical analysis, albeit with the user's less than scientific description as a result. As Leneghan is dismissive of the bio-medical status quo, does the user's account then enhance sociological understanding of ecstasy cramps accurately? The answer, in this case, would seem to be no.

The ethnography does read well as a narrative, or set of narratives, if not a typical academic anthropological work. As much as it is a work of research, its usage of extensive interview material and a glossary of ecstasy slang provide a solid bridge between ethnographic analysis and the lived conditions of ecstasy use, club culture and meaning making in real time. As such, it could be argued that its contents challenge current bio-medical paradigms through Leneghan's decision to include such narratives in academia in the first place. Thus it is an act of merging or "transculturating" his own existential phenomenology by "un-bracketing" it, and updating its status from paragon to *ergon*: a work or act that also accomplishes the goals of medical and psychological ethnography via lived narratives of non-ordinary consciousness. Unfortunately, though, Leneghan's work may be disregarded for reasons other than his methodology.

Upon further investigation it turns out that the book's publisher LAP (Lambert Academic Publishing) is owned by VDM Verlag, both of which are considered by some to behave unethically, due to such practices as selling works created entirely from (free) Wikipedia content. Also, there seems to be no editorial process in place, as Leneghan's *Acknowledgements* section credits photographer Darren Hart for work that does not actually appear in the book (17). Thus, the fact that Leneghan's work is affiliated with Lambert at all might raise questions as to its veracity.

But, if the work is epistemologically sound, one could argue that it does not matter who publishes it. Leneghan's work is an interesting contribution to his field; a well-documented ethnography that will hopefully engender debate about phenomenology, if not non-ordinary consciousness.

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THE DIGITAL MUSICIAN (SECOND EDITION)

ANDREW HUGILL

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The second edition of *The Digital Musician* is an expansive book reflecting more than ten years of research by the author and examining the complex nexus of creativity, cultural awareness, performance and sound production. In this volume, Andrew Hugill argues that the development of an individual creative voice is an essential ingredient of musical creativity, far more significant to creating innovative music than whatever tools or techniques one might use. As noted in the preface, the title of the book refers to all musicians working creatively with sound. This broad definition embraces EDM creators.

Since its first edition (2008), the book has been intended as an educational tool. The second edition has been redesigned and expanded to be of further significance to university and college students of music technology courses, covering both theoretical and practical approaches to electronic and electroacoustic music. The title of the book might lead potential readers to believe that the subject matter focuses on developments in music production technologies. Yet this is not the case and the author quickly dispels such misconceptions. As Hugill explains, the book is not a reference manual for computer music production (xiv), and he dutifully leaves such investigations to other authors and numerous books that already exist. Instead of technical advice, the book is a vast resource of creative projects that can expand the imagination of digital musicians. These suggested projects are categorised in relation to the level of complexity, and as such can be used by educators for classroom exercises or source material useful in designing course assignments. In addition, the book features an expansive list of annotated listening examples, which illustrate each of the discussed topics. These help to validate cultural, artistic and philosophical issues discussed in the text, and have the added benefit of providing historical context for each chapter. The educational aspect of the book is further exemplified by the inclusion of reading suggestions and discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

An important feature of *The Digital Musician* is the companion website, intended to expand the book's content by providing additional material as well as web links to discussed music and other relevant websites. However, several of these links are now invalid or expired.

Despite this shortcoming, the website features a wealth of material that complements the book, and includes expanded information on the case study artists and suggestions for further projects, the latter being of particular educational use. The new version of the book brings some revisions of the content featured on the companion website—for example, the first edition was accompanied by MusiMoo (Adkins 2009, Hugill 2005a), an interactive online educational environment, which has now been removed.

The revised edition features a new layout and structure. New chapters have been added and now the book consists of four distinct parts: Engaging, Creating, Knowing and Being. The first part poses questions related to forging one's creative identity and expanding aural awareness. This is a logical starting point, as the above-mentioned elements are fundamental in shaping the unique voice of musicians working with digital technologies. The second part, Creating, is the largest in the volume and examines such topics as performance, sampling, synthesis, the compositional process and instruments. The chapter on synthesis exemplifies the analytical focus that permeates the book. In this chapter, Hugill does not offer an investigation into how to program a synthesizer, instead he focuses on aesthetics as well as on defining various types of synthesis available (103). In past research, Hugill examined creative uses of the Internet in music education, collaborative composition projects and the use of virtual environments (Hugill 2005b), and he continues to emphasise the benefits of networked sound and collaborative online work (81–3, 162–65), which is particularly relevant given the growing importance of the network space for music creation.

The third part, Knowing, discusses various issues related to critical judgement. In addition, this part outlines the cultural context for music with discussion of key critical theories and their application in “identifying certain cultural tendencies and phenomena” (203), and how this knowledge can assist in self-evaluation as a musician. The final part, Being, concentrates on examining practical aspects of being a digital musician with discussion on careers, promotion and business. It is also here that Hugill discusses the changing landscape of music education and training. He suggests that it should no longer be limited to formal musical training, since “a digital musician will benefit from education in a wide range of areas, and not just ‘music’” (256). This illustrates the significant challenge facing electronic musicians nowadays, as the demands of the marketplace require proficiency in a wide range of digital technologies as well as in conventional music. Aiming to “build up a picture of shared ideas and practices in digital music” (258), Hugill has collected qualitative data through interviews with sixteen international musicians with a range of experiences behind them. Through these interviews, artists reflect on key themes explored in the book, and this provides the framework for the final part of the volume.

The broad reach of Hugill's selected topics occasionally might leave readers craving more in-depth information. For example, the description of the “*rhythm*” musical tradition and the argument that various heavy-metal scenes are defined as belonging to a tradition having a “relative lack of interest in pitch” (4) seems to demand further justification. However, it could also be argued that more controversial statements can become starting points in debates, and are particularly useful in a classroom setting.

I had the opportunity to implement some of the book's recommended listening and suggested projects in the classroom for an undergraduate course in computer sound production, and found this content to be effective in the educational context. The scope of the book is a reflection of the vast array of issues that a contemporary electronic musician needs to reflect upon and address. While there is no shortage of books on many of the topics covered in Hugill's text, *The Digital Musician* is an important summary of key issues concerning music practitioners using digital technologies. As an electronic musician, I found the volume stimulating and as potentially prompting further investigation into the field. Indeed, the continuous encouragement to reach further, via a rich provision of additional reading and music resources, is one of the major strengths of the book. Hugill's avoidance of focusing on technical matters overcomes the challenge of fading relevance, which faces many publications that discuss digital technologies. The book skilfully combines discussions on aesthetics, musicianship and technology, and encourages further investigation of issues that have not been covered in depth due to lack of space. A large number of suggested project ideas, the sheer breadth of the covered topics and generous additional online material encourage experimentation and further study, and also foster creativity. *The Digital Musician* is a stimulating resource for students, educators and artists looking to expand their skills and examine their inspirations and motivations.

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POPULAR MUSIC FANDOM: IDENTITIES, ROLES AND PRACTICES

MARK DUFFETT (ED.)

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The study of music fandom is a relatively new area of academic interest within the wider field of popular music studies. This collection of essays offers a solid grounding in the burgeoning field. In the same way as Bennett, Shank and Toynbee's *Popular Music Studies Reader* (2006) was a reprise of Frith and Goodwin's *On Record* (1990), this book acts as an update of Lisa Lewis' *The Adoring Audience* (1992), one of the earliest, and now seminal, texts in the field. Twenty-two years later, *Popular Music Fandom* offers a new collection of fan perspectives on music from the 1950s to the 2000s that also touch on new technologies (such as the internet and social media) which now play a significant role in shaping music fandom.

Duffett's introductory chapter gives a detailed overview of both the history of fan studies and the problems that surround the study of fan culture. Many of the earliest studies of fan culture were in the area of film and television. While useful, they did not provide an adaptable framework for fan studies in popular music. Duffett notes that the lack of any kind of framework to analyse the unique set of practices that are associated with fandom is part of why literature on the topic is relatively rare compared to other areas of popular music studies. The reason for this, Duffett notes, is that "fandom does not fall neatly into easy processes of generalization: 'music fandom' is one term for a wide range of phenomena and identification occurring in a variety of different times and places, a term that encompasses a range of tastes, roles, identities and practices" (27).

While the intersection of many of these elements is what makes fandom studies such a fertile area for analysis, it also means that it often slips through the cracks between musicology (which is often concerned only with the text), sociology (which often views music through the window of subculture) and psychology (which relies on concepts sometimes contested by cultural studies). To study music fandom in a cohesive way, an interdisciplinary approach is needed to examine not only the practices themselves, but the relationships between them. As Duffett states, music fandom "combines a threshold of affective engagement with, variously or in combination, musical appreciation, music

practice, celebrity-following, social networking, dancing, collecting and self-expression” (27). *Popular Music Fandom* features chapters that touch on all of these “engagements”, from Roy Shuker’s overview of record collecting and appreciation, to Matt Hill’s chapter on the “celebrity-following” of specific music producers, to Cornel Sandvoss’ study of Ibiza and EDM through an analysis of online forums.

Of particular interest are the two chapters which deal directly with EDM and dance culture: Beate Peter’s “Beyond Capital, Towards Myth: EDM Fandom and Dance Practice” and Cornel Sandvoss’ “I Love Ibiza: Music, Place and Belonging”. Peter’s thoughtful consideration of fandom in Chapter Three uses EDM as a case study to better understand the complex issues that surround the creation and definition of fan cultures. Like many of the contributing authors, Peter explores the importance of a fluid framework for fandom studies in order to “reflect the contemporary state of social flux” (93). Further, this fluidity also takes into consideration that fandom is not always a lifelong commitment, and that fans may belong to many groups at the same time, or at different times throughout their lives.

The case study then explores the social and legal contexts around early rave music and how these definitions have changed (and still change) over time. From this, Peter threads together the social, psychological and philosophical to better understand EDM fandom and dance practice as both an individual and collective group experience—often at the same time. Myth-making has long been discussed as a thread that runs through popular music history (see Kelly and McDonnell 1999), and when applied to EDM, the creation and reliving of individual and shared “mythical” experience may help the reader to understand the deep loyalty expressed in dance music fandom.

Sandvoss’ investigation into the community surrounding the Ibiza EDM scene combines an anthropological framework with quantitative and qualitative data collection. This data was taken from a popular message board, the “Ibiza Spotlight” (launched in 1999). The thematic analysis covers 70,535 separate posts and is combined with Skype interviews with frequent posters. Through this extensive data collection, Sandvoss aims to address the question of whether one can be a fan of a “place” in the same way as a “text”, as both place and text are “socially constructed though symbols, discourses and representations” (244). This exploration raises some interesting ideas, particularly the detailed discussion of “vibe”, which, from the interviewee responses, seems a significant part of Ibiza’s lasting appeal. The “vibe” also encompasses feelings of fun, safety and acceptance, while also acknowledging the fluidity and temporality of the Ibiza EDM community. The idea of “vibe” in a social context is not dissimilar to “groove” in a musicological sense—we know when we have felt it, but it is often difficult to define in a precise way. Sandvoss does well in exploring this idea of “vibe”, an often intangible but important component of many fandoms.

Large-scale studies such as Sandvoss’ allow for data to be arranged in many different ways, and for both small and broad-scale trends to be uncovered. However, with so much data available for analysis, it is disappointing that it is used so infrequently in the chapter. Instead, most analysis is specifically focused on interview comments. Similarly, while the chapter

outlines many of the positive experiences surrounding Ibiza, there is no acknowledgement of those who may not have had the transcendent community experience those on the message board recounted. Negative reports from posters may also be a part of the fan experience in Ibiza—what happens when the myth of Ibiza is shattered for EDM fans?

In addition to chapters focusing specifically on dance music, other notable contributions include Matt Hill's exploration of fandom around record production. While analyses of record production are beginning to increase in frequency in popular music studies, very few cover the fandom *around* record production. Similarly, Roy Shuker's analysis of why fans feel the desire to collect records, or engage in "completism", also covers ground often missed by sociological studies of popular music. Nedim Hassan's investigation of fan practices in the domestic environment illuminates experiences so common to many that they are often overlooked; they still involve both music and social interaction, which makes them important to studies of fandoms. Each chapter offers something engaging for the reader, whether or not you are familiar with or enjoy the kind of music each fandom surrounds.

One criticism of *Popular Music Fandom* is that while it covers areas of sociology, anthropology and psychology well, it is missing any connection to musicology. Chapters discuss various kinds of music; however, with the exception of Matt Hill's occasional citing of musical examples, there are no references to any musicological elements in relation to the fandom that surrounds them. While focusing on the "text" is certainly not at the centre of fan studies, some connection with it may contribute to answers about *what* fans fall in love with and why.

Reading through *Popular Music Fandom* encouraged me to reflect on my own experience as a music fan, and of the many fandoms I have inhabited over the course of my musical and academic career—after all, our early love of music is usually what fuels the curiosity to want to understand more deeply the strange, enjoyable, giddy experience of being a "fan". As a collection of chapters, ideas and analyses, *Popular Music Fandom* offers a varied, interesting and important contribution to the growing area of fandom and fan culture studies that is certain to influence further research.

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