JOANA FREITAS
Email: joanareisfreitas@fcsh.unl.pt

STEVEN GAMBLE
Email: info@stevengamble.com

MARIA PEREVEDENTSEVA
Email: m.perevedentseva@salford.ac.uk

EDWARD KATRAK SPENCER
Email: e.c.k.spencer@uu.nl

JENESSA WILLIAMS
Email: jenessa@stanford.edu

A Collective Vision for Researching Popular Music and Online Cultures

Introduction to JPMS *special issue "Popular Music and Online Cultures"*

INTRODUCTION

It has been over thirty years since the World Wide Web entered the public domain, a history that coincides with our generational identity as editors of this special issue. The "social media" era that began during the mid-2000s saw the web becoming increasingly embedded, embodied, and everyday in many parts of the world,[1] alongside the development of vernacular notions of "internet culture." Such widespread and quotidian web use has had a significant impact on what popular music is, and—to borrow Christopher Small's[2] framing—*how people music(k)*. The mass uptake of internet technologies has in turn affected music as an object of scholarly and empirical inquiry, as much recent work has reflexively demonstrated.[3] Many popular music scholars are eager to keep pace with

1. Christine Hine, *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday* (Routledge, 2015), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003085348.

2. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

3. Holly Rogers et al., eds., *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2023); Steven Gamble, *Digital Flows: Online Hip Hop Music and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2024); Maria Perevedentseva, "Electronic Dance Music and the Discursive Web: Interpreting Value, Sociality and Knowledge Construction on Boomkat.com," in *Music and the Internet: Methodological, Epistemological, and Ethical Orientations*, ed. Christopher Haworth et al. (Routledge, 2026); Edward Katrak Spencer, "Web-Based Ways of Listening: Reinventing Empirical Musicology in the Age of Social Media," in *New Methods and New Challenges in Empirical Musicology*, ed. Fanny Gribenski and Clément Cannone (Oxford University Press, 2026); Jenessa Williams, *Music Fandom in the Age of #MeToo: Morality Crowdsourcing, Racialised Cancellation and Complicated Listening Habits in Online Hip-Hop and Indie-Alternative Communities* (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2024).

Journal of Popular Music Studies, Volume 37, Number 4, pp. 1–18, Electronic ISSN: 1533-1598 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/jpms.2025.37.4.1

digital transformations to music culture, while neighboring disciplines offer a range of critical perspectives on the subject as well as useful methodological principles. A growing number of early career scholars attuned to digital culture are now focusing on the intersections between popular music and online culture, and some established music scholars are re-specializing. This emerging disciplinary priority indicates a need for rigorous reconsiderations of how the multiple intersections between popular music and online culture can be studied together. To this end, this special issue provides a set of vantage points that both recognize key developments associated with music(king) as an online phenomenon and anticipate imminent social and technological paradigm shifts.

Reflections on how the internet has influenced popular music culture are often characterized by discursive extremes, with platform pressures and corporate technological constraints pitted against user creativity and agency. There are also conventional narratives of how music and the internet developed in tandem; narratives that may already be familiar to many readers but are nonetheless useful to outline here. Before the advent of social media, early web adopters avidly discussed music via Usenet groups, the predecessors to forums. Users shared information on new releases, exchanged opinions, and otherwise engaged in (sometimes highly colorful) discourse on music in groups explicitly flagged as "alternative," such as alt.music, alt.rave, and alt.celebrities.gossip. At the same time, distributors developed record stores to sell music in hard formats, especially CDs, through the new medium of e-commerce. Soon, users could deploy peer-to-peer networks to exchange digital music files and disrupt recorded music revenues, which legal frameworks characterized as music piracy.[4] At the turn of the millennium, the iPod promised individualized mobile listening supported by legal digital download stores.[5] By the mid-2000s, Myspace provided a space for artists and potential audiences to connect more directly, and on ostensibly more equal terms, than in any earlier era of the industrialized music economy. Individual bloggers undertook curatorial taste-making, while journalistic publications migrated to the web and presented online versions of their music criticism. YouTube began airing music videos as well as user-generated content, facilitating a huge variety of audiovisual creative production practices and opportunities for collective participation.[6] By the late 2000s, on-demand streaming platforms funded by advertising and/or subscriptions upended listening conditions and artist revenue structures—a process that formed part of the wider platformization of cultural production and consumption[7]—with Spotify eventually becoming the market leader in most major music economies. As social media stabilized into a limited oligopoly of services around 2010, public-facing Facebook feeds and Twitter timelines housed media, discourse, and other richly value-laden online expressions of musical experience. Artists' opportunities for online distribution expanded hand in hand with perceived demands to maintain active profiles on smartphone applications, such as Vine and Snapchat. Thereafter, short-form

4. Adam Haupt, *Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, 2008).

5. Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Duke University Press, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822395522.

6. Guillaume Heuguet, *How Music Changed YouTube* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

7. Thomas Poell et al., *Platforms and Cultural Production*, 1st edition (Polity, 2022).

video dominated the attention economy among young listeners, with TikTok becoming the key platform for encountering and promoting music in leading global markets during the global pandemic of 2020. In 2025, generative artificial intelligence applications such as Suno and Udio appear primed to challenge the conventions of human-computer musical interactions, adding fuel to the fire of ongoing debates about artistic autonomy, authenticity, creative revenues, environmental costs, and tech sector hype.

This streamlined overview includes many of the shifts and transformations that have been addressed at length in existing literature.[8] Although it is important to pay credence to these developments, scholars should also be wary of casting them as groundbreaking or straightforwardly causal. The naïve belief that new technologies have single-handedly reshaped how popular music works, occasionally encountered in emerging studies of popular music, falls victim to the fallacy of technological determinism.[9] Furthermore, it plays directly into the hands of the technology companies that now hold unprecedented power over global digital music economies. Popular views of the tech sector as heroically "disruptive"[10] or revolutionary[11] can be hopelessly uncritical, reiterating modernist ideals of progress through rupture. Furthermore, technology megacorporations' relentless pursuit of growth and innovation, typified by Facebook's former motto "move fast and break things," ignore a range of neocolonial effects[12] and exacerbate systemic oppressions.[13] At the same time, attempts to maintain a critical stance should not silence the many positive examples of increased digital connectivity and user agency, such as online musical activity in impoverished areas with limited internet infrastructure.[14] For instance, Payal Arora's recent work illuminates how pessimism among the Global North's intelligentsia towards the tech sector's intervention in media practices contrasts sharply with the feeling of optimism among web users in the Global South, who tend to see much more hope and promise in creative and mobilizing uses of digital technologies.[15]

Running in parallel with the history glossed above, the field of internet studies has developed to consider the complex relationships between internet technologies, cultural

8. Brian J. Hracs et al., eds., *The Production and Consumption of Music in the Digital Age* (Routledge, 2016), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315724003; Sofia Johansson et al., *Streaming Music: Practices, Media, Cultures* (Routledge, 2018); Leslie M. Meier, "Popular Music, Streaming, and Promotional Media: Enduring and Emerging Industrial Logics," in *Making Media: Production, Practices, and Professions*, ed. Mark Deuze and Mirjam Prenger (Amsterdam University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvcj305r.

9. Nick Prior, *Popular Music, Digital Technology and Society* (SAGE, 2018): 5–10.

10. Michael Latzer, "Information and Communication Technology Innovations: Radical and Disruptive?," *New Media & Society* 11, no. 4 (2009): 599–619, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809102964.

11. Jascha Bareis and Christian Katzenbach, "Talking AI into Being: The Narratives and Imaginaries of National AI Strategies and Their Performative Politics," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 47, no. 5 (2022): 855–81, https://doi.org/10.1177/01622439211030007.

12. Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford University Press, 2019).

13. Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York University Press, 2018).

14. Alette Schoon, "'Makhanda Forever?': Pirate Internet Infrastructure and the Ephemeral Hip Hop Archive in South Africa," *Global Hip Hop Studies* 2, no. 2 It's Where You're @: Hip Hop and the Internet (2021): 199–218, https://doi.org/10.1386/ghhs_00044_1.

15. Payal Arora, *From Pessimism to Promise: Lessons from the Global South on Designing Inclusive Tech* (MIT Press, 2024).

practices, and sociality, with many findings and concepts applicable to the study of music. From the outset, internet studies shared many common concerns with popular music studies and neighboring fields. The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR), the main academic community for internet studies, originated as a multidisciplinary home for scholarship adopting a diversity of approaches and subject matter: researchers from cultural studies, film studies, and women's studies were in attendance at the association's founding conference.[16] Despite this earlier cross-disciplinary contact, insights from internet studies have rarely trickled through to music scholars due to blockages in intellectual traffic emerging from different disciplinary priorities. For example, David Hesmondhalgh and colleagues have suggested that humanities and social science research "lacks engagement with specificities and mechanisms"[17] that have already been well addressed in work on the internet. Notwithstanding the potential benefits of interdisciplinary engagement, the field of internet studies has increasingly aligned with the priorities of North American digital media and communication scholars, who face a very different set of disciplinary pressures than popular music studies researchers. Furthermore, Georgia Born and colleagues' recent efforts to cultivate "critical interdisciplinarity" in their project on music and AI are motivated by the belief that, while humanities researchers may indeed benefit from concepts associated with the "hard" sciences, academics in those fields could likewise listen to and learn from the humanists.[18] Significantly, it is worth remembering that the humanities/engineering divide we raise here is rarely sustainable in practice: many digital music producers and composers work in multidisciplinary ways that combine artistic and technical knowledge.[19] Equally, listeners—whether with their own disciplinary backgrounds or none—navigate disparate online spaces, discourses and tools in ways that evidence deep vernacular literacies and the ability to *détourne* technologies to hitherto unforeseen ends.

Having acknowledged that engaging with internet research may enhance the study of music culture in the platform era, it is also important to play to music studies' existing strengths. For instance, data science approaches may fail to grasp (or even overdetermine) the breadth and depth of music's myriad cultural intersections, leading to what engineers would call an "overfitting" of its uses and meanings. Similarly, treating music purely as a kind of social media text risks minimizing the rich aesthetic, ideological, and experiential facets of materially engaging with music online. Most urgently, we must insist on retaining and finding new ways to articulate music's sonic and cultural specificity in order to critically intervene in its reduction to linguistic tags and vectors, since such quantification risks

16. Barry Wellman, "Social Scientists in Cyberspace: Report on the Founding Conference of the Association for Internet Researchers," *Special Interest Group on Groupwork Bulletin* 21, no. 2 (2000): 13–14, https://doi.org/10.1145/605660.605664.

17. David Hesmondhalgh et al., *The Impact of Algorithmically Driven Recommendation Systems on Music Consumption and Production - a Literature Review* (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2023), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-into-the-impact-of-streaming-services-algorithms-on-music-consumption/the-impact-of-algorithmically-driven-recommendation-systems-on-music-consumption-and-production-a-literature-review.

18. Georgina Born et al., "Seminar 1: Interdisciplinarity," MusAI: Building Critical Interdisciplinary Studies, March 9, 2022, https://musicairesearch.wordpress.com/events/.

19. Christopher Haworth, "Critical Interdisciplinarity: Musician-Engineer Collaboration in Music AI Research," MusAI, October 25, 2022, https://musicairesearch.wordpress.com/projects/critical-interdisciplinarity/.

burying ideology inscrutably deep in the code. It is also here that the institutional implications of disciplinary orientation become audible and pressing concerns.

Sustaining a sense of discipline-specific expertise is especially important during tough times for the arts in higher education. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the financial challenges experienced by universities (and the public sector more generally) mean that arts funding has been eviscerated, leading to concrete impacts such as the shuttering of music departments.[20] The very status of the humanities in higher education is under threat from the dark neoliberal arts: mergers, budget cuts, restructurings, job losses, and business schools. As scholars, we are continuously asked to justify our activity and presence, creating a surreal mood of quasi-existentialism and an attendant discourse of jargon-filled justification. As a case in point, the UK's brazenly poptimist refiguring of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's concept of the culture industry into the "creative industries" as the home for arts and humanities research in the 1990s appears to have largely abandoned the critical and communitarian dimensions of this intellectual tradition for the relentless pursuit of technological training, "innovative" practice and marketable IP.[21] Increasingly, university managers and politicians are questioning the value (especially in the economic sense of the term) of any degree program that is not oriented towards entrepreneurialism in the technology or business sectors, with post-1992 UK universities particularly beholden to chasing each new technical upgrade and governmental whim.

Such concerns inform the fears of eminent musicologists, such as Ian Pace[22] and Peter Tregear,[23] for whom the decline of traditional musical literacies and embrace of popular and digital subjects indicate the de-skilling of music higher education under late capitalist logics. The unfortunate corollary of this is that music's place in UK higher education is once again bifurcating along familiar class lines, with older, wealthier institutions able to nurture critical and practical competencies in "traditional" as well as cutting-edge skills without the need for immediate financial returns, whereas newer establishments must demonstrate the relevance, accessibility, and employability of their programs for their economically and socially precarious student populations.[24] Elsewhere, from Serbia to the US and beyond,

20. For some indicative examples: Keele University announced the closure of its Music and Music Technology programs in 2020 (later re-designed as partial Music Production offerings after receiving over 5000 signatures in protest); the University of Huddersfield axed 37 staff in arts and humanities in 2022; Oxford Brookes University closed its music department in 2023; in mid-2024, Goldsmiths University of London, renowned worldwide for its popular music specialism, announced a dozen redundancies in Music (deferred for at least a year after significant union action); Cardiff University has recently offered voluntary redundancy to all staff members. The international picture, perhaps save for North America, is hardly more promising: in 2020, Monash University in Australia entirely cut its musicology degree, which had run for over five decades, whereas higher education budget cuts of around a billion Euros were announced in the Netherlands in September 2024.

21. For a thorough critique of this transformation, see Justin O'Connor, *Culture Is Not an Industry: Reclaiming Art and Culture for the Common Good* (Manchester University Press, 2024), https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526171269/.

22. Ian Pace, "To Do Justice to Arnold's Enviable Legacy, We Should Reverse a Tendency towards the de-Skilling of a Discipline," *Society for Music Analysis Newsletter* (2015): 28–29.

23. Peter Tregear, "Musical Literacy: A Skill of Some Note(s)," *The Conversation*, November 3, 2015, http://theconversation.com/musical-literacy-a-skill-of-some-note-s-48575.

24. Georgina Born and Kyle Devine, "Music Technology, Gender, and Class: Digitization, Educational and Social Change in Britain," *Twentieth-Century Music* 12, no. 2 (2015): 135–72. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478572215000018.

universities are engaged in active stand-offs with their governments about the fundamental rights of academic freedom, and the assumption that the arts should support progressive social ideals is increasingly thrown into doubt.

There are other complicating factors to consider here. Many undergraduate students around the world wonder why they should invest time in their studies at all—and question how they are supposed to concentrate—while the world is witnessing genocide, war, climate emergency, and a global financial permacrisis. Put bluntly, morale is low and the future is daunting, so what is the point? In this context, how can we find meaning in the academic study of online music cultures? While we do not claim to be able to provide a solution to the broader question of existential ennui in enduringly challenging times, we argue in the next section of this special issue introduction for the importance of critically oriented research collaboration and pedagogy as a vital way of responding to the circumstances faced by the arts and humanities. Importantly, we do not seek to position "the digital" or internet inquiry as some kind of simple technosolutionist fix for present ills. Instead, we consider the broader sociopolitical scenario inhabited by popular music studies and adjacent disciplines in order to articulate a renewed sense of intellectual and social purpose.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ON POPULAR MUSIC AND ONLINE CULTURES

In the current gloom, where pressures from all sides appear to encourage a dog-eat-dog mentality, we have found collaborative research endeavors to be an increasingly important—even defiant—act. The co-authored articles in this special issue are motivated by a collective desire to work together with a spirit of solidarity in spite of the challenges (particularly precarity) experienced by postgraduate students and early career popular music researchers. The articles that follow demonstrate both a shared concern for the significance of online music cultures in our socially networked world as well as clear enthusiasm to collaborate in ways that expand the outer orbit of popular music studies' methodological and epistemological conventions. Building on a succession of conferences—*Music and the Internet* (Oxford, 2018), *Like, Share and Subscribe* (Online/Lisbon, 2020), *Information Overload? Music Studies in the Age of Abundance* (Birmingham/Online, 2021), *Internet Musicking* (Online, 2022), and *Music and the Internet* (Chicago/Online, 2023)—we founded the Music and Online Cultures Research Network (MOCReN) in early 2023 as an academic community catering to a developing network of scholars with shared research interests. In January 2024, we invited twenty-five researchers to collaborate in self-selecting groups with the aim of producing original research that contributes to scholarship on music and online cultures. This "Winter Workshop" was held at the University of Bristol, UK, hosting researchers from ten countries. Over the course of two and a half days, we laid the foundations for further investigation by workshopping research design and prepared to co-write articles over the subsequent nine months. This special issue springs directly from the Winter Workshop, though it is important to highlight two other initiatives that served as significant sources of inspiration for the format and design of the meeting.

In the first instance, we would like to recognize the International Summer School "Methods of Popular Music Analysis" in Osnabrück, Germany, which led to the publication of *Song Interpretation in 21st-Century Popular Music*. The editors of that collection reflect on how collaboration in arts research is a contested paradigm that involves various complexities and opportunities. They suggest that whereas

> working in groups is a complicated and challenging way of collaborating with other people . . . group work can also produce excellent results, bringing with it positive effects considering social learning: the realisation that only by taking other members of the group as equal partners in achieving a now no longer individual, but common goal, is a valuable and often forgotten experience in a society where self-reliance is the key marker of success.[25]

Such comments frame interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaboration as an explicitly political act, contesting the valorization of individualism in the neoliberal academy (and wider society). Beyond the benefit of producing "inter-subjectively shared knowledge of a group of scholars,"[26] the mode of collaboration we explored through the Winter Workshop and subsequent research aimed to upset established power dynamics and conventional epistemologies of knowledge construction. Participants agreed to a radically inclusive code of conduct that drew attention to typical privileges and marginalizations in academia,[27] encouraged participants to "unpack" acronyms and complex theory that may be unfamiliar to collaborators, and urged patience towards participants who do not hold English as a first language (a common yet often underacknowledged element of supposedly international events). Our participants, encompassing a range of disciplinary backgrounds, identity dynamics, and career levels, acted in a spirit of open-mindedness and mutual respect. We also outlined a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and harassment, including a confidential reporting system. It could be argued that these are basic principles of inclusion and access in event management, yet popular music studies as a field is only just emerging from a period of intense self-reflection on failures to protect delegates and sustain just working practices.[28] It is our hope that the ethics of care modeled at this event can influence more radically inclusive practices in our field and across the broader academy.

In the second instance, the Winter Workshop was partly inspired by the Winter and Summer School meetings of the Digital Methods Initiative (DMI) at the University of Amsterdam. This venture has been running for over ten years and brings together postgraduate students and established scholars from Europe and beyond to work collaboratively on specific projects. The format of these DMI events conjures playful as well as intellectual effects: it encourages pre- and post-doctoral researchers to consider online phenomena from different vantage points and through other people's metaphorical spectacles and

25. Ralf Von Appen et al., eds., *Song Interpretation in 21st-Century Pop Music* (Ashgate, 2015), 4.

26. Von Appen et al., *Song Interpretation in 21st-Century Pop Music*, 5.

27. Amy Hinsley et al., "Men Ask More Questions than Women at a Scientific Conference," *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 10 (2017): e0185534, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185534.

28. 2022 IASPM-UK/Ireland Branch Conference, "'Gender, Power and Accountability within the Academy' Roundtable," at Challenge and Change in Popular Music, University of Liverpool, August 31, 2022.

headphones; it can lead to more critical and considered arguments through discussions that are necessarily difficult and honest; and it can help foster more rigorous and/or experimental methodologies by bringing together people with different disciplinary expertise or career stages. Moreover, the format we drew upon can enable the integration of research and pedagogy. It is a way in which to grow the idea of students-as-researchers and encourage the emergence of a new generation of "born digital" academics and professionals. More generally, the nuanced understanding of the hands-on workshop (*werkcollege*) within Dutch media studies pedagogy is quite different from some Anglo-American seminar formats, due to its emphasis on ludic modes of learning-by-doing. It must also be noted that the DMI paradigm is implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) political and can even be thought of as policy-oriented research. Each DMI Winter School has a pressing contemporary theme pertaining to digital culture and society, with projects intervening in major debates about issues such as digital governance, mis/disinformation, and data ownership in the age of Big Tech and right-wing global populism. Influenced by this hands-on and socially engaged approach, the articles in this issue examine some of the most significant aspects of internet-mediated popular music experienced in recent years.

Collectively, and just over ten years on from David Hesmondhalgh's book *Why Music Matters,*[29] the research presented in this special issue demonstrates that both music and music research still do matter in an age of continuous streaming and algorithmically steered cultural currents; inter-platform pipelines and guilt-inducing scrolling; (contrarian) cultures of kindness and spitefulness; and the transmedial reconfiguration of identity. As the preceding discussion has emphasized, ideas of interdisciplinary exchange—and questions of transdisciplinarity and its limits—set the stage for our entire project. Interestingly, in the introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop*, Justin Williams declares that hip hop studies is "one of the most interdisciplinary fields in existence."[30] We suggest that the rigorous and responsible study of online music cultures might require an even more diverse and cohesive range of approaches. So, to riff on internet meme parlance of yesteryear: *challenge accepted.*

ONLINE POPULAR MUSIC CULTURES IN THE GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ERA

Our primary aim in this issue is to offer a multifaceted examination of what popular music *is* and *does* in the internet era. Rather than reviewing the state of the entire field, it presents the state of the art for understanding different dimensions of popular music in the context of shifting aesthetics, disrupted cultural practices, and digital reorientations. We have encouraged authors to pursue both thought-provoking perspectives and methodological rigor while investigating forms of online musicking related to streaming and its alternatives, social media imaginaries, platform flows, fan practices, transmediality, and identity. The specific styles under study include lofi hip hop, K-pop, and

29. David Hesmondhalgh, *Why Music Matters* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

30. Justin A. Williams, "Introduction: The Interdisciplinary World of Hip-Hop Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 2.

fringe/experimental music. Its breadth, however, is not exhaustive. Rather, it is a collection of starting points that are indicative of wider endeavors in research on online music cultures, and its publication also offers an opportune moment to reflect on other developments in the field.

A recent sensation that has prompted a sudden increase of interest in online music studies is the advent of widely accessible generative artificial intelligence (GAI) applications, especially those pertaining to music-generative AI (MGAI). Given that no article in the issue tackles this topic head-on, we introduce some key issues here. Recent MGAI platforms and applications have intensified scholarly debate in several different fields: the Music Information Retrieval (MIR) community; the philosophy of music; the philosophy of AI; intellectual property law; and critical musicology concerning music and capitalism. Such work also benefits from discourse with politics, legislation, and business, including governmental policy and the legal, tech, and music industries. Significantly, discussions concerning the rapid development and widespread use of such technologies are polarizing and fraught. Some voices within this conversation have attributed to GAI technologies the potential to fundamentally reshape human-computer interactions, if not society as we know it, while others have tried to filter out such techno-utopian hype and expose ethical shortcomings. GAI harms include the unauthorized scraping of copyrighted material and the significant environmental cost of training machine learning models, alongside persisting hallucinations and disinformation created by digital assistants.[31] As with previous technological innovations, the truly transformative cultural and artistic potential of MGAI is being tentatively teased out in the shadows of the media hype around its world-making or -breaking potential. Soon, a more sophisticated critical discourse that goes beyond real/fake and human/nonhuman dichotomies will have to be formulated.

There is much at stake here concerning the ontological question of what popular music is during the current MGAI epoch, its cost (in every sense of the term), as well as the phenomenology and ethics of human engagement with MGAI. Consider, for instance, the case of Michael Smith, who was accused of using around 10,000 bot accounts to stream hundreds of thousands of AI-generated songs in order to obtain more than ten million US dollars in royalty payments.[32] Smith's alleged co-conspirator was the chief executive of an unidentified MGAI company. In a facetious 2019 email to Smith, they wrote that "this is not 'music,' it's 'instant music' ;)," a throwaway line that serves as a synecdoche for much vernacular as well as scholarly discourse.[33] In a recent philosophical inquiry into MGAI, Adam Eric Berkowitz suggests that "it is plainly evident that music embodies a higher order

31. Tama Leaver and Suzanne Srdarov, "ChatGPT Isn't Magic: The Hype and Hypocrisy of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Rhetoric," *M/C Journal* 26, no. 5 (2023): online, https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.3004; Alva Markelius et al., "The Mechanisms of AI Hype and Its Planetary and Social Costs," *AI and Ethics*, ahead of print, April 2, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-024-00461-2.

32. Liv McMahon, "Musician Charged with Using Bots to Boost Streaming Revenue," *BBC News*, September 6, 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly3ld9wy3eo.

33. Super-producer Timbaland's controversy-filled partnership with Suno, one of the leading MGAI platforms (at time of writing), offers another pointed example of suspect attitudes to automation in music-making. See Danielle Chelosky, "Timbaland Apologizes To Producer Amid AI Record Label Controversy," *Stereogum*, June 21, 2025, https://www.stereogum.com/2312616/timbaland-apologizes-to-producer-amid-ai-record-label-controversy/news/.

of meaning . . . [as] a method by which humanity expresses itself," whereas "it is as though AI music does not represent human artistry at all."[34] At our conference in Lisbon in June 2025, however, Júlia Durand highlighted that library music has faced the same accusations of deficient human artistry for decades, and José Galvez reminded delegates that the datafication of human experience and the indistinguishability of art and technology has been growing in the West since the early Enlightenment era. In some ways, therefore, a longer historical picture is needed as a counterweight to presentist hype. From a phenomenological perspective, Melissa Avdeeff offers a discussion of the audio uncanny valley as it pertains to MGAI listening encounters, a concept that "walks the line between unease and excitement by increasing the potential for novelty, while simultaneously challenging assumptions concerning anthropocentric notions of creativity."[35] Nonetheless, Avdeeff also reasons that since MGAI is "principally human-driven and consumed," it will be "human agents who ultimately guide its use and progress."[36] The ills of MGAI, then, are principally rooted in human ills, as exemplified by Smith and his collaborator's mercenary streaming-revenue ploy. But we must also not forget that quintessentially human capacity for *thrills* that our encounters with technologies of all sorts prompt again and again, often in the most life-affirming ways.

Aside from this small ray of hope, some aspects of the emerging story of this new technology may be painfully and vividly familiar, especially in terms of copyright law and corporate "disruption."[37] Predictably, leading developers and their investors continue to deny an alternative, more equitable "copyleft" paradigm through strategic collusion and territorialization.[38] Beyond legal perspectives, questions around ownership of MGAI productions must be expanded to properly consider questions of race and racialized technologies,[39] and other identity dynamics frequently subject to marginalization, such as the "AI girlfriend" paradigm (invoked by net-native artists Flume and JPEGMAFIA on their 2025 EP *We Live In A Society*). The popularity of MGAI vocal clones on YouTube during 2023—and their subsequent removal from the platform—are an important case in point.[40] Bracketing out perspectives concerning digital governance and fair use, the racial and spiritual significance of these phenomena reanimates the concerns of critical work in popular music studies, such as Nina Sun Eidsheim's analysis of vocaloid software, racialized scripts and the discursive (re)construction of identity via online conversation.[41] What are we to make of the postracial

34. Adam Eric Berkowitz, "Artificial Intelligence and Musicking: A Philosophical Inquiry," *Music Perception* 41, no. 5 (2024): 397, 402, https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2024.41.5.393.

35. Melissa Avdeeff, "Artificial Intelligence & Popular Music: SKYGGE, Flow Machines, and the Audio Uncanny Valley," *Arts* 8, no. 4 (2019): 11, 4, https://doi.org/10.3390/arts8040130.

36. Ibid., 11.

37. Latzer, "Information and Communication Technology Innovations."

38. Eric Drott, "Copyright, Compensation, and Commons in the Music AI Industry," *Creative Industries Journal* 14, no. 2 (2021): 190–207, https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2020.1839702.

39. Sanjay Sharma, "Inclusive Futures: Radical Ethics and Transformative Justice for Responsible AI," *Bridging Responsible AI Divides*, April 15, 2024, https://braiduk.org/inclusive-futures-radical-ethics-and-transformative-justice-for-responsible-ai.

40. Nilay Patel, "YouTube Is Going to Start Cracking down on AI Clones of Musicians," *The Verge,* November 14, 2023, https://www.theverge.com/2023/11/14/23959658/google-youtube-generative-ai-labels-music-copyright.

41. Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Race as Zeros and Ones: Vocaloid Refused, Reimagined, and Repurposed," in *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Duke University Press, 2019).

and posthuman imaginaries derived from MGAI vocal clones, for instance? For all the cases where MGAI producers are called out for partaking in digital Blackface, such as formerly Capitol-signed virtual rapper FN Meka,[42] many instances of racialized vocal cloning are overlooked and potentially increasingly normalized. Such productions not only raise legal and ontological questions but directly implicate the multi-century history of popular music and racial ventriloquism,[43] and suggest a need for online reception studies that map out the discursive priorities surrounding vernacular concepts of identity in GAI media.

The use of MGAI may also challenge our understanding of musicking as a fundamentally social activity, since AI applications enable forms of musical practice without the inconvenience (and expense) of human–human musical collaboration. In late 2024, the Canadian artist Caribou was criticized following the release of *Honey*, an MGAI-aided solo album that saw his recorded voice transmuted to "cutesy young women" on some tracks and venture "perilously close to appropriating and imitating Black artistry" on others.[44] On the other hand, some widely publicized examples of MGAI appear innocuous, even enabling, such as the digital reproduction of Randy Travis's voice for the 2024 song "Where That Came From." Although Travis suffered a stroke that limited his capacity to sing, a new recording was built using MGAI models, the country singer's back catalogue, and a recording by James Dupré. Although the sensational claim that MGAI is thus "giving Randy Travis his voice back" is not entirely convincing,[45] it is worth attending to the potential empowering, sentimental, and ultimately economic value that such vocal clones and ghost-singers might produce for disabled people. Moreover, listening beyond the voice and its sometimes overloaded equivalence to human identity, future scholarship on MGAI ought to unpack how (and whose) bodies, gestures and other non-vocal aspects of musical meaning-making are encoded in training sets and presented as artistic norms.

Finally, consider the 1991 duet between Natalie Cole (then living) and Nat King Cole (long deceased) analyzed in work on the "musical intermundane" by Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut.[46] As with this earlier case study, much online reception of MGAI vocal clones riffs on the idea that death is no longer the end for the human body, on the metaphor of musical cryogenics, and on (Christian) metaphors of resurrection. Indeed, such MGAI phenomena seem to diminish, or at the very least recast, fundamental paradigms of personal authenticity in popular music culture. Is the endless musical resurrection supposedly afforded by MGAI ethical or desirable? And what of another ghost who has long haunted popular music studies: must we finally surrender to Adorno and concede that

42. Gamble, *Digital Flows: Online Hip Hop Music and Culture*, 184–5.

43. Matthew D. Morrison, *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States* (University of California Press, 2024).

44. Ben Beaumont-Thomas, "Caribou: Honey Review – This AI-Aided Album Is Dubious on so Many Levels," Music, *The Guardian*, October 3, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2024/oct/03/caribou-honey-review-this-ai-aided-album-is-dubious-on-so-many-levels.

45. Marcus K. Dowling, "How Randy Travis' New Song, the First after His Stroke, Came Together with the Help of AI," *Nashville Tennessean*, May 6, 2024, https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2024/05/06/randy-travis-now-where-that-came-now-ai-origin/73585407007/.

46. Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut, "Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane," *TDR/The Drama Review* 54, no. 1 (T205) (2010): 14–38, https://doi.org/10.1162/dram.2010.54.1.14.

"truth content" is dead and buried while pop stars are artificially malleable and seemingly immortal pseudo-individuals?[47] Though MGAI applications—like any new software—are likely to have gradual and profoundly convergent implications for art and culture,[48] the articles here offer provocations that can help researchers to grapple with the ways in which digital technologies shape popular music and vice versa, and how those shifting relationships are rationalized by the people that are always and already in between.

Each of the articles in this special issue is thus informed by the same social and ideological contexts that condition MGAI practices, and they tackle the complex interplay of shifting musical and digital tides using a variety of methods that center human behaviors and beliefs. Interviews remain a crucial source of empirical insight, and while they provide only a partial or "small N" picture of phenomena, they also demonstrate the enduring value of actually asking stakeholders what they think about emerging sociotechnical developments.[49] Surveys similarly indicate beliefs and values at a larger scale, useful both for supporting some author expectations and upsetting some conventional narratives. Platform interface analysis—now well-established in internet studies and digital media and communication—provides a means of integrated analysis *in situ*, honing in on potential user experiences that implicate the everyday practices of artists and audiences alike. Given our disciplinary backgrounds, cultural and critical theories play a key role in interrogating structures and practices, and highlight normative values pertaining to social identity, transmediality, and gender injustice. Importantly, the articles straddle the differing perspectives on music and online cultures adopted by musical creators versus listeners, and draw attention to the cognitive dissonance (sometimes framed as complicity) that often characterizes those who are both.

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

In "Swimming Upstream," Muchitsch, Moura, and Perevedentseva intervene in existing debates about the effects of streaming on music culture, offering fresh insights into how independent experimental musicians negotiate changing dependencies, cultivate visibility, and sustain careers in the evolving platform ecosystem. The authors present extensive interview data and map out the conceptual coordinates of what they term "music platform imaginaries." These imaginaries highlight the agency, ambivalence, wonder, and nostalgia surrounding how platform affordances relate to artists' personal value systems and established ideals of cultural production. Furthermore, they show that strategic engagement with platforms represents only one, and by no means the most important, facet of these musicians' artistic lives, debunking the narrative that streaming and platformization have subsumed all previous modes of music consumption and sociality.

47. Theodor W. Adorno, "On Popular Music," *Zeitschrift Für Sozialforschung* 9, no. 1 (1941): 17–48, https://doi.org/10.5840/zfs1941913.

48. Tiziano Bonini and Paolo Magaudda, *Platformed! How Streaming, Algorithms and Artificial Intelligence Are Shaping Music Cultures* (Springer, 2024), 122–24, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-43965-0.

49. George Steinmetz, "Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and 'Small N's' in Sociology," *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 3 (2004): 371–400, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0735-2751.2004.00225.x. See also Julia Laite, "The Emmet's Inch: Small History in a Digital Age," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 4 (2020): 963–89, https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shy118.

The perspective flips from artist understandings to user flows in the following article, with a focus on TikTok, the music discovery platform *du jour*. Morgan, Gibson, and Rabearivelo examine how smartphone users navigate media platforms and negotiate new app features implemented by platform developers. They present survey data and insights from follow-up interviews to consider how platforms guide user practices and how listeners practically engage with new music, thereby contributing to ongoing scholarly efforts to demystify the uncanny power of the For You Page (FYP). They conclude that TikTok's *Add to Music App* feature exacerbates the contradiction in the platform's two primary aims: to retain user attention (in-app) and facilitate active music discovery (via partnering streaming services).

Expanding the scope of popular music's platform mediations wider still, the article "K-pop Stars at Your Fingertips" provides a deep dive into BTS mobile games. Through the frames of transmediality and actor-network theory, and informed by ludomusicological approaches, Carter, Freitas, Rose, and Rudolph analyze how two mobile games situate the personae of BTS in the context of the K-pop superstars' substantial multimedia oeuvre. The authors argue that these online games act as compelling conduits for affective (parasocial) connections that BTS fans, known as ARMY, develop with the idols. In doing so, "K-pop Stars" helpfully maps out the material breadth of potential fan investments with popular music and musicians in the contemporary platform landscape (and beyond conventional Anglophone paradigms).

Relatedly, the final article addresses online fan investments and interactions on YouTube. Through an innovative conceptual approach, Navarro Flores, Williams, and Mouraviev shift the locus of fandom beyond artist and genre to examine user engagement with "vibes" in the manner of Robin James,[50] specifically the communal affordances of "lofi beats" streams and videos. Using discourse analysis supported by online ethnographic observation, the authors of "Vibes, gender and musical affordance on the internet" detail the contested online spaces sustained by the Lofi Girl YouTube channel. Querying the much-reported "chill vibes"—alongside decidedly un-chill gendered harassment—of YouTube's "kindest community," this article emphasizes the ideological diversity of online interactions with music, not least in the post-genre and youth-oriented multimedia contexts that brands cultivate online. Such concerns are primed to become ever more pressing as the impacts of generative artificial intelligence on creative multimedia develop, as we contemplate in this closing provocation.

SURVIVING THE SYSTEM

In July 2024, Taylor & Francis announced that it had sold access to its entire library of published research in an AI partnership with Microsoft, reportedly worth around ten million US dollars in its first year.[51] In effect, that vast archive of human knowledge and empirical

50. Robin James, *Good Vibes Only: Phenomenology, Algorithms, & the Politics of Legitimation* (Duke University Press, 2026).

51. Kathryn Palmer, "Taylor & Francis AI Deal Sets 'Worrying Precedent' for Academic Publishing," *Inside Higher Ed*, July 29, 2024, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/research/2024/07/29/taylor-francis-ai-deal-sets-worrying-precedent.

inquiry is now being recast as a machine learning training set, with the likely goal of automating the generation of intellectual capital. How are we to proceed amid this bleak backdrop, not forgetting the previously mentioned phenomenon of diminishing academic freedom in the USA and elsewhere? At the time of writing, two co-editors of this special issue are experiencing logistical problems with their research careers due to US policy developments, while several speakers at our 2025 Lisbon conference were unable to attend due to precautionary travel advice from their home institutions. Finding mutual support among one's peers for critically oriented research can be an important way of coping with the co-option of intellectual capital and the undermining of academic freedom that we have experienced in recent times. As Spencer suggests in work on the political weaponization of music online, research on popular music and online cultures can perform a valuable diagnostic function. It holds the potential to render audible the mechanisms of the (anti)social web and to elucidate what it is like to experience these online phenomena in our present era.[52]

With this special issue, we aim to both recognize the real impacts of the permacrisis and to establish an ongoing means of collective flourishing. As we near a decade (perhaps longer) of "music studies in crisis," "everything on fire," and our fourth "once-in-a-lifetime" recession, there is need for more than neoliberal fallacies of resilience or petty "copium" content. It is not really radical of us—in fact it could hardly be more clichéd—to suggest that careful and caring human connection is the key. The humanities' lethargy about cross-sector knowledge exchange and publishers' individualistic author conventions need not dissuade us. But it is also worth acknowledging that investing too heavily in the affect of crisis might be precisely the thing that keeps this dreary show on the road. We set up the Music and Online Cultures Research Network as a hub to facilitate the sharing of research interests, the circulation of calls for papers, the organization of international networking opportunities, and so on. Three years on from MOCReN's inception, the strikingly positive feedback regarding a supportive research environment at our Lisbon conference indicates that collaboration can successfully intervene in everyday inequities and provide the collegial connection that is so important to sustaining scholarly pursuits. The network therefore primarily functions as a cooperative environment in which research collaborations can be grown.

Yet how are we to sustain such practices within a "system" that wants our outputs as its inputs and exacerbates a competitive, market-driven mindset in which research functions as a commodity? Perhaps part of the answer lies in Anna Tsing's work on the anthropological concept of the-gift-within-the-commodity. As Tsing notes in an essay that is mostly about the careers of matsutake mushrooms, academic labor often functions within a gift economy based on mutual respect and indebtedness among fellow scholars (an example being the tradition of peer review).[53] As indicated above, we consider this culture of collaborative interdependence to be especially vital to the endangered ecosystem of 2020s

52. Edward Katrak Spencer, "When Donald Trump Dropped the Bass: The Weaponization of Dubstep in Internet Trolling Strategies, 2011–2016," *Twentieth-Century Music* 22, no. 1 (2025): 129, https://doi.org/ 10.1017/S1478572224000094.

53. Anna Tsing, "Sorting out Commodities: How Capitalist Value Is Made through Gifts," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, no. 1 (2013): 21–43, https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.1.003.

popular music studies. More provocatively, and in view of Perevedentseva's recent work concerning a "mycelial turn" in the humanities,[54] can we work towards behaving more like fungi—embracing the symbiotic responsibilities of our sociomaterial, sociotechnical and sociomusical entanglements ("feeding one another")—and less like independent cogs that serve a system ("feeding the machine")?

Collaboration, lest we forget, also provides an opportunity for play. By navigating against the instrumentalist currents of metrics and automation, scholarly work can become a ludic endeavor that prioritizes curiosity, playfulness, and the spontaneous joys of entanglement and interaction. Playing together—whether through improvisation, remixing, or participatory platforms—has long been central to (online) music cultures, and perhaps reclaiming the spirit of playful co-creation can help us find ways to reimagine research practice. As algorithms and content become more predictable and repetitive, our best response may be to *play differently*.

As a moment in which working practices and cultural values are at the forefront of public discourse, the "dawn" of GAI offers an opportunity for radical re-imaginings of human flourishing and research activity. Working together, might we hypothetically find ourselves practicing precisely the copyleft principles and defiant communitarian solidarity that the tech, "creative," and legal industries are trying to prevent? Could it be that through developing an intellectual and methodological commons we begin to construct a uniquely human neural network that transcends the rush to upscale machine intelligence? Notwithstanding this deliberately ludicrous either/or rhetoric and the fanciful ecological metaphors, it seems likely that popular music studies and the humanities more broadly are entering a pivotal period in their evolution, and that some forms of mutualist compromise may be worth a shot. To this end, our modest ambition for the articles in this special issue is that they create some momentum for trails of thought that endure and entangle with future trajectories in the interdisciplinary study of music and online cultures. We look forward to following where those trails might lead. ■

FUNDING

This research was partially funded by the Leverhulme Trust (Grant no. ECF-2022-014).

REFERENCES

Adorno, Theodor W. "On Popular Music." *Zeitschrift Für Sozialforschung* 9, no. 1 (1941): 17–48. https://doi.org/10.5840/zfs1941913.

Arora, Payal. *From Pessimism to Promise: Lessons from the Global South on Designing Inclusive Tech*. MIT Press, 2024.

Avdeeff, Melissa. "Artificial Intelligence & Popular Music: SKYGGE, Flow Machines, and the Audio Uncanny Valley." *Arts* 8, no. 4 (2019): article 130. https://doi.org/10.3390/arts8040130.

Bareis, Jascha, and Christian Katzenbach. "Talking AI into Being: The Narratives and Imaginaries of National AI Strategies and Their Performative Politics." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 47, no. 5 (2022): 855–81. https://doi.org/10.1177/01622439211030007.

54. Maria Perevedentseva, "Timbre and the 'Zone of Entanglement' in Electronic Dance Music: Re-Thinking Musico-Social Ontologies with the Mycelial Turn," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 15, no. 1 (2023): 41, https://doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2023.15.01.03.

Beaumont-Thomas, Ben. "Caribou: Honey Review – This AI-Aided Album Is Dubious on so Many Levels." Music. *The Guardian*, October 3, 2024. https://www.theguardian.com/music/2024/oct/03/caribou-honey-review-this-ai-aided-album-is-dubious-on-so-many-levels.

Berkowitz, Adam Eric. "Artificial Intelligence and Musicking: A Philosophical Inquiry." *Music Perception* 41, no. 5 (2024): 393–412. https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2024.41.5.393.

Bonini, Tiziano, and Paolo Magaudda. *Platformed! How Streaming, Algorithms and Artificial Intelligence Are Shaping Music Cultures*. Springer, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-43965-0.

Born, Georgina, Fernando Diaz, Gustavo Ferreira, Andres Ferraro, and Lucy Suchman. "Seminar 1: Interdisciplinarity." MusAI: Building Critical Interdisciplinary Studies, March 9, 2022. https://musicairesearch.wordpress.com/events/.

Chelosky, Danielle. "Timbaland Apologizes To Producer Amid AI Record Label Controversy." *Stereogum*, June 21, 2025. https://www.stereogum.com/2312616/timbaland-apologizes-to-producer-amid-ai-record-label-controversy/news/.

Couldry, Nick, and Ulises A. Mejias. *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. Stanford University Press, 2019.

Dowling, Marcus K. "How Randy Travis' New Song, the First after His Stroke, Came Together with the Help of AI." *Nashville Tennessean*, May 6, 2024. https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2024/05/06/randy-travis-now-where-that-came-now-ai-origin/73585407007/.

Drott, Eric. "Copyright, Compensation, and Commons in the Music AI Industry." *Creative Industries Journal* 14, no. 2 (2021): 190–207. https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2020.1839702.

Eidsheim, Nina Sun. "Race as Zeros and Ones: Vocaloid Refused, Reimagined, and Repurposed." In *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*. Duke University Press, 2019.

Gamble, Steven. *Digital Flows: Online Hip Hop Music and Culture*. Oxford University Press, 2024.

Haupt, Adam. *Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion*. HSRC Press, 2008.

Haworth, Christopher. "Critical Interdisciplinarity: Musician-Engineer Collaboration in Music AI Research." MusAI, October 25, 2022. https://musicairesearch.wordpress.com/projects/critical-interdisciplinarity/.

Hesmondhalgh, David. *Why Music Matters*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

Hesmondhalgh, David, Raquel Campos Valverde, D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye, and Zhongwei Li. *The Impact of Algorithmically Driven Recommendation Systems on Music Consumption and Production - a Literature Review*. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2023. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-into-the-impact-of-streaming-services-algorithms-on-music-consumption/the-impact-of-algorithmically-driven-recommendation-systems-on-music-consumption-and-production-a-literature-review.

Hine, Christine. *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. Routledge, 2015. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003085348.

Hinsley, Amy, William J. Sutherland, and Alison Johnston. "Men Ask More Questions than Women at a Scientific Conference." *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 10 (2017): e0185534. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185534.

Hracs, Brian J., Michael Seman, and Tarek E. Virani, eds. *The Production and Consumption of Music in the Digital Age*. Routledge, 2016. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315724003.

James, Robin. *Good Vibes Only: Phenomenology, Algorithms, & the Politics of Legitimation*. Duke University Press, 2026.

Johansson, Sofia, Ann Werner, Patrik Åker, and Greg Goldenzwaig. *Streaming Music: Practices, Media, Cultures*. Routledge, 2018.

Laite, Julia. "The Emmet's Inch: Small History in a Digital Age." *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 4 (2020): 963–89. https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shy118.

Latzer, Michael. "Information and Communication Technology Innovations: Radical and Disruptive?" *New Media & Society* 11, no. 4 (2009): 599–619. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809102964.

Leaver, Tama, and Suzanne Srdarov. "ChatGPT Isn't Magic: The Hype and Hypocrisy of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Rhetoric." *M/C Journal* 26, no. 5 (2023): online. https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.3004.

Markelius, Alva, Connor Wright, Joahna Kuiper, Natalie Delille, and Yu-Ting Kuo. "The Mechanisms of AI Hype and Its Planetary and Social Costs." *AI and Ethics*, ahead of print, April 2, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-024-00461-2.

McMahon, Liv. "Musician Charged with Using Bots to Boost Streaming Revenue." *BBC News*, September 6, 2024. https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly3ld9wy3eo.

Meier, Leslie M. "Popular Music, Streaming, and Promotional Media: Enduring and Emerging Industrial Logics." In *Making Media: Production, Practices, and Professions*. Edited by Mark Deuze and Mirjam Prenger. Amsterdam University Press, 2019. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvcj305r.

Morrison, Matthew D. *Blacksound: Making Race and Popular Music in the United States*. University of California Press, 2024.

Noble, Safiya Umoja. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York University Press, 2018.

O'Connor, Justin. *Culture Is Not an Industry: Reclaiming Art and Culture for the Common Good*. Manchester University Press, 2024. https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526171269/.

Pace, Ian. "To Do Justice to Arnold's Enviable Legacy, We Should Reverse a Tendency towards the de-Skilling of a Discipline." *Society for Music Analysis Newsletter*, (2015): 28–29.

Palmer, Kathryn. "Taylor & Francis AI Deal Sets 'Worrying Precedent' for Academic Publishing." *Inside Higher Ed*, July 29, 2024. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/research/2024/07/29/taylor-francis-ai-deal-sets-worrying-precedent.

Patel, Nilay. "YouTube Is Going to Start Cracking down on AI Clones of Musicians." *The Verge*, November 14, 2023. https://www.theverge.com/2023/11/14/23959658/google-youtube-generative-ai-labels-music-copyright.

Perevedentseva, Maria. "Electronic Dance Music and the Discursive Web: Interpreting Value, Sociality and Knowledge Construction on Boomkat.com." In *Music and the Internet: Methodological, Epistemological, and Ethical Orientations*, Edited by Christopher Haworth, Edward Katrak Spencer, and Daniele Shlomit Sofer. Routledge, 2026.

———. "Timbre and the 'Zone of Entanglement' in Electronic Dance Music: Re-Thinking Musico-Social Ontologies with the Mycelial Turn." *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 15, no. 1 (2023): 41–60. https://doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2023.15.01.03.

Poell, Thomas, David B. Nieborg, and Brooke Erin Duffy. *Platforms and Cultural Production*. 1st edition. Polity, 2022.

Prior, Nick. *Popular Music, Digital Technology and Society*. SAGE, 2018.

Rogers, Holly, Joana Freitas, and João Francisco Porfírio, eds. *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2023.

Schoon, Alette. "'Makhanda Forever?': Pirate Internet Infrastructure and the Ephemeral Hip Hop Archive in South Africa." *Global Hip Hop Studies* 2, no. 2 It's Where You're @: Hip Hop and the Internet (2021): 199–218. https://doi.org/10.1386/ghhs_00044_1.

Sharma, Sanjay. "Inclusive Futures: Radical Ethics and Transformative Justice for Responsible AI." *Bridging Responsible AI Divides*, April 15, 2024. https://braiduk.org/inclusive-futures-radical-ethics-and-transformative-justice-for-responsible-ai.

Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Wesleyan University Press, 1998.

Spencer, Edward Katrak. "When Donald Trump Dropped the Bass: The Weaponization of Dubstep in Internet Trolling Strategies, 2011–2016." *Twentieth-Century Music* 22, no. 1 (2025): 107–29. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478572224000094.

———. "Web-Based Ways of Listening: Reinventing Empirical Musicology in the Age of Social Media." In *New Methods and New Challenges in Empirical Musicology*. Edited by Fanny Gribenski and Clément Cannone. Oxford University Press, 2026.

Stanyek, Jason, and Benjamin Piekut. "Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane." *TDR/The Drama Review* 54, no. 1 (T205) (2010): 14–38. https://doi.org/10.1162/dram.2010.54.1.14.

Steinmetz, George. "Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and 'Small N's' in Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 3 (2004): 371–400. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0735-2751.2004.00225.x.

Sterne, Jonathan. *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*. Duke University Press, 2012. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822395522.

Tregear, Peter. "Musical Literacy: A Skill of Some Note(s)." *The Conversation*, November 3, 2015. http://theconversation.com/musical-literacy-a-skill-of-some-note-s-48575.

Tsing, Anna. "Sorting out Commodities: How Capitalist Value Is Made through Gifts." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, no. 1 (2013): 21–43. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.1.003.

Von Appen, R., A. Doehring, D. Helms, and A. F. Moore, eds. *Song Interpretation in 21st-Century Pop Music*. Ashgate, 2015.

Wellman, Barry. "Social Scientists in Cyberspace: Report on the Founding Conference of the Association for Internet Researchers." *Special Interest Group on Groupwork Bulletin* 21, no. 2 (2000): 13–14. https://doi.org/10.1145/605660.605664.

Williams, Justin A. "Introduction: The Interdisciplinary World of Hip-Hop Studies." In *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Williams, Jenessa. *Music Fandom in the Age of #MeToo: Morality Crowdsourcing, Racialised Cancellation and Complicated Listening Habits in Online Hip-Hop and Indie-Alternative Communities.* PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2024.