Introduction

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What is electronic dance music and its abbreviation, EDM? The simple answer would be that it is electronic music you can dance to. Yet this would be too general, as the term mostly relates to post-disco and post-rave dance musical forms that emerged from a transatlantic exchange. Electronic dance music could arguably be understood as dance music made by and for DJs, characterised by repetitive phrases, electronic production methods, and an electronic sonic palette in which timbre and rhythm are foregrounded, as discussed in this collection by Maria Perevedentseva. Commonly, the tempo of recordings ranges between 120 BPM (beats per minute) and 180 BPM, often further manipulated by the DJ. Early examples, can be found in the electronic dance music recordings of Chicago house music of the mid-1980s, quickly expanding into a globalised dance phenomenon during the early 1990s, leading to a diversity of subgenres that ranges from club anthems to psytrance, and from drum and bass to dubstep. Fundamental to the ontology of EDM is an aesthetic that lies in abstraction and challenge as much as in reconciliation and celebration, in which the audio components of historical recordings are recast. In some cases, like New York's Club Music (also understood by British readers as garage or deep house), this is to pay homage to those who came before, as an oral history of dance music. Elsewhere, machine aesthetic of techno and trance enables dancers to negotiate rapidly developing and accelerating technological developments and increasing cybernetic connectivity.[1] In other words, we argue that EDM's musical language is inextricably intertwined with electronic, digitalised culture. As shown by Vitos' and van Veen & Attias' contributions to this collection, dance music is firmly embedded in mainstream popular culture, with the interconnectivity of social media allowing this music to be made available to a wide audience.

Music genres are continually contested within a living music culture and evolve during their use in their contexts of time and locality. McLeod notes that 'electronic/dance music in the 1990s has yielded a metagenre that is constantly breaking apart, recombining, and making obsolete numerous subgenres on a yearly basis'.[2] As a form of communication within the context of a specific political economy,[3] music genres are subject to the power dynamics of

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classification.[4] For example, in Germany, most electronic dance music is understood as 'techno', while in the Netherlands the tag 'house' was adopted as a general term during the 1980s and 90s, regardless of whether the tags 'techno' or 'house' referred to a vocal club anthem or to industrial techno. In the process, the importance of marginalised, queer, and African-American dance cultural spaces, which have been essential to the formation of underground disco and club culture and concomitant forms of dance music, seems to have been forgotten in popular cultural memory.[5] Music genres are produced discursively within the fluid inner-circle debates by DJs, dancers, fans, and producers, and solidified in music industry definitions by journalists, record shops, streaming services, and sales platforms. Together, these discursive spaces delineate a porous set of stylistic descriptors[6] that are validated and reinforced within networks of overlapping dance music scenes,[7] which raises questions regarding what is included and excluded. While there are attempts to fix unstable meanings, it is useful to wonder who benefits from a particular representation.[8]

Since the late 1980s, the term 'dance culture' has been used in the UK to indicate the post-rave electronic dance music scene, which may be understood as 'electronic dance music culture', or 'EDMC', in line with the specialist research journal *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture*. The abbreviation 'EDM' is used as an umbrella term for many subgenres. However, since the early 2010s, in the USA the term 'EDM' has been claimed to narrowly indicate a pop dance subgenre. As Spencer's contribution on EDM festivals shows, such festivals seem to utilise the collective language of togetherness of yesteryears' raves but instead offer a ruptured spectacle in which the power politics of identity differentiation are embraced. Overall, you will find that the terms 'electronic dance music' and 'EDM' are used in slightly different ways by the contributors to this collection, which are clarified within the contexts of their case studies. Fikentscher foregrounds the importance of the DJ's record archive in music genre formation. A case study regarding online genre definition is further explored by Vitos, while van Veen and Attias address this format off and on the dance floor in the context of screened live DJ shows. As part of a music cultural form that circulates globally, electronic dance music genres are reworked and hybridised locally, which is illustrated in this volume by, for example, Chew's study of dance culture in China, in Alisch's observations of kuduro in Angola, Peter's theorisation of the rave concept in Blackburn, UK, and Ludewig's investigation of the hardcore techno scene in Berlin. Music genre can also be regarded as a social process in the production of social identity, a position that is particularly prominent in contributions by Parsley,

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Spencer, and by O'Grady and Greasley. As a music genre, it also produces a range of subjectivities through technological manipulation in music production – as can be read in contributions by Bougaïeff and Perevedentseva – and within the contexts of musicking[9] on the dance floor, as discussed by Gadir. In this way, electronic dance music shapes an affective response to lived experience, as Christodoulou explains in relation to accelerated culture in drum and bass, and Till does in a discussion of chill out music. As these contributions show, although electronic dance music may on the surface seem easily recognisable, its genealogy is rich, and its cultural meanings are varied. Avoiding an exhaustive encyclopaedic approach, the purpose of this collection is to give insight into potential understandings, offering a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary set of approaches, ranging from architecture and geography to media studies and musicology.

During the 1990s, when the notion of 'electronic dance music' was increasingly used, we heard much about 'global dance culture'. There was a sense amongst dancers that the dance floor offered an unspoken lingua franca, a cosmopolitan space that would become the place to just be. We acknowledge this can be an oversimplification, criticised by some of the contributors here, including Gadir, Parsley, and Spencer, as well as O'Grady and Greasley. Yet, there is a kernel of truth if one considers the wider context of the emergence of electronic dance music, in response to a shift to a post-industrial neoliberal economic paradigm that emerged during the 1970s in New York and rapidly spread across the globe accompanied by an economic crisis.[10] On the margins of the economy, we see the development of disco and hip-hop during the 1970s in NYC, house music in Chicago and forms of techno music in both Detroit and Frankfurt during the 1980s, and, since the late 1980s, rave culture in the UK. The development of information and communication technologies accelerated during the 1990s, enhancing a sense of being a global citizen with shared relationships to an emerging digitally coded network society. The formation of electronic dance music helped dancers to ritually make sense of a new way of being in relation to a newly technologically enhanced existence, in the context of financial nomadism and enhanced entrepreneurship. Those closer connected within this globally networked world – at first in the USA, Western Europe, and Japan – acutely needed forms of music and movement to articulate what felt like a new cyborgian subjectivity.[11] Electronic dance music soon became the party soundtrack of choice in places as far apart as South Africa, Israel, India, Australia, and Brazil.

The genealogy of electronic dance music not only includes early dance music years in New York's underground disco scene during the 1970s and

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Chicago's house music scene during the 1980s; post-industrial, post-punk synthesiser music and electro; and de-territorialised electronic funk of Afro-futurist Detroit techno.[12] For example, Melville shows in his contribution that Jamaican reggae sound system culture gave the UK part of its 'rave' dance party template, which is further developed in Peter's chapter. In turn, this helped to shape the sound system logistics of teknivals and dance parades. Also, 1960s hippie music festivals and the civil rights movement concept of P.L.U.R. (Peace, Love, Unity, Respect), shaped the DIY ideology of teknivals, later commodified in the form of huge EDM festivals. Enabled by the availability of relatively affordable music technologies, geographically spread post-war zones developed their hard-hitting, minimalist styles, from gabber to kuduro. Add to this mix a general attitude of hedonism in hard times. Such formative contexts and influences, and more, have fed into what we now recognise as electronic dance music and its associated dance cultures. Such a rich family tree illustrates some of the ways in which electronic dance music and its cultural contexts may be understood. As a recorded music, especially within the promiscuous musical practices of DJ-mixes, its sounds eventually move into new contexts, leading to new interpretations, processes that are intensified by the global spread of the internet.

The convergence of various music-cultural trajectories into EDM has led to ways in which the terms 'clubbing' and 'raving' are often used interchangeably. Historically, raves are large dance parties that initially took place in London's deserted post-industrial workspaces during the 1980s, using mobile sound systems inspired by the reggae sound systems that were imported as a concept by migrants from Jamaica during the 1970s, as Melville explains in his chapter. They offered an alternative to nightclubs in terms of music policy and, operating in a semi-legal territory, allowing for alternative opening times, which can be explored further in Peter's chapter on the development of the UK rave concept with a case study from Northern England. A moral panic gripped the UK in relation to this party format during the late 1980s and early 1990s, during which a proliferation of acid house tracks from Chicago became the music of choice. By 1989 some rave organisations moved their sound system-based dance parties to rural settings to avoid police surveillance, where it met and merged with the party calendar of travellers.[13] Eventually, this set the scene both culturally and politically for the development of teknivals around nomadic sound system party crews, such as Spiral Tribe and Bedlam, which spread from the UK across Europe and beyond. Ludewig shows in her chapter how such parties partly inspired Berlin's Love Parade and its spin-offs, while

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elsewhere St John traces their lineage to DIY parties in the Australian outback, known as 'Doofs'.[14] As rave organisations struggled with police actions and new anti-rave legislation in the UK, raving once again became clubbing; going to a dance club became a form of raving, as shown in Malbon's late 1990s study of UK club culture.[15] According to Rief, the term 'clubbing' not only 'refer(s) to dance and music events in nightclubs of variable sizes and capacities', but also to 'open-air parties in the open countryside, on beaches or in the mountains'.[16] Just as the terms 'clubbing' and 'club culture' are associated with DJ-led nocturnal dancing events, regardless of setting, so is 'raving'. Due to a cultural heritage based in reggae sound system culture, dance club nights associated with breakbeat genres such as jungle, drum and bass, and its hybrid club music sound UK garage are sometimes considered 'raves' by their participants; yet the music played at those club nights is not understood as 'rave music', itself an electronic dance music subgenre that has its own, recognisable style that is partly hardcore techno, partly accelerated breakbeat.

The sonic worlds created by EDM producers are a product of the musical material they both craft and re-use within the creative relationships they forge with the music technologies they engage with. According to Strachan, '(e)ach network of creativity ... is distinct and relational according to the particular make-up of a given network. ... technologies are active in the production of experience for the human actor'.[17] In other words, the affordances of the music production and performance technologies are important actors within the creative processes. This is why certain pieces of equipment are associated with the sound of certain subgenres and even with iconic tracks, just as the analogue 12-inch vinyl dance single remains in the imagination as a residual medium within the digital DJ hardware and software, from CDJs (CD players designed for turntable manipulation) to digitally coded vinyl interfaces and digital audio workstation (DAWs).[18] The early production equipment may well be obsolete, but their affordances have made an important impact on the musical aesthetic of electronic dance music; their residual versions live on in the form of digital plug-ins for DAW computer software. In brief, at various points, electronic technology, whether in production, performance, or dissemination, has acted towards exponentially driving musical change while challenging and rupturing perceived notions of authorship, distributed creativity, and *liveness* in performativity.

In this collection, insights are shared from first-hand ethnographic and archival research on how rapid developments in digital communication technologies also impacted the production and performance of electronic

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dance music. Up to the mid-1980s this had depended on analogue tools and media, such as vinyl records, turntables, and reel-to-reel tape, as discussed in Fikentscher's chapter in relation to the importance of the DJ's physical music archives. This development accelerated with the introduction of digital music tools.[19] At its foundation, electronic dance music originated with DJs 'hacking' vinyl record players to keep people dancing – whether this meant mixing between tracks on multiple turntables or experimenting with innovative techniques to overcome the limitations of the DJ equipment. Also, during the early 1980s, house music DJ Frankie Knuckles used reel-to-reel tape machines to remix tracks to suit his queer, mostly African-American and Latinx, dance crowd at his weekly club, The Warehouse in Chicago, by adding a heavier 'foot' (kick drum) and slightly increasing the tempo.[20]

Through miniaturisation of electronic circuits, electronic music production technologies became increasingly accessible in the form of synthesisers, sequencers, effects processors, and drum machines, allowing producers, remixers, and DJs a new range of creative freedom and, eventually, merging the roles of DJ, remixer, producer, and composer together to form what is now known as 'the artist' or 'the producer'. It was during the early 1980s that iconic drum machines such as Roland's TR-808 Rhythm Composer and the bass sequencer TB-303 Bassline (initially discontinued due to poor sales), and later the TR-909 Rhythm Composer gained popularity, forming a sonic backbone to most of the emergent electronic dance music forms, with the 808 and 303 combination initially more popular with the electro crowd in New York, and the 909 gaining popularity in the Chicago house scene, followed by the Detroit techno scene and related subgenres in the UK and elsewhere. The 303 experienced a re-appreciation in 1987, addressed by Fink here, with the accidental creation of acid house, its machine-generated, random sequences enhanced by the squelching sound of its resonance control, dominating electronic dance music subgenres from acid house to psytrance and everything in between.

Important to the rise of electronic dance music during the 1980s was the introduction of MIDI (musical instrument digital interface), which allowed components such as synthesisers to communicate with each other, rather than to rely on analogue control voltage (CV) for sequencers to trigger a synthesiser. The 909, released in 1983, was one of the first instruments fitted with this connection. In 1985, the Atari 520ST was one of the first home computers kitted out with an inbuilt MIDI connection, making it the PC of choice for the so-called bedroom producer, music producers who compose and record electronic music at home, much of which was, and still

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is, dance music. The availability of MIDI to PC connections started the development of sequencing software, such as Notator in 1987 (which later morphed into Logic Pro) and Steinberg's Cubase in 1989, the forerunners of what are now known as software-based DAWs. By the start of the new millennium, Ableton Live was introduced, a DAW that enables DJs to create music sets for live performance as well as to produce music, further blurring the line between stage and the music studio, and between the DJ, remixer, and producer.[21] Illustrating this technological context in our collection, producer and performer Bougaïeff presents examples from his techno music making practices.

The digital miniaturisation of audio technology enabled the introduction of relatively affordable digital audio samplers during the 1980s and 90s, which were basically digital audio recorders with very small memory allocation. Initially used as a recording engineering tool,[22] partly to replace analogue echo effects and partly because the sampler was adopted by remixers and producers with a DJing background as an extension of their mixing practices. For example, its use can be heard extensively in both electro and house music recordings. For house music, which offers a foundation for electronic dance music, the sampler enabled DJ-producers to remake hard-to-obtain older disco classics, and to also produce crude remixes on cassettes and vinyl cuts as an alternative to Knuckles' studio remixes on reel-to-reel audio tape. Meanwhile, the Amiga 500 home computer, introduced in 1986, used audio samples for its media content, offering a potential that was exploited by young working-class jungle producers in the UK during the early 1990s, when this classic PC became available as second-hand gear. By 1991, Akai had released its iconic MPC60 sampler, which offered an interface that allowed for rhythmical programming that became popular with producers in house music, drum and bass, and hip-hop in the 1990s and later, during the early 2000s, with the West London broken beat (bruk) scene. And, by the mid-1990s, time stretching became a possibility in audio sampling, allowing for an (albeit crude) tempo deceleration in an audio sample without losing its original pitch, a feature that became especially popular with drum and bass and underground garage producers in the UK.

The accessibility of music production technologies enhanced the ability to respond within local cultural crossroads and specific music scenes, heralding the development and splintering of local sub genres, micro-labels, custom-ripped mix tapes and, since the turn of the millennium, online mixes. The affordances of these music technologies broadened the potential for an authentic DIY model of creativity, and also enabled the tightening of

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a developing neo-liberal gig economy in which major record companies no longer invest in individual music careers but instead incorporate successful music labels. The signature of the individual music maker became less important than the trademark of their company, while the DJ emerged from the shadows onto the stage as the live music performer, re-embodying studio-generated recordings that no longer represent live events, making them appear like a magician, even a god-like entity.[23] The DJ as spectacle became a marketable entity, presented on the front pages of club magazines and headlining as the main music act rather than as the stop-gap entertainer at music events. Studio producers take their music to their audiences in the role of DJ, even if they only play their own music during pre-programmed sets, leading to a rethinking of *liveness* of the performance and of the DJ as necessarily being an improvising performer.[24]

The sound of electronic dance music showcases the dynamic relationship between human and machine. Producers and DJs pursue increasingly immersive and complex machine–body interactions with their music. Indeed, dance club anthems often feature strong vocal performances, while vocal samples from older dance and movie classics can be heard throughout EDM production work. Disembodied and reprogrammed samples of the human voice are common, as are pitch-shifted vocal samples.[25] During performances, especially those with a genealogy in sound system culture, the voice and embodied presence of the MC is of importance in bringing together the crowd at drum and bass and hardcore dance events. Yet, to enable the sonic space for the MC's voice, the actual music recording is an instrumental production, meaning it is usually devoid of vocals. Within the production aesthetics of dominant subgenres, such as techno and trance, the sounds of the music production technologies are foregrounded within the sonic quality of the music. This can contribute to a trance-like virtuality that, perhaps paradoxically, enables dancers to counter or process the isolation that capitalism brings by using its technological innovations to provide the means for a concentrated form of embodied communality between fellow human beings. Where a DJ performs their skill in collecting, selecting, and programming, they simultaneously act out their experience as participant in the machine-made party, often empathic with the vibe of the crowd and sharing in its communal affect. In this way, a feedback loop develops between dancers and the DJ.[26] A blurring of function occurs between the producer and their audience, replacing the creative agency of an artist with a 'living text that resulted from the collaborative performance of DJs and ravers and existed only in the moment of their interaction with the music'.[27] Where for some

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a seeming lack of *liveness* is not an issue, for others the challenge of being seen to perform their music has encouraged DJs to manipulate controllers as part of their live performance.[28] The DJ-producer performance has become a spectacle even though the intertextuality of mixing tracks and of using music samples should be sufficient to sonically validate the curatorial prowess of the DJ-performer, in the virtuosity of mixing, blending, arrangement, and presentation of found and pre-existing sounds. Within the resulting whirlwind of machine sounds, human embodiment and the DJ's relationship to the dance floor are crucial.

The complex entanglement of human and non-human actors is crucial to the study of electronic dance music. As Wiltsher puts it, 'dance music involves fluid, fully human engagement with music that flaunts its distance from the human; a relentless, repetitive and robotic act'.[29] Electronic dance music is music to be danced to – where the teleological and processual use of looping is designed to prolong pleasure with an almost spiritually trance-like potential for ritual and psychological expansion. The relentless four-to-the-floor beat that characterises many subgenres, including house and techno, may lead one to think that this is 'machine-made music that turn[s] you into a machine',[30] and thereby enables a cyborgian subjectivity.[31] However, from a musicological perspective, Young observes that

> it is not the regular thuds of the kick drum that drives dance music's creation and perception but rather the continual stream of cycles of desire and fulfilment . . . demarcated in the sonic space with indicators of accumulation (such as multi-tracked build-ups, drum-roll effects and filter sweeps/uplifters) and arrival (the characteristic bass drop).[32]

We can find the negotiation of potentially robotic affects at a broader generic and stylistic level as well. As the marketing of hardware was initially associated with a shiny utopianism of cybertechnology, this is now redundant against the miniaturised processing power of modern computer chips. Similar to the fate of vinyl records, the music-making hardware has been re-signified as 'nostalgic' and 'authentic', referring to a time when hopeful optimism for the future of humanity lay in the cybernetic pleasures of a nascent digital posthumanism, articulated in the shiny aesthetics of digital art. This has been largely replaced by a renewed search for organic, analogue, material, and human aspects in electronic dance music – found, for example, in the aesthetics of rhythmic imperfection and vinyl lo-fi sonorities, or the inclusion of acoustic instrumentation.

The dance floor offers a space outside the everyday rules of social engagement and temporalities of daytime society, a temporary 'escape

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from the objective drudgery of life'.[33] Being thrust into an intimate, pulsating space with strangers engenders a certain sort of openness and release, only possible by surrendering to the sonic and haptic intensity of the experience. Melechi even suggests that '(t)o understand the pleasures of the dance floor we must move to a different logic of tourism where one comes to . . . [relocate] into the body'.[34] As dancers lose themselves to the music, possibly enhanced by intoxicating body technologies, a possibility is opened for a temporary levelling out of social distinction within the overpoweringly sonically dominated and often carefully curated dance space, arguably creating a sense of oneness and a reported feeling of equity amongst participants.[35] Especially on dance floors that cater for marginalised social groups, such as gay clubs and the dance cultures that stem from this, the idea is embraced that regardless of social standing or material wealth all are included in the equalising throbbing mass of bodies on the dance floor. As the mass of bodies moves together to one unifying beat, a process of entrainment is triggered, producing a shared collective identity.[36] In the drawing together of a temporary sense of community for just one night or weekend, the dance floor intrinsically seems to evade formal structures of control, creating environments that are worlds within worlds: distinct from everyday social interactions, yet still embedded within broader society.[37] As such, dance floors may offer potential for cultural resistance, as expanded on by Ludewig in her contribution that addresses the dance party as space of protest. Some participants may even claim the dance floor helped them to review their living practices by finding alternatives close to countercultural claims that birthed alternative arts festivals such as Boom Festival in Portugal or Burning Man in the USA.[38] Yet, unless reinforced by longitudinal everyday contexts, such ideals can be short lived and even exploited by entrepreneurial party organisers as evidenced by many hugely successful EDM festivals and holiday destinations. Importantly, as Spencer, Gadir, Parsley, and O'Grady and Greasley point out in this collection, during electronic dance music events social differences can also be reinforced as dancers group together, while excluding others.

This collection sets the scene with a consideration of the main elements of an electronic dance music event, including the developments of notions and practices of the rave concept by cultural sociologist Beate Peter, which underpins most of the associations that readers may have with electronic dance music culture. This is followed by a discussion from an architectural perspective by Catharine Rossi of how the dance club evolved from both the nightclub and the development of immersive audio-visual art spaces.

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The notion of the sound system is developed by cultural studies expert Caspar Melville, with reference to the Black Atlantic cultural links between the UK and Jamaica. The opening section is concluded with a contribution by ethnomusicologist Kai Fikentscher on the importance of the DJ's archive to the development of electronic dance music.

The collection moves forward to examples of geographically diverse cultural contexts while emphasising dynamics between local contexts and a globalised electronic dance music culture. Cultural anthropologist Bianca Ludewig addresses the relationship between techno dance parties and the encroachment of, arguably neo-liberal, gentrification of urban spaces in Berlin. Musicologist Stefanie Alisch provides a detailed ethnographic account of Angolan Kuduro sound system culture within a warzone in relation to Black Atlantic cultural politics. Sociologist Matthew Ming-Tak Chew relates an overview of how global dance culture is locally translated in various ways within China. Finally, Bernardo Attias, Professor of Media and Communications, and media philosopher tobias van Veen provide an account of online DJ performances using broadcast software that during the Covid-19 lockdown period (2020–2022) reached global audiences; using their own experience as a starting point they elaborate on mediation of electronic dance music culture.

With an understanding of the diversity of cultural contexts in which electronic dance music cultures can be understood, the collection next moves its focus towards the contexts of the music itself, with a set of distinct case studies, each offering a different approach to the subject. Media and music expert Chris Christodoulou shows from a music cultural perspective how within a British urban context, an aesthetic of acceleration is applied to the production of drum and bass and related subgenres. Rupert Till, Professor of Music, delves into a counter-narrative to accelerated culture with a genealogy of chill out music, a genre that developed in parallel to the frenzied dance floor. The issue of genre aesthetics in electronic dance music styles is further addressed by cultural anthropologist Botond Vitos in a chapter that investigates genre definitions in online music provider Bandcamp.

Having mapped out issues of style, the chapters that follow delve deeper into the aesthetics of electronic dance music, with case studies that illustrate the production of a range of subjectivities. Music psychologist Maria Perevedentseva provides a theoretical framework for the analytical study of timbre in electronic dance music. From the perspective of music practice, music producer Nicolas Bougaïeff delves into his approach to techno production to illustrate decision-making in creating a sonic palette. Taking an

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American perspective on racial politics, Robert Fink, Professor of Music, explores ways to understand serendipity in music making, with a case study on the influential squelching sound of the Roland TB-303 Bassline instrument. Musicologist Tami Gadir completes this section with a critical analysis of the idea of flow on the dance floor, which is not as apolitical as dancers may perceive.

Gadir's critical assessment of flow segues into the narrative of the final section, which returns to the realities of social difference, based on ethnographic evidence. Samantha Parsley, Professor of Organization Studies, tackles gender politics with a case study of the production environments of EDM. Sociologist Ed Katrak Spencer notes gendered interactions on a brostep dance floor at an American EDM festival. The volume closes with the important issue of the ageing dancer, addressed by applied performance experts Alice O'Grady and Alinka Greasley. Are you ever too old to dance? We think not – keep on dancing!

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