MUSIC AND GENRE: NEW DIRECTIONS

Schulich School of Music, McGill University, Montréal

September 27-28, 2014
Room A832, New Music Building
Day 1: Saturday September 27

Digital Genre Machines: Between the Dissolution and the Reification of Genre

Coffee and welcome
Georgina Born, David Brackett, Mimi Haddon

9.00-9.15

Keynote
John Frow (University of Sydney),
“Scale and Taxonomy in Musical Genres”
Chair: David Brackett

9.15-10.30

Genre, Circulation, and the Formatting of Consumption
Mads Krogh (Aarhus University),
“Format Radio, Genre Cultures and Segmentation within Danish National Radio”
Blake Durham (University of Oxford),
“The Work of Genre: Circulation and the Politics of Classification,”
Eric Smialek (McGill University),
“Metal Taxonomies: Parallel Universes of Genre”

10.30-12.30

Lunch (on your own)

12.30-1.30

Genre and MIR (Music Information Retrieval)
Jason Hockman (McGill University),
Aaron Einbond (Harvard University),
“Beyond Automatic Genre Classification: MIR and moving Information”
Eric Drott (University of Texas),
“Genre in the Age of Algorithms”

1.30-3.30

Tea

3.30–4.00

Roundtable Discussion
Glenn McDonald (the Echo Nest and Spotify),
“The Genre Grinder’s Song (What It’s Like to Run a Machine for Sorting Music)”
John Frow, Eric Drott, Aaron Einbond, Georgina Born (Chair)

4.00-6.00

Dinner
Au Petit Extra, 1690, rue Ontario Est, Montréal, QC H2L 1S7
Participants are kindly asked to pay for themselves

7:30
Day 2: Sunday September 28
Genre is Social: From Intra-Musical to Sociological Theories of Genre

Keynote 9.00-10.15
David Brackett (McGill University),
“‘Thar’s Gold in Them Hillbillies’: Old-Time Music in the 1920s and Its Relations”
Chair: Eric Drott

Historiography, Genealogy, and Emergence 10.15-12.15
Steve Waksman (Smith College),
“All What Jazz? Genre, Performance, and the Social Geography of Early Jazz”
Mimi Haddon (McGill University),
“What is Post-Punk? A Case Study in Genre and Genealogy”
Sonya Hofer (Colorado College),
“‘Atomic’ Music: Navigating Experimental Electronica and Sound Art through Microsound”

Lunch (on your own) 12.15-1.15

Reflexivity 1.15-2.45
Christopher Haworth (University of Calgary),
“Between Critical Concept and Genre: ‘Non-Cochlear’ Sonic Art”
Patrick Valiquet (University of Oxford),
“Genre Effects: Sources and Styles of Association in Electronic Art Music”

Time, Affect, the Social, and the Material 2.45-4.15
Georgina Born (University of Oxford),
“Time, the Social, the Material: For a Non-Teleological Analysis of Musical Genre”
Charles Kronengold (Stanford University),
“Genres, Affects, Temporalities”

Tea 4.15-4.30

Keynote 4.30-5.45
Karin Barber (University of Birmingham),
“Voice and Text in Yoruba Oral Genres” Chair: Georgina Born

Final discussion 5.45-6.30
FIN
ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

John Frow (University of Sydney)  john.frow@sydney.edu.au

Scale and Taxonomy in Musical Genres

The folk taxonomies that organise music download sites are conceptually heterogeneous, are structured at different levels of scale, and deploy categories that are not mutually exclusive. Many of their exemplars are assigned to multiple genres, and the relation between genres and sub-genres is unclear. In this they reflect the problems of any more or less formal system of generic taxonomy; all such systems work with similarly ad hoc and pragmatic forms of ordering, and they are ‘folk’ taxonomies in the sense of supposing the possibility of a coherent and rigorous system. In this paper I look at the organising structures of Amazon and iTunes in order to pose two questions: Is it possible to specify the levels of scale and scope that would allow us to define musical genres as coherent formal and rhetorical structures? And what are the uses that we can and should properly make of musical taxonomies?

Biography:
John Frow is an Australian Research Council Professorial Fellow in the Department of English at the University of Sydney; he has previously held chairs at the University of Melbourne, Edinburgh University, and the University of Queensland. He is the author of numerous books in literary and cultural studies, including *Marxism and Literary History* (1986), *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* (1995), *Time and Commodity Culture* (1997), *Accounting for Tastes: Australian Everyday Cultures* (with Tony Bennett and Mike Emmison, 1999), *Genre* (2006; second, revised edition 2014), *The Practice of Value* (2013), and *Character and Person* (2014). He edited *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader* with Meaghan Morris (1993) and the *Sage Handbook of Cultural Analysis* with Tony Bennett (2008). He is currently working on a study of regimes of interpretation and value.

David Brackett (McGill University)  david.brackett@mcgill.ca

“‘Thar’s Gold in Them Hillbillies’: Old-Time Music in the 1920s and Its Relations

Discussions about genre in popular music tend to vacillate between two poles. At one extreme, genres are defined by the notion of consistent style traits. At the other extreme, in the quotidian discourse of musicians and fans, one often finds an insistence on the unique quality of individual texts, a stance that would seem to militate against the usefulness of genre as a conceptual tool. Yet both of these extremes encounter contradictions, the first in the inconsistency of formal features of the texts grouped within a single genre, and the second in the neces-
sity of relying on genre labels in order to communicate about music. In response to this apparent conceptual impasse, I will argue for analyzing genre according to the following four properties: 1) that a genre becomes legible due to its relation to other genres at a particular moment in time, rather than because of internally consistent formal features; 2) that genre relations exist simultaneously on multiple levels corresponding to their social function and use; 3) that genre is iterative in that it works on the basis of its citation of conventions, or put differently, on the basis of repetition and difference, with each invocation of a generic model resulting in a modification of that model; and 4) the ability of genres to evoke connotations of group identities, an ability that is particularly pronounced in popular music genres.

The category of “old-time music” in the 1920s will be used as a case study to illustrate these four properties of genre. Confined as it is to the three years during which the old-time category emerged and stabilized, this study allows us to observe the music industry’s attempts to find an appropriate label, sound, and conception of the audience that occurred during the inchoate period of the genre’s formation. This analysis, drawing on primary historical documents and sound recordings, will reveal the interdependence of the musical/sonic properties of genre, its institutional status, and its discursive production.

Biography:

Karin Barber (University of Birmingham) k.j.barber@bham.ac.uk

Voice and Text in Yoruba Oral Genres

In anthropological and literary approaches to genre, there has been a tension between the idea of a classificatory system based on the identification of formal features, and the idea of genre as a mode of practice involving the orientation of speaker to hearer in a specific social context for particular communicative purposes. However, African (and no doubt other) case studies show that local emic conceptions of genre – local ways of shaping and organising cultural expressions – may combine these two perspectives and may also resist subsumption into either of them, in ways that widen the range of our scholarly categories. An example is the concepts used in Yoruba (Nigeria) to organize and think about praise
poetry. I draw attention to four points here: (1) praise epithets/performances/repertoires reveal ideas about the relationship between part and whole deriving from a non-European philosophy of number. (2) Identification of named genres operates according to two cross-cutting principles – one based on structural features of the verbal text (identifiable even when one text is incorporated into another), the other on voice (vocal qualities associated with the social role of the performer, the situation and event). The intersection of these two modes of identification shows how oral genres can be locally conceptualised simultaneously as entextualised artefacts and as emergent practice. (3) When praises are enunciated on Yoruba dundún (“talking” drums), musical and textual dimensions are fused: the musical text is a representation of a verbal text, but at the same time the stripped-down sound-form of the drum tones isolates the core process of verbal textual constitution. (4) An ethnographically rich exploration of local genre conceptions makes it possible to trace the way in which “new” genres emerge in a given cultural and historical context: in this case, how popular jùjú and fújí music genres were built upon existing modes of textual/musical production.

Biography:
Karin Barber is an anthropologist with a particular interest in popular culture, religion, and the verbal arts, both oral and written. She lived and worked in Nigeria for many years and most of her research has been on Yoruba topics. She has published books on praise poetry, popular travelling theatre and everyday local uses of literacy. She is currently working on early Yoruba print culture. Her most recent book, Print Culture and the First Yoruba Novel (2012), which won the Paul Hair Prize in 2013, came out of her current research. She is co-editor of Africa, the journal of the International African Institute, and is a Fellow of the British Academy.

GENRE, CIRCULATION, AND FORMATTING CONSUMPTION

Mads Krogh (Aarhus University) musmk@dac.au.dk

Format Radio, Genre Cultures and Segmentation within Danish National Radio

It is the aim of this presentation to discuss how programming practices connected to format radio relate listener segments to music genre cultures, and in particular how this relation implies a reification of genre. It is suggested that the practices of format radio illustrate a ‘broadcast-precursor’ to processes of reification at work in today’s personalized music recommendation services. As an empirical frame for discussion I consider the introduction of format radio within Danish National Radio broadcasting (DR) during the early 1990s. Format radio was introduced as part of an overall restructuring of DR’s FM channels resulting in clearly distinguished, genre-based channel profiles enforced by the introduction of programmed music playlists. As a basis for formatting, listeners’ tastes were ‘mapped’ by way of surveys, interviews, polls etc. and translated into
guidelines for programmers.

The attempted alignment of listeners’ preferences and music radio content, which characterize format radio, works to reify genre in at least two ways. On the one hand, music genre cultures are reduced to matters of for instance style, atmosphere and specific listening situations featuring in the surveys etc., which are translated into programming policies. On the other hand, these policies may come to educate listeners on musico-generic differences, when e.g. particular radio shows or channels become emblematic of certain genres. The mapping and translation of listeners’ tastes implies in this respect a reciprocal construction of audience and music radio and a kind of feedback loop, as format radio enrolls listeners and (in a broader sense) music genre cultures in an assemblage with the aim of managing the uncertainties of an ever-changing music and media market. I aim to elucidate this assemblage in order to address how the reification of genre may be regarded as a process, which is ‘oriented to the production of teleology and thus the erasure of its own contingency’ (Born 2012).

Biography:
Mads Krogh is associate professor of popular music culture at the Department of Aesthetics and Communication, Aarhus University, Denmark. He has a worked with issues of musical practice and ontology, genre, mediation and location with an empirical focus on hip hop and rap music in Denmark and Scandinavia. He is editor of Danish Musicology Online (http://www.danishmusicologyonline.dk/index_uk.html) and presently a member of RAMUND – A Century of Radio and Music in Denmark: Music Genres, Radio Genres, and Mediatisation, a collective research project funded by the The Danish Council for Independent Research (http://ramund.ikk.ku.dk).

Blake Durham (University of Oxford) blake.durham@worc.ox.ac.uk

The Work of Genre: Circulation and the Politics of Classification

What roles can genre be said to perform within networks of musical circulation, and what forms of musical knowledge do individuals apply to their personal processes of musical classification? This paper draws upon comparative ethnomusicographic research within a private BitTorrent tracker community and users of the streaming service Spotify to analyze the processes of musical classification and individual contribution within strictly regulated networks of musical exchange. Examining how consumers of music utilize notions of genre points to the interplay between the aesthetic and social dimensions of music. However, it also draws attention to the ways in which technical systems of musical circulation serve to configure the user, refiguring and governing understandings of musical relations. Georgina Born’s model of the intersecting planes of social mediation is deployed to illuminate the controversies over ambiguity in genre identification conventions: genre simultaneously draws together imagined communities,
refracts macro-social formations, and encapsulates the micro-social creative actions of listeners. Lastly, the mutual mediation of genre and exchange is demonstrated through unpacking the hierarchies of musical value and the limitations on acceptable formats for musical distribution. Digitally-circulated release formats not only participate in the historical lineages of music’s commodity forms, they are also bound up in the aesthetic and social conventions that often come to characterize and distinguish particular genres: musical form itself is implicated in the formats of digital music, and the prioritization of albums over singles and mixtapes speaks to the regimes of value deployed by circulatory systems.

Biography:
Blake Durham is a DPhil student at the University of Oxford, supervised by Georgina Born. He received an MA in contemporary music studies from Goldsmiths, University of London and studied electro-acoustic music, technology and cultural industries in his undergraduate at Loyola University New Orleans. His research focuses on practices of digital music circulation and consumption through comparative ethnographic analysis of a private file-sharing community, users of licensed streaming services, and offline practices of musical ownership in the southern United States. He is interested in tracing the continuities between online and offline musical behavior and the unique socialities and theories of value engendered by digital modes of exchange.

Eric Smialek (McGill University) eric.smialek@mcgill.ca

Metal Taxonomies: Parallel Universes of Genre

Over the past thirty years, heavy metal discourse has shown a particular obsession for genre categories and boundaries, resulting in both a surprising number of efforts to chart genre taxonomies and a great deal of policing by fans over what styles of aggressive music are emphatically not “true” forms of metal. When viewed through the lens of genre theory (Foucault 1972, Derrida 1980, Bakhtin 1986), genre taxonomies can help popular music scholars to better understand fan debates about genre by drawing attention to the aesthetic values and assumptions that inform the taxonomies, evident in the implicit logic of their graphical displays.

Beginning with taxonomies from a French scholarly monograph (Hein 2003) and a documentary film on metal (Dunn 2005), I will demonstrate how the authors of each chart rely on a linear conception of influence that privileges legibility and stability while sacrificing more complex relationships such as reciprocal influences between newer and older genres and the simultaneous participation of musical texts in multiple genre categories (Derrida 1980). I then proceed to show how forms of subcultural capital in metal (Bourdieu 1993, Thornton 1996, Kahn-Harris 2007) inform the organization of two very different taxonomies, an educational genre exhibition at an art gallery (Hill 2008) and an elaborate genre
map on an early fan website (Lestrade 2001). Finally, using one of the most popular and sophisticated genre taxonomies of metal available to date, I demonstrate how the online “Map of Metal” (Grant and Galbraith 2010) reproduces popular narratives about subgenre hierarchies and myths about metal's singular origin in England (Wallach 2011). By drawing attention to the often subtle assumptions behind metal taxonomies, I will argue that these reified visualizations of genre both inform and reflect common, but often erroneous, beliefs about metal music circulating widely amongst the genre’s audiences and producers.

Biography:
Eric Smialek is a doctoral candidate in musicology at McGill’s Schulich School of Music where he is writing a dissertation that combines the study of fan discourses with close music analysis of extreme metal. He recently served as the graduate student representative of the Canadian branch of the International Society for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM-Canada) and is a three-time winner of their Peter Narvaez Memorial Student Paper Prize. In addition to a chapter in Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies (Routledge, forthcoming), Eric is currently completing articles on musical expression in extreme metal vocals, self-exoticism in the music of Icelandic band Sigur Rós, and the role of music at hockey games to promote regional forms of nationalism. Prior to graduate school, Eric enjoyed a brief stint playing electric guitar, keyboards, and bass for black and death metal bands in Vancouver, BC.

GENRE AND MIR (MUSIC INFORMATION RETRIEVAL)

Jason A. Hockman (McGill University) jason.hockman@mail.mcgill.ca

Breakbeat Era: On the Creation and Development of the Technologically-Driven Genres of Hardcore, Jungle, and Drum & Bass

Beginning in the late 1980s, the United Kingdom’s DJ-oriented electronic music community embraced home computing and sampling technologies, and subsequently developed innovative techniques to master these technologies. These efforts resulted in the development of three related genres of popular electronic music: Hardcore, Jungle, and Drum & Bass (HJDB). A common attribute shared by these genres is their unique usage of fast-paced sampled drums derived primarily from breakbeats—samples of short percussion solos typically from 1960s to 1980s Funk and Jazz recordings. Over the course of HJDB’s history, the role of breakbeats in these genres has changed considerably, due to a variety of factors, including the continued advancement of computing and sampling technologies, as well as an enduring competitive spirit amongst the musicians in the HJDB community.

This presentation will consist of two main objectives. The first is to present a historical account of the HJDB genres themselves, including a description of
the technologies and associated techniques used in the creation of this music. The second objective is to present novel music information retrieval methods—breakbeat classification, downbeat detection, and breakbeat modification estimation—used together to provide a description of breakbeat usage within HJDB music. Such tools are imperative for the cataloging of large-scale trends (e.g., popularity of breakbeats, common rhythmic transformations of breakbeats) as well as identifying the musicological influence of artists, subgenres, and the breakbeats themselves. Both the historical and analytical objectives have been informed by over twenty interviews with musicians and label owners from throughout the history of HJDB. Computational methods based on HJDB-specific knowledge are shown to significantly outperform generalized music analysis techniques, highlighting the importance of style-specific approaches for computational musicology.

Biography:
Jason A. Hockman holds a PhD in Music from McGill University and a Masters of Music from New York University. In the fields of music information retrieval and computational musicology, he focuses on computational meter and rhythm description with a specialization in popular British electronic music. He is a professional electronic musician with critically-acclaimed releases on a variety of established international Drum & Bass record labels including his own Detuned Transmissions imprint, and he has had his music remixed by major artists in the genre including Omni Trio and Deep Blue.

Aaron Einbond (Harvard University) einbond@fas.harvard.edu

Beyond Automatic Genre Classification: MIR and Moving Information

Since its beginnings in the late 1990s (Fingerhut 2004), the growing field of Music Information Retrieval (MIR) has drawn increasing attention for its technological as well as socioeconomic impact. The recent acquisition of EchoNest by Spotify is a case in point of how MIR is reaching an ever-wider network of listeners, users, developers, and marketers. However, the populist messages of these companies may bely increasing systematization through applications like automatic genre classification. MIR uses audio feature extraction to summarize information about digital sound. An audio feature, or descriptor, is any characteristic attributed to audio such as pitch, loudness, brilliance, or higher-level metadata. However, audio feature analysis is also being exploited toward creative uses by a recent generation of composers and sound artists.

Rather than a reification of genre, MIR can leverage machine listening to organize sound that may be difficult to classify due to its noise content, timbral richness, or vast quantity. This sound can then be re-contextualized through concatenative synthesis, audio mosaicking, and algorithmic composition. In contrast to the proprietary software of commercial MIR, an increasing selection of free and
open-source tools are being developed for creative use, often by the artists themselves. Yet as MIR permeates creation, definitions of creativity themselves must be reassessed. To borrow phrases from writers Kenneth Goldsmith and Marjorie Perloff, “uncreative writing” becomes the condition of digital mediation, where, rather than generating new information, emphasis is given to “moving information” through MIR.

References:

Biography:
Aaron Einbond’s work explores the intersection of composition, computer music, field recording, and sound installation. He was born in New York in 1978 and has studied at Harvard, Cambridge, U.C. Berkeley, and IRCAM in Paris with Mario Davidovsky, Julian Anderson, Edmund Campion, and Philippe Leroux. He is a 2013 Guggenheim Fellow and has taught at Columbia, Harvard, and the University of Huddersfield where he co-edited *Noise In And As Music* and co-organized an interdisciplinary symposium on the topic in 2013. Upcoming projects include and a Giga-Hertz Prize commission for the SWR Experimentalstudio and a Musical Research Residency at IRCAM.

*Eric Drott* (University of Texas) drott@utexas.edu

*Genre in the Age of Algorithms*

This paper explores transformations that notions of musical genre have undergone in response to developments in the field of Music Information Retrieval (MIR). With the growth of online streaming services, algorithms developed to identify, classify, and search large libraries of music files have become integral to music distribution infrastructures, their effects registered, if indirectly, in the playlists generated by Spotify, iTunes and Rdio, among others. As others have noted with regard to search engines and face recognition software, the power wielded by these algorithms is inversely proportional to their transparency. Because their procedural logics generally operate below the threshold of users’ awareness, the results they return are liable to be taken at face value; and because the assumptions guiding these algorithms are equally obscured—assumptions governing how they go about relating songs, artists, and genres, and how they define the categories they present as given—it is often difficult to discern to what extent these assumptions act upon and perhaps even create the musical realities
This presentation centers on two issues connected to how music genres are being reimagined in and through these algorithms. The first concerns the mediations involved in making music amenable to the measurement, comparison, and categorization that MIR systems entail. By treating classification as a computational problem, algorithmic processes transform genres into fixed lists of quantifiable parameters. Acoustic features, social tags, and metadata alike are expressed numerically to enable precise measures of similarity and distance. A second issue concerns how the relationships thus fabricated are represented, focusing on the genre maps produced in association with data-mining firms like the Echonest. These maps not only provide insight into how the musical field is being reordered by MIR systems; they also shed light on the changing social imaginaries implied by these new technologies.

Biography:
Eric Drott teaches music theory at the University of Texas at Austin. He is author of *Music and the Elusive Revolution: Cultural Politics and Political Culture in France, 1968-1981* (California, 2011), which considers how different music communities responded to the uprising and general strike of May ’68, and how the political values, meanings, and uses ascribed to music are mediated by genre. Other work on the practices of musical genre includes the article ‘The End(s) of Genre’, which appeared in the Spring 2013 issue of *Journal of Music Theory*.

**ROUNTABLE DISCUSSION**

Glenn McDonald (the Echo Nest and Spotify) glennm@spotify.com

*The Genre Grinder’s Song (What It’s Like to Run a Machine for Sorting Music)*

At the Echo Nest we track approximately 28 million songs currently available online. If you know which one you’re looking for, we can definitely help you find it. But what if you don't? Most of my work, including the Every Noise at Once genre maps, arises out of our desperate pragmatic need to programmatically organize this vast space of music information into navigable and at least vaguely intelligible form, so that the weight of everything that’s possible can become a gravity that pulls you into a universe of joy, instead of a weight that falls on you and crushes you where you stand. Genre classification is not the only component of this effort, but in many ways it’s the one that encapsulates all the others. Genres are how we name the neighborhoods in this space, and talk about our movements among them, and maybe decide where to go in the first place. And, maybe, they are also part of how we discover the wonderful unknown places where people we’ve never heard of live and sing. I’ll talk about how we do this using data and computers and math, what works well and what doesn’t, and how the world is maybe different now that this is possible.
Biography:
Glenn McDonald is a Principal Engineer and Data Alchemist for the Echo Nest at Spotify, where he spends his time turning interesting data into meaningful and useful data, or sometimes vice versa. He believes music is the thing humans are best at, and that computers and data ought to be able to help us lose ourselves methodically in joy. His various attempts to explore and organize awe include the genre map Every Noise at Once, the world-on-shuffle Echo Nest Discovery playlist, tabulating and analyzing the Village Voice’s annual Pazz & Jop critics poll, running the empath heavy metal statistics site, and writing the long-running music-review column The War Against Silence.

HISTORIOGRAPHY, GENEALOGY, AND EMERGENCE

Steve Waksman (Smith College) stwaksman@smith.edu

All What Jazz? Genre, Performance, and the Social Geography of Early Jazz

In his influential analysis of popular music genres, Franco Fabbri offers the key observation that, “Each genre has its own space set out in a particular way” (Fabbri, 1981, p. 57). I have built upon Fabbri’s insight into the spatial character of music genres in my previous work on heavy metal (Waksman, 2009), exploring the link between metal as a genre and the emergence of “arena rock” in the 1970s. With this paper I want to move this line of inquiry in a different direction, to examine not the one-to-one correspondence between particular genres and specific performance spaces, but instead to survey how a given genre accumulates a range of conflicting and contradictory associations through its presentation in multiple kinds of venues.

To address this issue, I will examine the evolution of “live” jazz performance during the period from the late 1910s through the end of the 1920s, emphasizing the multi-valence of “jazz” as a term that circulated through a wide variety of performance spaces, in each of which it was invested with a distinct sense of significance. To what extent was jazz as it appeared in vaudeville the same as jazz that appeared in the era’s cabarets, nightclubs or dance halls? What does it mean that “symphonic” jazz of the sort associated with Paul Whiteman flourished as much in movie theaters as in concert halls? Seeking answers to these questions, I will highlight two further areas of inquiry: how the spatial mobility of jazz was linked to American race relations of the time, and how jazz served as a term of musical classification that was laden with complicated assumptions about the racial character of the music, who performed it and who listened to it; and, how the movement of jazz through diverse social spaces bore upon its standing as a musical form that provoked a re-articulation of “high” and “low” cultural discourses as they existed in the early twentieth century.
References:

Biography:

Mimi Haddon (McGill University) mimi.haddon@mail.mcgill.ca

*What is Post-Punk? A Case Study in Genre and Genealogy*

This presentation takes the genre known as post-punk as a case study to analyse the conditions that contribute to the formation of a genre or category of popular music. By scrutinizing articles in the rock media from the mid- to late 1970s I examine the different ways in which post-punk was labeled and thought of in its own time. I illuminate a fluidity and interchangeability between genres such as punk, new wave, power pop, new musick and industrial that has been lost in the media, fan discourses and scholarship of more recent years. Four albums that fans consider to be at the core of the post-punk canon will be my main musical examples: Wire’s *Chairs Missing* (1978), PiL’s *Metal Box* (1979), Joy Division’s *Unknown Pleasures* (1979), and the Fall’s *Hex Enduction Hour* (1982). In addition to tracking the discourse surrounding these records, I will also analyse their stylistic similarities and differences amongst each other and in relation to surrounding genres of the period, such as punk, reggae and disco.

My inquiry is less concerned with pinpointing post-punk’s origin than with asserting that genres are not unencumbered entities that exist “out there” that can be positively identified using objective criteria or continuities, even if such criteria does cut across the aesthetic, the social, the institutional, etc. Rather, by reading a presentist conception of post-punk against the historical period’s uncertainty regarding categorization I elucidate the values according to which intermediaries such as journalists and scholars have contributed to the ossifica-
tion of post-punk as a genre.

Biography:
Mimi Haddon is a doctoral candidate at McGill’s Schulich School of Music. Combining her interests in popular music, genre and identity, her dissertation is a genre study of the post-punk period. Most recently she has been preparing an article on the social and musical exchanges amongst post-punk and dub-reggae musicians in Britain in the late 1970s, and the attendant post-colonial and racial politics of the era. In the coming year two separate collected editions will include two of her articles: one that explores genre, identity and irony in relation to Paul Anka’s performance of “Smells Like Teen Spirit” and another on queer historiographical approaches to the music of the Smiths.

Sonya Hofer (Colorado College) sonyahoferlanz@gmail.com

“Atomic” Music: Navigating Experimental Electronica and Sound Art through Microsound

This paper looks at microsound—an emergent term, corresponding concept, and associated genre of experimental electronica appearing in the late 1990s—which animates the idea of sound as material entity, and, as I will demonstrate, ultimately complicates and expands questions concerning disciplinary boundaries. The conceptualization of sounds as having mass or as matter, particularly on an imagined “atomic” level as is implicit in microsound, has had many historical antecedents, especially in the twentieth century. However, the comparison, representation, and analogy of sound as an object of material composition is a peculiar metaphor as sound is not literally tangible nor does it have any inherent material substance in and of itself.

At the meeting point of microsound, a wide spectrum of musicians and listeners across genres and subgenres has converged, along with a diverse range of technologies and approaches to those technologies. In what follows, I begin by tracing the emergence of microsound, focusing on how it pre-figured and re-configured certain electronic genres and also on its inherent conceptualization as musical “matter.” Microsound conceptually had the ability to draw in a variety of aesthetic connections with, and in some senses subsume, several experimental electronica genres and subgenres (such as glitch, microhouse, minimal), all of which impacted and became part of its very notion. Furthermore, with its insistence on materiality that helped to conceive sound in a more tactile manner, microsound consequently also gathered in and associated genres beyond musical ones and in the realm of the visual and plastic arts, from minimalism/Minimalism to overlappings with sound art. As will be introduced and observed, sound art reveals pressing, necessary issues of experimental electronica; I argue that exploring the inception and implications of microsound and how it curiously seams together genres and disciplines provides a vital critical perspective on the
evolving relationship between art and music. And yet, while greatly perplexing these lines, microsound ultimately helps to clarify vagaries by offering some direction from within the murky ontological terrain by articulating specific points of connection, commonality, and divergence between these intertwined fields of creation.

Biography:
Sonya Hofer is a musicologist on the music faculty at Colorado College as their Riley Scholar in Residence. She completed her BMus at the University of British Columbia and was awarded a PhD from Stony Brook University, New York. Her dissertation, *Experimental Electronica Beyond ‘the Great Divide’*, explores the interdisciplinary terrain of a significant metagenre of Electronic Music—Experimental Electronica—and focuses on how the repertory eludes categorization by perplexing disciplinary lines. Hofer’s research examines the intersections and negotiations of not only the varying fields of musical creation, such as those spanning the classical and the popular, but also the varying fields of artistic creation, such as those between art and music. Hofer has also worked as an art gallery curator and in various guises within Indie Rock.

**REFLEXIVITY**

**Christopher Haworth** (University of Calgary) littl.shyning.man@gmail.com

*Between Critical Concept and Genre: ‘Non-Cochlear’ Sonic Art*

The context for this talk is the recent critical, institutional and artistic efforts to define sound art: its identity as a discrete art genre separate from music, its critical concept, and the status and authority of the varied genealogies it pulls together. My talk centres on an event from 2010: the high-profile Instal festival in Glasgow. Breaking with a programming style that had previously focused on free improvisation, noise, lower case and other Wire magazine-sanctioned genres, at this festival a kind of speculative concept of sound art was auditioned, one greatly informed by recent work in art criticism and philosophy. Titled Music Is More Than Music, and comprising talks and performances equally, it drew together improvisers, noise musicians, sound artists, philosophers, theorists, lawyers and conceptual artists in order to consider music, not as a formal object or self-contained language, but as, quoting the organizer, a ‘schematic diagram, a proof of concept, a vehicle for an idea.’ From a certain perspective, this experiment in conceptual sound practices might be viewed as a glimpse into genre-formation in the making - the birth cries, perhaps, of a new ‘non-cochlear’ sonic art practice, to borrow Seth Kim Cohen’s pre-emptive phrase. But what was striking about the event was the way that genre was consistently disavowed, critiqued, or repressed in the works and talks presented. Whether explicitly or implicitly, genre inside of this new conceptual sonic art was figured variously as anti-modern and regressive; correlationist; as only aesthetic; or as inherently opposed to creative
freedom.

In this talk I take these positions to be symptoms of an ontological split in contemporary art music: a moment of critical indecision in its underlying philosophical concept. I will argue that the provisional ‘conceptual’ turn in sonic art - essentially a discursive construct - has been mobilised as a way of reframing and restating a set of internal contradictions and impasses pertaining to a diverse array of modernist sub-genres; ones that, inside of the discourse of music, would otherwise come under the broad church of noise and free improvisation [340].

Biography:
Christopher Haworth is the Eyes High postdoctoral scholar in music at University of Calgary working on Networked Computer Music. Previously, he held a one-year fellowship at McGill University in the Department of Philosophy, where he studied the poetics and politics of ‘instruments’ in new media performance. His writing has been published in Leonardo Music Journal (MIT Press) and the edited collection Resonances: Noise and Contemporary Music (Bloomsbury Press) amongst others. He is also a composer of computer music, with interests in psychoacoustic phenomena and its creative applications, ‘technological aesthetics’, and issues surrounding liveness and authenticity in technologically-mediated contemporary musics.

Patrick Valiquet (University of Oxford) patrick.valiquet@music.ox.ac.uk

Genre Effects: Sources and Styles of Association in Electronic Art Music

The concept of genre occupies a problematic position in the theoretical discourse of electronic art music (EAM). For many producers the recognition of generic norms suggests an abdication of creative agency or an arbitrary analytical perspective. Since the field also tends to be one of ‘producers for producers’ in the Bourdieuan sense, this attitude is rarely contradicted by audiences, who mostly come from the same limited institutional sphere and thus know implicitly what to expect with regard to its aesthetic and social conventions. Nevertheless, hierarchies and regularities are elaborated by musicians and intermediaries, and discerned by analysts and ethnographers. How do these associations happen despite such apparent anomie?

In this paper I draw upon ethnographic and archival work conducted in Montreal about efforts to reform institutions and perform innovation in response to ubiquitous digitalisation. The transformation of EAM in Montreal since the 1990s amplifies latent aesthetic and social relations, condenses local political and economic currents, and dramatises global narratives of democratisation and pluralisation with respect to digitalisation more broadly. My observations show that genre in EAM plays a major role in the performance of belonging, and can have both normative and rhetorical effects. At the sonic surface, EAM producers draw
upon a rich repertoire of gestural, genealogical and situational conventions. At an organological level, they develop markers of genre in the articulation of technical knowledge, material aesthetics and instrumentation. Finally, they reshape these associations over time with the help of changing institutional and policy formations. Genre effects thus accrue along specific pathways through the field, to characteristic objects or setups, and to individual musicians as they play out their careers. The multi-dimensional frictions that occur as these effects accumulate make discerning genre in EAM a highly individual and perspectival task. This reinforces the strong sense of plurality associated with digitalisation.

Biography:
Patrick Valiquet studies the practices, technologies and epistemologies that shape electroacoustic music and sound art. He is currently finishing a doctoral degree at St Catherine’s College, Oxford, where he has held a research studentship with Georgina Born’s ERC Research Group, and a doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. In 2014 he will take up a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Edinburgh with support from the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et Culture.

TIME, AFFECT, THE SOCIAL, AND THE MATERIAL

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Time, the Social, the Material: For a Non-Teleological Analysis of Musical Genre

One of the aims of this conference is to harness the fertility of the present moment for understanding the emergence and evolution of musical genres, while retuning the theoretical apparatus of genre theory by reference to those very historical processes. Building on genre theory as it has developed in the interdisciplinary space between literary and film theory, anthropology and sociology, and with reference to papers from the conference, I first pursue the importance of a simultaneously semiotic and meditational, anthropological/sociological and historical analysis of genre—pointing out the non-contradiction between these approaches. I argue that genre theory has to be medium specific and, drawing on my earlier work, that in music it requires supplementing by a theory of music’s mediation—one that attends to music’s temporal, social and material mediations. With reference to ethnographies of digital musics in Kenya, Canada and the UK, I show how musical socialities, temporalities, media and materials are being engaged in distinctive ways in contemporary practices—often synergistically, with different kinds of reflexivity—to pretend the future of the genres which they initiate, in which they participate, or the historicity or identity of which they aim, perhaps paradoxically, to baffle, defy or occlude. In this way I draw out how musical genres exemplify the bidirectional mediation of music and time: musical genres produce time through the contingent articulation of their several temporalities; while in turn, historical processes—most obviously, the temporalities
associated with particular institutional, social and technological conditions—mediate the evolution of genre. Drawing on my research and other papers presented, I suggest that institutionalized support can favour either the endurance or the invention of genres. In turn, the scientific and technological developments linked to MIR augur an acceleration of the inscription and reification of genre, while also—given expanded reflexivities in relation to materials and media—feeding creative moves that attempt to outstrip these generic codifications, aesthetically instrumentalising MIR and potentially opening out novel directions. The implications of this account are to deepen a non-teleological analysis of time and/in musical genre while advocating an intensified awareness of the play of temporalities in genre at the meeting point of sound, the material and the social.

Biography:
Georgina Born’s work combines ethnographic and theoretical writings on cultural and media production, including music, television, software and interdisciplinary practices; genre is an ongoing preoccupation. Her books include *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (1995), *Western Music and its Others* (ed. with D. Hesmondhalgh, 2000), *Music, Sound and Space* (ed., 2013), and *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences* (ed. with A. Barry, 2013). She directs the European Research Council-funded program ‘Music, Digitization, Mediation: Towards Interdisciplinary Music Studies’ (MusDig) which, through ethnographies in Argentina, Canada, Cuba, India, Kenya and the UK, as well as of music software and online communities, researches the transformation of music by digitization and digital media. She is Professor of Music and Anthropology at Oxford University and Schulich Visiting Professor of Music at McGill University.

**Charles Kronengold** (Stanford University)  
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*Genres, Affects, Temporalities*

What does it mean that genre can precede affect—that a musical gesture’s instantaneous affective charge hits a listener only thanks to a particular genre’s functions, contexts, stakeholders, conventions, paratextual features, circulatory systems, and notions of form? If affects are pre-linguistic or even pre-cultural, how can they rely on contingent social formations like genres? What do we make of the ways that both affects and genres shape our moment-to-moment experience of music’s temporality? The “affective turn” has drawn on a specific model for the temporality of experience. According to this model, perceptions are already imbued with affect, and these affect-laden perceptions trigger body/brain responses that occur before cognitive processing takes place. William Connolly, Brian Massumi and Elizabeth Wilson have sought to develop a politics out of this temporality. But musical experience complicates this picture. First, the production of musical affect is radically contingent—dependent on cultural knowledge and the actual conditions of diffusion and reception. And second, musical expe-
experience is essentially multitemporal: as Jonathan Kramer reminds us “music can enable listeners to experience different senses of directionality, different temporal narratives, and/or different rates of motion, all simultaneously.”

Combining big-data and close-reading approaches to smaller musical objects like scale-fragments, fanfares and drum fills, I’ll test a model of musical experience in which affects and genres work collaboratively and antagonistically to help create a piece’s multitemporal flow. For clarity’s sake I focus here on small gestures in big genres and big gestures in small genres. Humble solo entries in György Kurtág’s concertos and isolated percussion instruments at the beginning of Krzysztof Penderecki’s first symphony reveal how these genres shape musical affect in a way that embraces temporal multiplicity and admits a degree of contingency. Strategies for creating bigness in brief pop songs too create uncertainty about whom these records are addressing and how—and about what exactly they are. In short, doubts about the nature and status of these late-modern genres enter into pieces, practices, conventions, and modes of circulation, influencing their temporalities. Projecting and sustaining this doubt is part of what genres are good for.

Biography:
Charles Kronengold writes on twentieth-century Western art music, popular music, film, and such philosophical subjects as composers’ intentions, the roles of accidents in theory, and the relevance of African American music to debates about the ‘post-secular’. Recent research concerns the ways that modern artistic genres condition, depict, embody and help to transform the activity of thinking. He is the author of the forthcoming Live Genres in Late Modernity: American Music of the Long 1970s and a book-in-progress, Crediting Thinking in Soul and Dance Music. A new book-project, tentatively titled Sensing Thinking in Urban Cinema, focuses on the audiovisual depiction of nonverbal thinking. He received his B.A. from Yale, and his Ph.D. from UC San Diego, and was a Society for the Humanities Fellow at Cornell. He is Assistant Professor of Music at Stanford.