Post-Euphoria in Electronic Music Making
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Link to practice-based component

(Alternative link available upon request)

Abstract

Engaging in a range of electronic music making techniques, this doctoral, practice-based project examines the creative interpretation of "post-euphoria": a concept conceived here to describe a retrospective subjectivity that encapsulates reminiscing and an afterglow feeling in relation to lost euphoric experiences. The study aims to establish a musical aesthetic the responds to this concept using DAW tools, to form a body of musical work comprising a collection of recordings. Identifying a lack of available practice-based studies on music production practices that deal with memory and recollection, particularly in connection with electronic dance music and its concomitant cultural events, the research contributes insights to this underexplored area.

To examine how post-euphoria can be interpreted through electronic music making, the research firstly conducts interviews with comparable electronic music practitioners whose work is informed by themes of recollection and reminiscing in the context of electronic dance music. Insights gained in the interviews then inform the main creative investigation, which is pursued by utilising the DAW Ableton Live and its built-in tools. Developed as part of the creative investigation are production and compositional strategies and a body of ten original recordings, accompanied by this critical exegesis that examines and contextualises the creative practices established.

Undertaking the study enabled an understanding of ways in which elements of electronic music production can be used figuratively to embody conceptual meanings relating to reminiscing and recollection. It further demonstrates how electronic dance music tropes can be employed, alongside sampling-inspired and self-remixing techniques, to connote a sense of missing euphoria and to suggest transformations that occur in the memory of fleeting experiences. Finally, the study shows how these musical elements can be incorporated within a songwriting framework and as part of an integrated collection of corresponding recordings, to further the musical interpretation of post-euphoria.

<u>Preface</u>

In 2011, I moved to London to pursue an undergraduate degree in music studies. The move was partly inspired by my then musical idol, the conceptual music producer Matthew Herbert, who turned out to be affiliated with my academic institution of choice. At the time, I was particularly captivated by Herbert's *Bodily Functions* album (!K7 Records, 2001), which samples human body-produced sounds in line with a strict creative manifesto. What initially drew me to this album, however, was a less clearly defined mood with which it is imbued – a pleasantly faded and subdued yet blissful energy, courtesy of fragmented house music motifs and minimalist production, which felt like the perfect soundtrack for a post-clubbing, early hour stroll.

Shortly after arriving in London, I became familiar with another producer whose music is seemingly nothing but pleasantly faded. Working under the pseudonym Burial, the then enigmatic producer (real name William Bevan) incorporated chaotic urban soundscape samples alongside chopped vocal samples and high-paced and disordered rhythms, creating a mutated rendition of UK-born dance music genres such as two-step and jungle. I was particularly captivated by interviews conducted with Bevan, where terms like "afterglow" and "ghost of a rave" were poetically used by the musician to describe his creation (2012). Despite its distinct musical features, Bevan's music resonated with me in a similar way to how Herbert's music did and provided what would become the soundtrack to my South London home.

I then stumbled upon vaporwave music – an internet-born genre that made me rethink everything I knew about music making through its sample-based production and intricate handling of cultural memory themes and notions of decaying experiences. It was also during this period in my life that I began exploring East London's club scene, accumulating memorable moments of dancefloor euphoria with a newly found community and immersing myself in the city's nocturnal life. This personal episode proved fleeting, but its recollection remains poignantly beautiful nonetheless. And like that, enchanted by lost

nights-out and lingering on remnants of a faded euphoria, this is where my journey into the realm of post-euphoria begins.

As I am writing this preface to my doctoral study, the cultural landscape of clubbing is substantially different to what it was in my early London days, partly due to a global pandemic that forced the closure of nightlife for nearly two years. But these changing circumstances have, strangely enough, provided an eerily suitable backdrop for my post-euphoric, musical endeavours presented in this study. With dancefloor euphoria appearing like a distant memory, my concept of post-euphoria received a whole new layer of meaning – extending beyond a post-party feeling and soundscape to include reminiscing to a time and place in one's life, and in our collective memory, that may never quite be what it once was.

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<u>Chapter 1: Introduction</u>

Engaging in a range of electronic music making practices, the study that follows creatively responds to the concept of "post-euphoria" – utilised here to describe a subjectivity with which lost yearned-for experiences are recollected and reimagined. The study adopts a practice-based approach and presents an original body of musical work that expressively interprets post-euphoria as a musical aesthetic, using a Digital Audio Workstation (hereafter DAW), Ableton Live, and drawing from elements of electronic dance music production. In doing so, the study demonstrates how music production technology can be used to creatively interpret nuanced and complex meanings relating to retrospection and reminiscing – establishing a musical vocabulary that is concerned with the residual and the faded and with what remains when perceived blissful experiences subside. The study hereby asks:

How can post-euphoria be interpreted through electronic music making?

The research is further stimulated and framed by two main aims:

1. Establishing a musical aesthetic that responds to the concept of post-euphoria using DAW tools

2. Developing a body of musical work that interprets the concept of post-euphoria through a collection of recordings

The first aim focuses on experimenting with the DAW Ableton Live, with which I have been working for the past ten years, and utilising its built-in tools to develop musical motifs and production approaches that expressively interpret my concept of post-euphoria. The second aim sets out to expand the established musical aesthetic in the form of an integrated body of musical work that interprets post-euphoria through presenting a series of interlinked recordings. The main outcome of my doctoral research is thus the submitted body of musical recordings, whilst underlining concepts and creative practices developed are discussed in this accompanying exegesis to contribute a context and critical reflection.

Working as an electronic music practitioner and engaging in practice-based research, I have previously recorded several bodies of work that explore themes of longing and missing through employing DAW-based production strategies: from sample-based audio collaging, through sampling easy-listening library music and to incorporating synthesis and MIDI programming within songwriting (Baron, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019). Through my music making, I have examined the capacity in which elements of music production can be used, in conjunction with lyrical ones, as carriers of intricate and conceptual ideas and to capture ambiguous feelings of fleetingness and sentimentality. The present study further develops these creative approaches through the lens of a new concept: *post-euphoria*, establishing electronic dance music-inspired, DAW-based production strategies and suggesting new terminology with which to understand conceptual uses of music production elements.

In the early stage of the research, it became clear that there is currently little available practice-based research in the field of popular music production, let alone concerning practices of electronic popular music making that deal with memory and recollection. Indeed, practice-based research in electroacoustic composition dates to the 1950s, when Pierre Schaeffer conducted "sonic research" and integrated experimentation with sounds with critical analysis as part of his musique concrète works (Andrews, 2013, p. 69-70; Young, 2015, p. 149-168). Music practice-based research had become all the more prevalent in the 1970s, with the advent of music composition and performance PhDs (Cook, 2015, p. 12-13). However, this tradition of practice-based research tends to focus on Western art music and sonic art and is less commonly applied within the context of electronic popular music, as done in the current project.

Several studies from which the current research draws provide a useful framework within which to analyse conceptual practices of electronic music making (Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen, 2016; Demers, 2010; Prior, 2017), including ones dealing with memory and recollection – particularly in discussions of vaporwave music (Glitsos, 2016; Strachan, 2017). Yet these studies do not engage in developing new methods of music making, as done presently. Other music practitioners interviewed for this study have indeed dealt

with themes related to my concept of post-euphoria through their music making (Brocato, 2019; Senni, 2019; Weiss & Takahashi, 2019). They do not, however, attempt to create a direct and figurative correlation between musical motifs and themes of reminiscing and retrospection – nor do they employ DAW-focused production and vocal-led songwriting – as I have done as part of the research for this project. Finally, the contribution of the current study is highlighted by establishing post-euphoria as a new term and concept not previously explored as such in existing studies on music production, thus providing a framework for understanding musical aesthetics that are inspired by aspects of reminiscing as realised in the context of electronic dance music.

Key Concepts and Terms

The study has been stimulated and shaped by several underlying concepts and terms, which inform my understanding of post-euphoria as a concept that has been uniquely developed during the research. The notion of euphoria is used to describe an all-consuming pleasurable feeling and an altered state of consciousness, as experienced in the context of listening to electronic dance music and participating in electronic dance music events (Garcia, 2011; Malbon, 1999; Reynolds, 1998; Solberg, 2014; St John, 2004). Drawing from Maslow's understanding of peak experiences as transformative moments of bliss and fulfilment (1968), I regard the experience of such euphoric feelings as having a formative and resonating impact. The sense in which such euphoric or peak experiences – whether real or fantasied – are idealised and repeatedly reflected upon stimulates my interpretation of post-euphoria. I further distinguish between euphoria and post-euphoria and employ the prefix "post" to describe a state that follows actual euphoria and encapsulates a sentimental yearning for bygone blissful experiences. Borrowing from discussions of post-digital art and its use of the prefix "post" to suggest a digitally saturated and altered realm (Busby, 2017; Cramer, 2014), I conceptualise post-euphoria as comprising a reconfigured manifestation of recollected euphoria that has become imbued with a sense of loss and missing. My concept of post-euphoria is thus not concerned

with euphoria as such, but rather with recollection of and longing to perceived euphoric experiences that appear lost and decaying.

Initially inspiring the study is the notion of an "afterglow", commonly adapted in writings on electronic dance music to describe the dawn-time period immediately after leaving a dance party (Malbon, 1999, p. 169-170; Reynolds, 1999, p. 95, 326). Malbon and Reynolds suggest that this phase of a night out – often extending into the following day – is characterised by a pleasant and subdued sensation, which lingers once the effects of recreational drugs consumed throughout the night begin to subside. Based on his mid-1990s ethnographic research of dance club scenes in Vauxhall, London, Malbon shows that this stage of a night out is often dedicated to reflecting upon and processing the party experience, whilst "attempting to make sense of the night out in the context of everyday life more broadly" (p. 169). In its suspension between the party experience and everyday reality, an afterglow is further understood by Malbon as encapsulating a liminal and transitional subjectivity amongst party participants. The study hereby builds upon Malbon's accounts of afterglow – not just a post-party phase but also as a mode of profound reflection upon faded and decaying euphoric experiences.

The notion of an afterglow as a post-party state has been musically interpreted in the works of producers interviewed for the current study, including Nick Weiss and Logan Takahashi, who together form Teengirl Fantasy. Discussing their 2017 concept album *8AM*, Weiss and Takahashi regard an afterglow as a post-rave, early morning phase that holds what they describe as "residual feelings" (Weiss & Takahshi, 2019). Another musical act whose notion of an afterglow informed the current study is William Bevan, known professionally as Burial. Incorporating late-night urban soundscape samples alongside manipulated electronic dance music motifs, his music attempts to create – as explained in his interviews with cultural theorist Mark Fisher (Bevan, 2012) – an echo of a faded party experience that continues to resonate after leaving a club. Whilst confessing to have never attended a rave, the producer explains that his early recordings reimagine a rave experience through the mediated perspective of his older brother's rave stories and record collection.

Fisher thus asserts that Bevan's music is, in fact, about "never actually experiencing rave" (ibid), suggesting that an afterglow is not concerned with actual recollections but with imagined ones.

Whilst I draw from discussions of the term afterglow in the context of electronic dance music related experiences, I opt for employing my own concept of post-euphoria to describe a retrospective subjectivity that goes beyond a mere post-party phase. In conceptualising post-euphoria, I further draw from philosophical discourses of cultural memory and particularly from Svetlana Boym's discussions of "reflective nostalgia" (2011) – understood by Boym as a peculiar type of nostalgia that "lingers on ruins" and embraces "shattered fragments of memory" (p. 41). Reflective nostalgia is, according to Boym, distinguished from "restorative nostalgia" and is not concerned with mourning and attempting to reconstruct the past. Instead, it indulges in a process of dynamic retrospection during which impressions of past experiences are playfully reimagined, suggesting longing for a home that has never existed and a "romance with one's own fantasy" (p. xiii). Similar sentiments are identified in writings on dance music cultures, including in Eileen Wu's ethnographic study of San Francisco's 2000s rave scene (2010). Describing "nostalgia with no physical or experiential reference point" amongst past participants of rave events, Wu asserts that such reference-less nostalgia serves as a tool for making emotional sense of lost youthful experiences (p. 64-65). A similar phenomenon is described in Matthew Collin's discussions of Ibiza's 1990s acid house scene (2009), which is said to have mythologised a glorified "simulacrum" of previous dance scenes and eras (p. 61). Drawing from these discussions, I regard post-euphoria as a form of reminiscence that, like Beven's notion of an afterglow, favours idealised impressions over true recollections of lost yearned-for experiences.

The study additionally builds upon discussions of hauntology as a lens through which to conceptualise the subjectivities that I associate with post-euphoria. Initially introduced by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx* (1993), the term hauntology – a blendword that refers to the ontology of being haunted – was originally used to describe how echoes of past communist ideologies continue to haunt society in the form of ghostly entities. According to Derrida,

these entities are "neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive" (p. 63) and remanifest in a way that disrupts our sense of linear temporality. Over the past two decades, notions of hauntology have been further addressed and adapted by popular culture theorists, such as Mark Fisher and Simon Reynolds, to describe musical genres that present eerie, nostalgic tendencies and retro-futuristic themes. Notions of hauntology have also been particularly associated and became synonymous with the musical releases of UK-based record label Ghost Box, which employ sampling of library music and educational radio broadcasts to explore processes of misremembering. The work of Ghost Box is, however, not directly concerned with electronic dance music. Of greater importance to my research is Fisher's discussions of hauntology in Burial's music and his assertion that the producer's work can be interpreted as haunted by fantasies of lost rave experiences (2012). Also insightful are Fisher's discussion of "party hauntology", which he attributes to late-2000s electronic dance pop music productions that appropriate previous dance music motifs (2014, p. 180-181). Fisher further asserts that such party hauntology dismisses acts of mourning traditionally associated with hauntology and favours accelerated amnesia of past rave legacies in the form of musical pastiche.

From Fisher's accounts emerges a distinctive type of hauntology that informs my concept of post-euphoria and that is concerned with faded recollections of electronic dance music experiences. Yet while Fisher makes a dichotomous distinction between mourning and amnesia of bygone dance music experiences, my concept of post-euphoria suggests a dynamic and reflective process of recollection that, like the afterglow and reflective nostalgia, resides in the grey area between memory and fantasy. A similar tendency has been identified in relation to house music and DJ practice, which according to Rietveld (2011) encapsulate a "fluid" musical archive that reimagines – rather than recreates – lived cultural memory and previous dance music legacies. Also feeding into my thinking around post-euphoria is an assertion by David Bell (2016) that hauntology is not concerned with an actual longing for bygone experiences, but rather with aesthetically fetishising instances of past futurity. Bell exemplifies this by discussing what he describes as a widespread fascination with modernist, Brutalist architecture and particularly with ruins of former

Eastern Bloc, which in his view shows how rejected, historical projects are being aestheticised and taken out of their original political context.

Bell's interpretation of hauntology calls to mind Boym's notion of reflective nostalgia and its lingering on ruins, as well as writing by Dylan Trigg (2006) on post-industrial ruins and the decontextualised perspective through which they are interpreted. Similar observations have been made by Pope (2011) in relation to genres of electronic dance music, such as Detroit Techno, which in his view romanticise dystopian environments, and by Trainer (2015) on vaporwave as a genre that idealises childhood memories. More recent genres of electronic dance music, such as lo-fi house, can also be understood as presenting decontextualised nostalgic tendencies. Applying vaporwave-like lo-fi aesthetics to dancefloor-oriented productions, lo-fi house music has been said to suggest nostalgia and memory by connoting the sounds of analogue music technology, whilst incorporating degraded minor-key samples of 1990 electronic dance music to suggest both loneliness and a collective dancefloor euphoria (Ledsham, 2017). These discussions and musical works inspire and shape my understanding of post-euphoria as a subjectivity that romanticises and reimagines decaying and lost experiences related to electronic dance music.

Drawing further from discussions of hauntology as dealing with a "failure of the future" (Tanner, 2016, p. 35), my concept of post-euphoria encapsulates not only retrospective subjectivities but also a sense of anticipation to awaited and unfulfilled experiences. This anticipatory mode is further addressed in Fisher's above-mentioned discussions on Burial's work (2014, p. 98) and is further explored in my interviews with producer Lorenzo Senni (2019), which will be addressed in what follows. These insights and musical works feed into my understanding of post-euphoria as a state of suspension and missing to prospective experiences that fail to manifest. Further shaping my understanding of post-euphoria are recent discussions of what has been dubbed as "anti-hauntology" in electronic music and particularly in the work of late producer Sophie (Bluemink, 2021). Seen as challenging the mournful undertone of Fisher's hauntology, Sophie's work is said to present a future-facing popular music making strategy that does not dwell on the past but rather accelerates and

pushes the aesthetic boundaries of pop and electronic dance music (Colquhoun, 2021). I hereby draw from such creative strategies and regard post-euphoria and its inspired musical aesthetics as encapsulating a constant and active reimagination of euphoric experiences.

My understanding of post-euphoria as a concept and as a musical aesthetic has been further informed by the works of several electronic music producers not mentioned in the previous sections, who operate within the experimental fringes of electronic dance music. Whilst these producers work within different genres and use different production techniques, their music can be regarded as pertinent to a shared and growing tendency within the landscape of electronic music towards what I have identified as post-euphoria – namely a retrospective yearning towards decayed electronic dance music-related experiences. Amongst these producers are British born Brian Leeds (previously working under the name Huerco S.), Darren Cunningham (known professionally as Actress), Lee Gamble and Sam Barker, whose music presents deconstructed renditions of electronic dance music productions and thusly suggests reimagined recollections of euphoric dancefloor experiences (Barker, 2019; Cunningham, 2020; Gamble, 2014; Leeds, 2016). Also informing my conceptualisation of post-euphoria are sample-based works by lo-fi house music producers like Baltra, who reimagines 1990s house music through the prism of saturated and compressed production (Baltra, 2019), as well as modular synthesis-based works by Caterina Barbieri that examine notions of recollection, euphoria and contemplation (Barbieri, 2019). These musical works are not examined as such in my research, yet they can be seen as constituting a so-called post-euphoric musical lineage that informs my conceptualisation of post-euphoria as a musical phenomenon that extends beyond the current project.

Chapter Outline

What follows here first, then, is a discussion of research publications that delineate the field, the practice of electronic music making, to which this creative project contributes new knowledge. It will map out research literature in the field of electronic music production to delineate the field of research and the

musical practices employed in the study. My review focuses on selected electronic music making approaches, which are said to embody conceptual meanings peculiar to DAW-based production. The review thus frames the development and conceptualisation of musical practices relating to post-euphoria and situates them within a contextual lineage.

This is followed by a discussion of the research design and of issues in practice-based research. The methodology chapter explains the different stages of the research, from contextual interviews with relevant practitioners in the field, through the initial research and development stage that tests a range of music production approaches and to recording and assessing the final body of musical work. The discussion includes an overview of the settings and tools utilised for each stage of the research in response to the ongoing cyclical processes of critical analysis and reflection that occurred throughout the research project.

Drawing from interviews conducted as part of the study with four electronic musicians, Nick Weiss, Logan Takahashi, Fabio Brocato and Lorenzo Senni, Chapter Four addresses initial research to explore themes related to post-euphoria in existing creative practice. Insights from these interviews frame my aesthetic approach to the research question and aims and include discussions of conceptual themes relating to post-rave afterglow, nostalgia and suspended euphoria, as evident in the works of the interviewed musicians. These, then, support in inspiring and contextualising the practice-based inquiry.

Chapter Five presents creative approaches and paradigms established during the research and development stage. These include the use of production and compositional "embodiments" – a creative approach that I establish and that employs elements of electronic music figuratively – as well as electronic dance music tropes, self-remixing, sampling-inspired techniques and broad brushstrokes production, alongside vocal and lyrical creative strategies. The creative approaches and techniques and initial sketches recorded as part of this stage serve as the basis for forming the final body of work, discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Six goes on to describe creative practices employed in each musical recording to interpret post-euphoria. It comprises discussions of individual recordings and pairs of recordings produced in conjunction, assessing the techniques and creative strategies used in each recording. The chapter thus serves as a critical commentary, alongside which the recordings can be listened to and examined in depth. The insights from this process are invaluable to the overall conceptualisation of post-euphoria as a musical aesthetic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Literature on practices of electronic music making, including selected studies on music production and creative affordances of DAWs, are at the focus of this chapter. The review is particularly concerned with scholarly works that examine how digital music production processes and motifs can be conceptually and figuratively emphasised to suggest intricate and nuanced connotations. It further addresses writings on experimental genres of electronic music, such as vaporwave, which employ DAW-based production techniques to explore notions of memory and reminiscing. The discussion identifies both a lineage of distinctive production approaches that pertain to the creative practices developed as part of the research and a gap in currently available research and creative work.

Production Mediations

Central to the examination of conceptual work within music production is research on digitisation of popular music sound by Brøvig-Hanssen and Danielsen (2016). Offering a framework within which to conceptualise the practices attempted as part of this study, of particular significance is their discussion of the terms "transparent mediation" and "opaque mediation" (p. 5) that refer to how idiosyncratic music production processes are foregrounded by musicians to create specific connotations. They propose that DAW-based production techniques, such as cut-and-paste editing, equalisation and compression, can be used ornamentally and "transparently", or rather conceptually foregrounded as an act of opaque mediation – as attempted in this study – suggesting symbolic meanings relating to the very mediation of the sonic material. The latter approach is instrumental in conceptualising the creative work produced as part of the study.

My study further builds upon the notion of a musical "mediation" in keeping with Nick Prior's interpretation of the term, which entails "conducting

one thing through another" and focuses on the transformative effects of that conduction (2017, p. 3). Prior maintains that digital audio processing tools, such as auto-tune and vocoder, create mediations that shift the way in which we listen to and interpret music, whilst arguing that the ability to listen "through" these mediations and manipulations exposes the "ontological plasticity" and a sense of malleability that informs multiple meanings and potentialities embedded in sound (p. 1). He further asserts that the prominence of such mediations in works of recorded popular music invites a mode of engagement that takes pleasure in witnessing the very reconfiguration and deconstruction of the musical material and suggests what he describes as ambivalent meanings relating to its transformation.

Sound as Metaphor

Prior's discussions of audio effects and the so-called ontological plasticity they bring to fore resonate with observations by Joanna Demers (2010) on sonic materiality in works of popular electronic music. Demers focuses on the capacities in which sound can be presented as malleable material to convey "extramusical" subject matters (p. 48), whilst identifying three types of processes through which these capacities manifest: construction, the generation of new sonic material by means of synthesis; reproduction, the incorporation of found recordings through audio sampling; and destruction, the disfiguration and manipulation of sound through digital signal processing (p. 43-44). She further observes that the meanings created by applying these processes are not constructed by way of direct signification but, rather, are intertextual, taking the form of referential metaphors and associations between sound and external ideas and narratives. I draw from Demers' concept of sonic metaphors when coining my own concept of production embodiments, which will be discussed later in Chapter Five where the research and development insights are laid out.

Further examination of referential sonic metaphors by Laura Glitsos looks at vaporwave music, whilst discussing music and affect in the context of digital mediation (2016, 2017). Particularly relevant to this study are her discussions of specific production techniques utilised in vaporwave recordings, such as

equalisation and filtering of mid-range frequencies, to create a sense of hollowness that connotes notions of corporeality and its lack thereof (p. 149-150). This type of analogical signification, whereby sonic phenomena are figuratively likened to nuanced conceptions and narratives, has been thoroughly employed throughout the current study. In addition, Glitsos touches upon vaporwave's use of sampling, echo effects and audio time stretching to interpret themes of remembrance and recollection, as examined in the musical work produced for the study.

DAWs and Self-Reflexivity

Additional perspectives on symbolic meanings in works of recorded music are offered by Robert Strachan (2017), who focuses on affordances of digital music production technology and their impact on creative and aesthetic paradigms of popular music making. Key to the current study is Strachan's discussion of experimental electronic music genres that, in his view, emphasise digital production processes to make cultural commentary. Strachan argues that glitch music foregrounds the accidental, by-product sounds of DAW production tools to highlight the ubiquity of technology in society (p. 137-138) and that dubstep music emphasises its DAW-based production to "reflect the mediation of dance music motifs and experiences through the filter of the bedroom [music production] environment" (p. 142-143). Also related to this study is Strachan's discussion of vaporwave music, which he interprets as reflecting upon processes of remembrance and evocation through the use of digital sampling, echo and modulation effects and by foregrounding the transformation that such production techniques induce within the musical material.

The impact of DAWs on creative strategies undertaken by musicians is further addressed by Mark Marrington (2017), who asserts that the interface of software like Ableton Live – utilised in my research here – imposes distinctive compositional practices such as looping and fragmentation of musical motifs. Missing from Marrington's study, however, are discussions of compositional practices that are not only devised in response to working with a given software, but also informed, as this study has been, by predetermined, conceptual aims.

The latter approach is addressed by Lisa Busby (2017) with regards to post-digital songwriting. Her discussion reaches beyond describing the affordances of DAWs to present ways in which such affordances can be used with a preconceived conceptual aim in mind. Busby exemplifies this by discussing instances where digital manipulation of vocal syllables evokes "blissed-out", drug-induced states, as well as compositional strategies that merely reference but do not utilise affordances of production tools such as digital samplers (p. 118, 123). Her discussions of sampling-inspired production techniques assisted in conceptualising my idea of "sampling-without-sampling", as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Particularly insightful is the discussion of spatial representations in soundscape composition by Findlay-Walsh (2018), who looks further into how DAWs can be used to connote symbolic meanings relating to processes of mediation. In his analysis of Burial's musical work, Findlay-Walsh discusses ways in which digital sampling and processing of field recordings are used to replicate the experience of listening to music in particular environments and using certain listening devices. For example, he shows how Burial's juxtaposition of late-night sound samples and elements of electronic dance music can be seen as replicating the experience of passing through different urban spaces whilst on a night-out and the "bleed" of city soundscapes to one's headphone music (p. 15-16). Whilst not employing field recordings, the current study furthers Findlay-Walsh's approach of using music production practices to create referential and multi-layered representations linked to the very medium of recorded music to suggest different types of mediations and narratives.

Common to the above discussions and crucial to this study is the presumption that DAW-based production can be applied in ways that show awareness to and "self-reflexivity" in relation to the very technological processes at use (Strachan, 2017, p. 146; Findlay-Walsh, 2018, p. 1). Such self-reflexivity further resonates with Brøvig-Hanssen and Danielsen's concept of opaque mediation and its deliberate foregrounding of digital music production processes as a meaning making tool. It further forges an idiosyncratic aesthetic language, peculiar to digital music production, which draws correlations between sonic

and non-sonic phenomena. In the case of my creative practice as applied in this research, such correlations are drawn specifically between elements of music production and processes of recollection and reimagination.

Gaps in Music Production Studies

The above studies shed light on conceptual practices of electronic music production, yet they remain theoretical throughout (with the exception of Findlay-Walsh's work, which is partly practice-based) and do not engage in developing new methods of production. They are therefore limited in their capacity to contribute first-hand insight on the inspirations, motivations and thought process behind the musical works they critically analyse. In addition, the reviewed studies do not examine ways in which retrospective subjectivities are musically interpreted within the context of electronic dance music. Responding to the lack of practice-based research in these areas, the current study engages in conversations with practitioners in the field (see Chapter Four) and produces original, creative work – establishing in effect new creative approaches and coining the term "post-euphoria" as a new conceptual framework within which to musically interpret recollection of lost, electronic dance music-related experiences.

It should also be noted that the reviewed studies focus on analysing individual recordings and do not consider if and how such recordings are incorporated within more extensive bodies of musical work. They therefore neglect to address aspects of curation and intertextuality, as informing such works of electronic music. Whilst several additional studies not reviewed in the previous sections offer insights on the use of extensive concept album formats (Eliker, 2001; Letts, 2011), they are for the most part focused on aspects of songwriting and popular music more broadly and do not address electronic music making practices. My research furthers these studies by examining how certain conceptual themes can be realised not only through individual recordings and production techniques, but also through creating an extensive collection of interrelated recordings – highlighting ways in which such elaborated musical

formats can be used expressively and conceptually. The next chapter will address how I approached the research process.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The methodological approach applied in the study is stimulated by music practice-based work and complemented by ethnographic field work. Delineating the research design and situating the employed methods used within a broader field of creative, practice-based research, the chapter describes the pursued methodology as including elements of music making, critical reflection and contextual framing. I will further discuss the different stages of the research and the way in which they feed into one another, whilst also reviewing the research environment and tools employed in each one of them. A detailed discussion of music production techniques will be presented separately in Chapters Five and Six, where the creative approaches and recordings are examined.

The research centres on active engagement in developing and employing creative practices of electronic music making, to examine how post-euphoria can be interpreted in electronic music and whilst creating a body of musical recordings. My concept of post-euphoria is treated here as a creative catalyst, in response to which the creative practices are devised. Underpinning the inquiry, my background and experience in working as an electronic musician served as a standpoint from which to develop and critically analyse the music production strategies under examination. Interviews with comparable music practitioners, conducted as part of the study in preparation for the creative work, further the inquiry and assist in characterising existing musical works that are inspired by themes related to my concept of post-euphoria.

The creative component of the research was pursued in such a way that aligns with Candy's definition of practice-based research as an original investigation undertaken to gain new knowledge by means of practice (2006). It fulfils the two key criteria set out by Candy's definition: in the first place, the investigation was conducted by means of creative practice; although also informed by theoretical perspectives and interviews with producers, the lion's share of the research took place in the recording studio. In the second place, the output of the research and its proposed insights are presented in the form of a

creative artefact, which in this case comprises a series of recorded musical works. Further in keeping with Candy's definition of practice-based research, the recorded body of work is examined and contextualised within this critical exegesis, and as part of the *Viva Voce*, which frame and assess the employed practices. Both the original artefact produced, namely the body of musical work, and the exegesis form part of the final submission, as is customary in practice-based, doctoral studies (Biggs, 2004; Candy, 2006; Candy & Edmonds, 2010; Skains, 2018).

Undertaking a music practice-based methodology enabled in-depth, first-hand insight into creative practices of electronic music making. Most importantly, the practice-based investigation is used here not only to examine current approaches and strategies of electronic music making, but also to devise new ones – highlighting in effect my own artistic voice and creative interpretation. Adopting a practice-based inquiry is also in keeping with establishing my own concept of post-euphoria: conducting a non-practice-based inquiry and looking solely into existing works of other music practitioners would have proven inadequate on this occasion, as the concept of post-euphoria has been developed and framed specifically for the purpose of this research and has not been explored as such, to my best knowledge, in the works of other musicians. Employing a practice-based inquiry thus enables to examine the retrospective, electronic dance music-related subjectivities that I associate with post-euphoria, as defined in the introduction chapter, in ways not afforded in existing literature.

Research Design

The research methodology is designed to bring together elements of creative practice and critical inquiry, which inform one another as the different stages of the research follow on from each other. At the core of the research process is the music production work and its ongoing critical assessment, stimulated and contextualised by interviews conducted with comparable music practitioners. The research thus includes three main stages: contextual interviews; research and development and final production.

In order to gain insights into how other music makers creatively interpret subjectivities related to my concept of post-euphoria, the initial stage of the research comprised conducting three interviews with four music producers: Nick Weiss and Logan Takahashi (working as a duo under the name Teengirl Fantasy and interviewed here jointly), Fabio Brocato (working under the name Broke One) and Lorenzo Senni. The selection process for interviewing these individuals involved identifying electronic musicians whose work is informed by a conceptual framework and explores aspects of retrospection and missing in the context of electronic dance music, as also informing my interpretation of post-euphoria. Each of these three musical acts employs distinct conceptual and creative approaches: Weiss and Takahashi examine post-rave afterglow using fragments of synthesiser recordings and dance music tropes, Brocato deals with nostalgia to childhood memories through using audio effects and Senni explores unfulfilled euphoria with unresolved, trance music-inspired compositional structures. Conducting three interviews with these musicians thus enabled gaining a broad perspective on a spectrum of musical strategies as a basis for my own investigation.

A preliminary analysis of musical works by the interviewed musicians (an album by Weiss and Takahashi, an album by Brocato and an EP by Senni) was conducted using professional monitor speakers in preparation for the interviews, to identify relevant production motifs that will be further examined in the interviews. Also in preparation for the interviews, a review of previous journalistic materials was carried out, to gather background information on the inspirations and motivations behind the examined musical works. This review enabled identifying and mapping the intentions behind the examined musical works – partly through looking at statements previously made by the interviewed musicians – effectively preparing the ground for investigating how such intentions are realised through production work.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I established initial contact with the prospective interviewees, outlining the purpose of my research and asking whether they would be interested in participating in it. The interview invitation

(see Appendix 2) also contained a briefing regarding the interview process and outcome, which was reiterated and explained in detail at the beginning of each interview, to ensure that the interviewees are fully aware of and in consent with the procedure. I further assured the interviewees that the edited interviews will be sent for their review and confirmation prior to their inclusion in the exegesis. Also preceding the interview process, an ethics approval was sought from and confirmed by The School of Arts and Creative Industries at London South Bank University (see Appendix 1), to assess and mitigate potentially sensitive issues that may arise as part of the interview process.

Next, the interviews took place: the interview with Weiss and Takahashi was conducted in real world situ, in person, in Weiss' recording studio in New York City. Conducing a trip to New York and physically attending Weiss' recording studio enabled a detailed examination of the software and hardware setup used by Weiss and Takahashi and allowed obtaining in-depth insights in a conversational and personal setting. The interviews with Brocato and Senni were individually conducted online, via Skype, as it was not feasible to arrange in person meetings. During the interviews, which spanned between an hour and two hours each, the interviewees responded to a set of open questions relating to their sources of inspiration and creative processes. The full interviews were recorded as audio files with the consent of the interviewees and then partly transcribed. Insights drawn from the interviews relating to creative approaches identified stimulated the subsequent creative stages of the research – enabling me to situate the creative practices I have developed within a lineage of existing practices.

Following from the interviews, I began conducting the research and development stage, testing a range of DAW-based production and compositional strategies in a home studio environment. The studio hardware setup comprised a laptop, an audio interface, a condenser microphone and a set of monitor speakers (see Appendix 3 for technical specifications) and centred on working with the DAW Ableton Live 9 – building upon my previous experience and proficiency in using the software and utilising its unique capabilities, including advanced time warping, MIDI effects and synthesiser tools. During this stage of

the research, I predominantly employed the software's Session View where looped audio clips can be vertically arranged and triggered. Doing so enabled me to test and experiment with initial compositional motifs prior to arranging them along a linear grid. I was therefore able dedicate this stage of the research to aspects of sound design and layering of repetitive elements characteristic of electronic dance music, thus alluding to the euphoric feelings associated with this type of music.

The decision to utilise Ableton Live informed the development of creative strategies that are peculiar to and afforded by this particular DAW. For example, as Ableton Live's Session View is designed for producing and performing loop-based music, it fosters a workflow that embraces musical repetition as a compositional strategy – a creative paradigm previously addressed by Marrington (2017, p. 80) in relation to songwriters who employ Ableton Live and, as a result, adopt "accumulative" compositional forms that are characteristic of electronic dance music. In other instances, particular audio processing tools that are unique to Ableton Live, such as its audio-to-MIDI conversions, freeze reverb and "modulator" vocoder mode, served as a compositional starting point from which the recordings were conceived. My creative process has thus been directly impacted and shaped by the capabilities and interface of Ableton Live, demonstrating how the technological affordances (Strachan, 2017) of working with a given DAW inform distinctive music making strategies. This also includes the limitations of the software in comparison to other DAWs – particularly in areas relating to audio editing and mixing capabilities – which led to developing a broad brushstrokes-like method of working, which is discussed further in Chapter Five.

In addition to the studio-based work, part of the research and development took place outside the recording studio, as initial melodic and lyrical ideas were captured using a voice memo iPhone application and then recreated and expanded in the studio. Doing so allowed for integrating vocal-based songwriting with DAW production, examining how the two practices can be applied in a complementary fashion. It also enabled me to embrace my background as a singer-songwriter to test how electronic dance music-inspired production

elements (such as ones employed by the interviewed musicians) can be moulded and reimagined beyond the realm of dance music and within the context of popular music song.

Upon completing the research and development stage, during which over twenty recorded sketches were produced, I commenced the final production stage. Here, I focused on creating a conceptually and aesthetically cohesive body of work, through expanding and refining ten recordings. This stage of the research was conducted in an acoustically treated edit suite, to allow careful attention to sonic detail, whilst further utilising Ableton Live for recording, arranging and audio processing. Here, and unlike in the research and development stage, the software's Arrangement View was used as a sequencer within which the final compositions were constructed along a linear, time-based grid. Additional elements of analogue synthesis were incorporated as part of this stage through collaboration with peer musician Rotem Haguel to complement the DAW-based production. These additions, whilst musically invaluable, are not examined in the exegesis to allow focusing on analysing my own DAW-based work. The finalised recordings were then curated as an integrated artefact, forming an extensive collection of interrelated musical pieces that responds to the concept of post-euphoria as a musical whole. This was done using an online, private Soundcloud playlist, where the recordings were managed and ordered. Upon finalising the curation of the body of work, five vocal-based recordings were further mixed in collaboration with my doctoral supervisor Justin Randall, using the DAW Pro Tools and third-party mixing audio tools to refine the integration of the different elements within the final mixes. To ensure that the levels of the recordings are balanced and consistent throughout, the recordings were also professionally mastered by Beau Thomas – a mastering engineer who previously worked on Teengirl Fantasy's *8AM* album, which is examined in the interviews chapter.

In parallel with the above-described stages, several ongoing and non-linear reflective activities took place throughout the course of the research process. To begin with, the stages involving producing and assessing the musical output comprised "action-reflection cycles" (Scrivener, 2000, p. 14), as hands-on

experimentation led to critical reflection, which in turn stimulated additional experimentation, in a cyclical manner. Ideas, inspirations and observations regarding my creative practices – as well as "eureka moments" relating to the concept of post-euphoria more broadly – were continuously captured using an ongoing reflective logbook to further the creative work and were revisited during the completion of the exegesis. In addition, and whilst not an integral part of the primary research, the theoretical framework relating to electronic music production was continuously reviewed to contextualise and conceptualise the creative practices that have been developed during the three research stages. The final analysis of the recordings, as presented in Chapter Six, took place after the completion of the music production work to enable a critical perspective on the produced creative output.

Summary

The applied practice-based methodology engages in electronic music making practices to examine ways in which post-euphoria can be interpreted as a musical aesthetic. Preceding the creative work, open interviews with comparable music practitioners are pursued to inform the creative work and its contextual framing. Next, studio-based work is undertaken, utilising the DAW Ableton Live and producing in turn a set of initial recordings that experiment with a range of production and compositional strategies. Finally, and further utilising Ableton Live, the recordings are refined, expanded and curated to form a body of ten recordings. Insights gathered throughout the different stages of the research are used to stimulate the ongoing creative work, as an ongoing cycle of critical reflection and creative production takes place. Adopting such practice-based research methodology enabled devising new approaches and strategies of electronic music making, suggesting ways in which music production technology can be used to expressively interpret aspects of reminiscing and retrospection that inform my concept of post-euphoria. The next chapter presents insights from the interviews conducted as part of the first stage of the research, where my primary research commences.

Chapter 4: Contextual Interviews

Introduction

This chapter presents insights from three interviews conducted as part of the research with four producers: Nick Weiss and Logan Takahashi (known as Teengirl Fantasy), Fabio Brocato (known as Broke One) and Lorenzo Senni, whose music explores themes relating to my conception of post-euphoria. Conducting the interviews thus enabled to refine and delineate my understanding of post-euphoria as a conceptual theme and as a musical aesthetic dealing with recollection of lost electronic dance music-related experiences, as defined in Chapter One. In particular, the interviews assisted in cementing my understanding of the conceptual themes I identified previously, namely post-party afterglow, reflective nostalgia and hauntology in relation to electronic dance music experiences and anticipation to awaited and unfulfilled euphoria, whilst demonstrating how these can be realised musically. Insights from the interviews informed, in turn, the creative work conducted and presented in the final body of work.

The interviews examine two albums and one EP, namely *8AM* by Teengirl Fantasy (2017), *Reminiscence* by Broke One (2015) and *Persona* by Lorenzo Senni (2016), focusing on particular recordings from each release. The examined releases are underlined by conceptual, thematic threads, portrayed using a range of electronic music making practices: Teengirl Fantasy's Weiss and Takahashi's *8AM* employs analogue synthesisers and digital editing of improvised recordings to connote a party afterglow, Brocato's *Reminiscence* applies audio effects on dance music motifs to reflect upon notions of nostalgia and longing and Senni's *Persona* presents stripped-down, trance music-inspired production to convey a sense of unfulfilled euphoria. Whilst none of the interviewees explicitly uses the term "post-euphoria" (Weiss and Takahashi discuss "post-bliss" and "post-ecstasy" and Senni refers to "circumscribed euphoria" and "mutilated euphoria"), they all explore ideas relating to my concept of post-euphoria and its dealing with recollection and reminiscing of – as well as anticipation to – electronic dance music-related experiences.

The interview with Weiss and Takahashi was conducted in Weiss' recording studio in New York City, whilst the interviews with Brocato and Senni took place via Skype. The interviews span between an hour and two hours, comprising a set of open questions regarding the examined musical releases, their underlying inspirations and their associated creative practices. Each interview is preceded here by a short description of the examined musical work and citations from previous press interviews. Selected excerpts from the interviews are then included to capture the conversational and open-ended nature of the interviews, which were conducted in such a manner to achieve unbiased responses. These excerpts are integrated below within discussions of the musical practices and approaches employed and their correspondence with my own musical practice.

Post-Ecstatic Feelings: Teengirl Fantasy's *8AM*

My understanding of post-euphoria as a party afterglow draws from the work of Nick Weiss and Logan Takahashi as Teengirl Fantasy, with emphasis on their concept album *8AM*, released in 2017 via Planet Mu. As they explain in previous press interviews, the album attempts to capture a "post-ecstasy feeling" (Reynaldo, 2017) and inherent to its concept is "the idea of coming-after" and the notion of a post-peak that occurs "after the main event of the night" (ibid). With the duo's previous work dubbed "glo-fi" music (Lester, 2010), *8AM*'s press release states that the album aims to "replicate a headspace when you've seen the sun come up but sleep is still way off" and to create "music of in-between time" that dwells on being physically exhausted yet holding on to a memory (Eisinger, 2017).

Guided by this statement of intent, the album's 1.12-minute opening track 'Glare' – which is the focus of my interview – seems to present a succinct, musical interpretation of an afterglow state and the subjectivities it invokes. Constructed as a brief, interlude-like piece and comprising sparsely arranged, muted synthesisers, the track remains subdued and obscure throughout, calling to mind the lingering, subtle sensations associated with an afterglow, as defined in the introduction chapter. The synthesiser parts are further processed using what

appears as a low-pass filter equaliser and reverb effects, creating an overall muffled sound, and seem to have been down-sampled. The resulting effect can be described, particularly in light of Weiss and Takahashi's own public accounts of the album, as encapsulating a residual type of bliss that feels fleeting and faded.

Residual Feelings

8AM sees Teengirl Fantasy's attempting to make what Weiss describes as a "concept album about the idea of post-rave". He further conceptualises the notion of post-rave as a phase that, like an afterglow, occurs at the end of a night out as impressions of music and events experienced throughout the night continue to linger. Weiss further explains:

> [It's] when the party is already over, maybe you're driving home or walking home… And it's still like you have residual feelings of the music that you were listening to or the moments you were having, but you're not actually listening to [that music] at that time.

Takahashi explains that *8AM* saw the duo working with a predetermined "idea or feeling" in mind and trying to articulate it expressively. According to Weiss, they were trying to "make an effort to get a specific feel, or like at least have that feeling in mind or getting into that headspace when writing [the music] and see where that went". He further notes that, whilst working on the album, they attempted to "revisit the headspace of *7AM* [their previous album released in 2010], but to go a little bit later: if *7AM* is when everyone is kind of very deep in that dawn moment of the rave experience, *8AM* is kind of after that [when] transitioning to the next day".

An Echo of an Energy

8AM's exploration of post-party feelings calls to mind William Bevan's interpretations of his mid-2000s productions as Burial, as introduced in his interviews with Mark Fisher (2012). However, whilst Bevan's use of late-night, urban soundscape samples alongside fragmented beats creates a fast-paced and disorderly sonic palette, the use of sustained and echoing synthesiser in *8AM* –

particularly in opening track 'Glare' – seems to convey a soothing, muted energy, as described by Takahashi:

> I thought about how the idea of an afterglow still has this energy to it, from like the adjacent whatever rave space or something… And it's kind of like this weird combination of this echo of an energy with this, like a calmer sort of thing.

Takahashi elaborates on producing music that corresponds with a particular time of day, dwelling on the notion of energy change. He perceives post-bliss as a condition whereby different energies simultaneously decay and rise to ultimately produce a sense of serenity. "[During] the post-rave or post-bliss time [when] the energy levels are going down, it's also like the physical brightness is coming up too", he says. "So that kind of captures the high energy afterglow with like the calmer feeling". Weiss adds to this:

> …with *8AM*, it's less about a specific time of day but maybe more like what led up to that time… It's like maybe you were out all night and you're still up and it's already 8 in the morning… And you can also remember that feeling at any time of day… [It's] a headspace rather than what you would be doing at that time of day… Or [it's the idea of] visiting that time… [Takahashi:] just like the landscape in KLF's Chill Out that is kind of like an imagined space that doesn't actually exist… [Weiss:] yeah, you can visit it whenever basically.

In short, Weiss proposes that the after-party morning phase encapsulates a peculiar emotional state that can manifest and be tapped into in other contexts and beyond the party experience.

Dance Music Tropes

KLF's concept album *Chill Out* (1990) is frequently referenced by Weiss and Takahashi when discussing the sources of inspiration for *8AM*. The duo particularly draws from the capacity in which *Chill Out* references rave music and culture whilst simultaneously remaining non-dancefloor-oriented. This

ambivalence towards electronic dance music further feeds into how they define their own music, as explained by Weiss:

> I definitely felt that in the wider sense of dance music culture our music was more of an outsider kind of thing… I think that our music was very much an in-between, like it definitely pulled from dance music but wasn't fully just functional, it was more like experimental or conceptual… I think that's more common now, there are definitely more people that are using tropes or signifiers of dance music but without necessarily making dance music.

Takahashi further touches upon influences of post-rave, chillout music, as heard in *8AM*. As chillout rooms are part of club and rave spaces, he emphasises that active dancefloors and their adjacent relaxing environments "are all connected to each other". Effectively, he asserts, residual rave energy transmits and echoes between such physical spaces: "the energy between the two or three [chillout and rave] spaces or whatever is somehow connected and affecting each other". Making these connections – and blurring the lines – between electronic dance music and its related, non-dancefloor-oriented genres further inform the current study and its interpretation of post-euphoria through the use of electronic dance music tropes (discussed in more detail in the next chapter).

An Unfolding Process

8AM was recorded using Ableton Live over the course of three years (2014-17), which Weiss and Takahashi say is the longest period they have ever dedicated to working on a musical release. The album utilises analogue synthesisers such as Roland Juno and Roland V-Synth, recorded in conjunction with software synthesiser like Spectrasonics Omnisphere through employing MIDI triggering. This recording technique enabled to create what Weiss describes as a "hybrid sound" that fuses analogue and digital electronic instruments, whilst further using editing tools and audio effects in Ableton Live. Recording the album, Weiss and Takahashi were intrigued by the prospect of "zooming into" sounds and breaking apart their materiality. "It was always about

the materiality of the digital and [about] deconstructing it", Weiss says, in keeping with Demers' discussions of sonic materiality (2010) introduced in the literature review chapter. The album does not comprise found music samples, which Weiss and Takahashi steered away from to avoid sample clearance issues. Instead, they resampled materials recorded during the album making process.

Discussing the track 'Glare', Weiss points out to its "briefness" and "fleetingness", saying that it felt like a particularly suitable opening or closing track for the album. The track was recorded as a single live take, from which the duo extracted an unedited fragment. "There was something light about it", Weiss says, "like that it just was what it was and that it wasn't super produced… and the tone of it was… just felt like something unfolding… in a very elegant way". Interpreting the track, he portrays a visual, break-of-dawn scene that encapsulates the feeling of "staring into the sun". The production approach applied in 'Glare' is consistent with the album's overall production approach: "with *8AM* we generally started with these raw recordings of us playing in the moment and picked out little ideas that popped out within sometimes like an hour long or more recording", says Weiss. Further breaking down their creative process, he notes:

> Our approach is pretty hardware-based first, we are essentially a jam band in that when we're writing stuff it's really about letting the record [button] just go and improvising and try to do everything live without really thinking about the computer, but afterwards we definitely go in and edit and within the edit write new stuff and the song can take a totally new life within the edit.

Embracing such live improvisation-based production approach resulted in compositions that are, according to Weiss, "not super structured" and deliberately "amorphous in nature" to convey a sense of fluidity. "There aren't any hard breaks, and everything is kind of like massaged in a way", he says in relation the musical arrangements. Takahashi adds that the lack of rigid compositional structure creates a space within which the listener can freely roam, so to speak, without being pointed at a particular direction. "The [tracks] fade in and out more like deep-listening music… It's like travelling between the

points and not to the points…". Whilst not particularly concerned with live improvisation, the creative work conducted for the current study embraces elements of structural fluidity, as explored by Weiss and Takahashi.

An Unspoken Call

Conceived as a concept album, *8AM*'s overall narrative is conveyed not only musically but also through the titles given to each of its individual tracks. Weiss clarifies:

> We've almost tried to build a narrative from the titles, they're almost like writing little poems or something… Especially since there weren't lyrics in most of the tracks… We want the track titles to be like something you could read through and get like a general idea of the music even without listening to it, like what we were going for conceptually.

Discussing making music in response to a predetermined theme, Weiss describes a process that occurs, in part, at a subconscious level:

> There could be a lot of thought that goes into it beforehand and afterwards but if there's a part of it that's super instinctual, unspoken or like when you're not thinking about it totally that's probably the moment that you transmit whatever that feeling was and it might not even be what you originally wanted to put into it.

Weiss further notes that such instinctual approach is particularly fundamental when attempting to convey conceptual themes through instrumental production, as done in *8AM* (with the exception of the track 'Seeds', which includes featured vocals). Where meanings cannot be conveyed using lyrics, he says, "it needs to be like a call to something that is more unspoken".

Open-Ended Bliss

The period following the release of their former *7AM* album (2010) thoroughly informed the making of *8AM*. Weiss and Takahashi talk about life

experiences they had during that time and about the very notion and experience of time passing as sources of inspiration. They also refer to how memory and recollection of certain experiences manifest within their musical exploration of post-bliss, as put by Weiss:

> Bliss could be either like euphoria or some kind of ecstatic feeling or even like a relaxation and I think post [bliss] is a little bit more open-ended… Like you're not totally in it, you could be remembering it or having like flashbacks to it… Kind of like you're woken up and reality is seeping in but you're still like in the edges of it… Maybe that's the difference [between bliss and post-bliss], that there are more contrasting feelings going on, instead of just a singular bliss feeling.

There is a sense of ambiguity in Weiss and Takahashi's musical handling of notions of reminiscence and temporality. "Longing for the future or the past… I totally think these are things we drew on aesthetically", says Weiss, suggesting that the post-rave concept in *8AM* can be understood beyond the party afterglow context to encompass aspects of memory and recollection more broadly. This idea of longing runs as a thread throughout their discussions of the album, yet that which is yearned-for remains faded and obscure in their interpretations. "The idea of longing resonates with me…", says Takahashi, "I'm not even sure longing for what". Such statements made by the duo are further in keeping with discussions of reflective nostalgia and hauntology presented in the introduction, which revolve around traces of an obscure, longed-for past and a future that may have not materialised.

In conclusion, the insights gained from the interview with Weiss and Takahashi shed light on ways in which a party afterglow and its associated emotional states can be interpreted as part of an electronic music-focused body of work. In particular, their conceptions of "residual feelings" and "echo of an energy" – as understood in the context of electronic dance music and as portrayed through the soundworld and composition of *8AM*'s 'Glare' – further my understanding of post-euphoria as a conceptual theme and as a musical aesthetic and informed the creative work conducted for the study. Whilst Weiss and Takahashi focus on creatively responding a given "feeling" – a strategy that

also informed my creative work for the research – they do not conceptualise their process as comprising figurative use of musical elements, as I have done and as will be explain in detail in the research and development chapter. The following sections focus on related notions of nostalgia and recollection in dance music production, as explored in Fabio Brocato's work as Broke One.

Decontextualised Nostalgia: Broke One's *Reminiscence*

Conceptualising post-euphoria as encapsulating notions of memory and evocation, I draw from the work of Italian producer Fabio Brocato, known professionally as Broke One, with emphasis on his 2015 album *Reminiscence*. A concept album that pays homage to genres of electronic dance music and reflects upon processes of recollection, it suggests a particular type of longing that, like Boym's reflective nostalgia (2001), reimagines past experiences as obscure and faded memories.

My inquiry here focuses on the album's 1.21-minute-long title track and its dealing – as its name suggests – with notions of retrospection: constructed as a short, interlude-like piece, the track can be likened to a fleeting flashback of a bygone experience, recollected at a distance. The track comprises a heavily echoed, percussive loop and dim synthesiser chords, characteristic of jungle and house music. These are gradually juxtaposed with field recordings of morning bird singing and children playing and do not resolve to the tonic harmony at the end of the piece. The result can be said to connote a post-party soundscape, whereby the still-echoing sounds of electronic dance music blend with those of everyday, early morning sounds. The piece can also be said to imply, by obscuring its musical materials and through its unresolved closure, a sense in which memories become faded and ambiguous over time, as further interpreted below by Brocato.

Buried Memories

Unlike Teengirl Fantasy's album *8AM*, which was recorded in response to a predetermined, conceptual theme, *Reminiscence* was conceived – at least in its

early stages – without a clear, thematic idea in mind. However, as Brocato became immersed in the album's recording process, he engaged (perhaps subconsciously, as he observes) in creating a collection of recordings that share a thematic thread: "I realised there's like a little wire connecting all of [the tracks]… It grew as I was working on the album", he says. He further differentiates between EPs and albums, explaining why on this occasion he opted for the latter format: "albums are more like concept works… An album is just like a movie in a way… It's a trip… It has to be a journey on its own".

Attempting to break down the conceptual themes with which the album is concerned, Brocato frequently refers to the work of Scottish electronic duo Boards of Canada as a source of inspiration:

> I'm a little obsessed with Boards of Canada… I'm really into that aesthetic… I don't know how they do it, but they really make me think about the past just by listening to them, you know… They make me remember something that is… Buried. I was trying to achieve the same thing – not just copying their aesthetic, [but also thinking] how they do it… That is the main goal of *Reminiscence*.

Brocato mentions his upbringing and discusses yearning for childhood experiences, as well as longing for a time when "everything was easier", as informing the album. He struggles to pinpoint what it is that makes these childhood memories appealing and artistically stimulating, suggesting that the album making process enabled him to reconnect with bygone, early life experiences of first encounters.

When discussing the track 'First Contact' of *Reminiscence*, for example, he mentions his first experience of Jungle music and suggests that the track is inspired by sensations it evoked within him at the time. He further mentions his first romantic relationship as one that inspired this particular track, suggesting that there is something common to the initial excitement felt at the early stages of a new relationship and whilst experiencing certain types of music for the first time. Brocato stresses that *Reminiscence* does not, however, attempt to replicate these very sensations, but rather to convey the feelings and emotions that occur retrospectively in the course of their recollection.

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Notions of first encounters are also associated in Brocato's interpretations of the album with the collective memory of seminal, past events. Discussing the track '2069', he says that he was "thinking about the first person [to land] on the moon in 1979" and "fantasising about the moon 100 years after". A spoken word sample from a documentary about past expeditions to the moon was, in turn, incorporated within the production of the track. Related themes of science, science fiction and technology further informed the work on tracks like 'Chaos Engine', which is inspired by Brocato's readings into the Chaos Theory, and 'Geofront', which draws from futuristic, Japanese series Neon Genesis Evangelion (1995). Common to these musical inspirations, it seems, is a sense of temporal ambivalence and non-linearity – reminiscent of hauntology, as discussed in the introduction chapter – whereby representations of a yearned-for past futurity are being re-evoked and decontextualised.

Dance Music Ambivalence

Coming from a dance music background, Brocato approached the making of *Reminiscence* with the objective of transitioning from DJ to recording artist and reaching audiences beyond dancing crowds. He acknowledges that the album draws from dancefloor-oriented musical genres yet suggests that it stands apart from such genres in its conceptual aspirations. This ambivalent approach to dance music and its associated genres is also shown by the liner notes of the album, as noted by Brocato: "when the people from the label asked me what description or genre I want to [use in order to] classify the music, we ended up with 'house, techno, jungle, abstract, ambient' as a genre title". This sense of eclecticness is further evident in the discrepancies between different tracks on the album. Addressing these inconsistencies, Brocato recalls a press review published shortly after the album's release, which pointed to a discrepancy in the lengths of its tracks: "I said to myself… who makes up the rules? You can say a lot in a 1-minute track and say nothing in a 7-minutes track… 'Reminiscence' [the album's title track] says a lot to me in 1 minute and 21 seconds". Brocato further describes this track as "very impulsive", explaining that it was produced in approximately half an hour.

The album employs a range of production practices, from keyboard playing, through beat making and to applying audio effects and sampling. Brocato constructed most of the album's tracks by firstly writing harmonic parts and recreating chord progressions he was inspired by, using a Rhodes electric piano. On top of the harmonies, he would add synthesiser elements, exploring different waveforms. The percussive parts, he explains, were the last thing to be added to the recordings – contrary to what one might expect from beat-centred, electronic dance music productions. The album further applies an array of audio effects, such as reverb and distortion, as well as a combination of delay and low frequency oscillators (LFOs) for pitch variations. Brocato notes that the album makes extensive use of digital effects units made by software company D16, which he describes as characterised by an analogue-like sound. Sampling is also applied in the album, yet more sparsely, in tracks like '2069', as discussed above.

Discussing how production techniques used in the album relate to its conceptual themes, Brocato suggests a correlation between certain audio effects and specific feelings he was interested in conveying. In particular, he refers to his use of reverb – in keeping with Takahashi's concept of an "echo of an energy"– and the capacity in which it relates to notions of fleeting memories: "when you try to achieve… Try to make people perceive what you feel… Reverb obviously makes you feel something that… a thought that came to your mind and disappears after 5 seconds". He further describes his use of LFO as correlating with his longing to faded childhood memories, suggesting a "technostalgia" (D'Errico, 2012) to the characteristic sound of past technologies and the eras in which they prevailed:

> I tried to achieve that [sense of childhood reminiscing] by using… The LFO is the key… It's the characteristic […] because an LFO is basically like a wave going up and down, and if you apply that to the pitch tone, the pitch goes up and down… I was thinking about old television and about playing VHS and its distorted sounds… And up-and-down tones of the pitch because the tape was damaged… So I was trying to achieve that through the use of the LFO.

Further referring to his use of LFO to connote feelings of longing to bygone eras, he suggests, as done by Weiss and Takahashi, that the process of musically interpreting conceptual notions is, ultimately, intuitive: "Maybe it was subconscious", he says, "but I hope it was perceived like that".

In summary, Brocato's album *Reminiscence* and its title track exemplify how production and compositional motifs, such as brief structures, reverb and LFO, can be used to create stripped-down and deliberately obscure dance music tropes that symbolically connote notions of recollections and nostalgia. Furthermore, they suggest that the notion of reminiscence and the conjuring of fragmented, ambiguous memories are central to post-bliss and party afterglow, as discussed in the introduction and in the interview with Weiss and Takahashi. Whilst the creative work conducted for the study differs from Brocato's, being stimulated by a preconceived theme, it draws from his perception of the album format and its implied narratives as a "journey" and builds upon his dealing with recollection of lost yearned-for experiences in interpreting post-euphoria. The next interview with Lorenzo Senni examines another musical interpretation related to post-euphoria, which is concerned with anticipation to yet-to-be-fulfilled experiences.

Circumscribed Euphoria: Lorenzo Senni's *Persona*

The work of Lorenzo Senni presents a musical interpretation of transformed euphoria that is concerned with anticipation and unfulfilled experiences. Described by the Italian producer as dealing with "mutilated euphoria" (Senni, 2015), Senni's music focuses on employing synthesiser-based arrangements and stripped-down, trance music-inspired motifs to convey its take on euphoric experiences. Discussing his practice with Twells (2016), Senni states that recording his 2016 *Persona* EP was "a process of searching for euphoria" and that his music interprets euphoria "outside its usual context". In my interview with Senni, I examine his compositional approach to, and conceptual inspirations for, the making of this six-track EP.

In Senni's own words, his work is heavily synthesiser-based and relies on analogue synthesisers, such as Roland JP8000 and Roland JD900, which are recorded using the DAW Logic Pro. He notes that the starting point for most of his productions is a melody or a chord progression composed using Logic, which is then played and processed through a synthesiser. In addition, he makes thorough use of analogue synthesiser-based and Max MSP-programmed arpeggiators to create repeating note sequences, and occasionally uses virtual synthesisers such as Virus. Whilst working on *Persona*, he further utilised audio effects built into his analogue synthesisers, such as reverb, delay, chorus, flanger and phaser, to manipulate the different elements in his recordings.

Creative limitations, as informed by his music production technology of choice, play a fundamental role in Senni's music making. "Everything is very limited on purpose because I'm not a very technical person", he says, noting that he tends to lose focus when not adhering to a restricted setup and process. These creative limitations include, for example, using a restricted set of audio effects to process sounds and employing software tools sporadically. He also tends to record already-processed synthesiser parts to avoid being able to process them differently at a later stage, thus deliberately narrowing his production scope. He suggests that it is through embracing this strict approach that he is able to both gain control of his creative process and achieve unexpected results.

Dance Music Outsiderism

Senni's perspective on the genres of electronic dance music from which his music draws is not a straightforward one. Recalling his first club night experiences, Senni talks about attending – yet not fully indulging in – what he describes as "hardcore" events: "I always related to trance, but I never actually experienced it in full... I enjoyed being an outsider, I wasn't bored or wanting to go home, I just had a different kind of experience". From this observant viewpoint on party experiences evolved his concept of "rave voyeurism", which stimulated the making of *Persona*, as a perspective from which dance music-related, euphoric moments are experienced at a distance.

Senni further observes that rave voyeurism entails "experiencing certain kinds of music in an atypical way", such as the experience of dance music in a non-dancefloor context. Similar to Burial's interpretation of rave through the eyes of his older brother (Fisher, 2012), Senni's approach suggests a decontextualised experience that is reconstructed and mediated from a distantiated outlook. He further demonstrates this sense of alienation from dancefloor experiences through what he describes as his own inability to produce and play conventional dance music tracks in a club setting. "I never DJ-ed in my life... I don't even know how to turn on CDJs [and therefore I can't] understand if something would work in a club or not".

Senni's musical interpretations of rave voyeurism and the ways in which they reference trance music are underlined by the use of Roland JP8000 sounds, which the producer perceives as evocative of past trance productions. These references are further conveyed through the track titles in *Persona*, particularly 'Rave Voyeur', as well as through its artwork that portrays an animated figure peeking through a peephole. Senni notes that he wanted to keep these references relatively ambiguous and "not too direct". His focus lies not in creating actual trance music, he explains, but rather in reimagining the genre in new, mutated forms.

The Never-Ending Build-Up

Senni asserts that his tracks are unconventional in terms of their compositional structure and progression, referring to sections in *Persona*'s opening track 'Win in The Flat World' as "too long" and saying they do not meet listeners' expectations. It is through elongating musical sections, amongst other production and compositional strategies, that he simultaneously draws from genres of electronic dance music and challenges their conventions. Senni further uses the phrase "the never-ending build-up" to describe prolonged versions of dance music-inspired, "build-up" sections, as introduced in *Persona*. Such build-ups are commonly understood as inducing euphoria through their gradually intensifying arrangement and are said to conventionally resolve into a "drop", which provides a sense of release (Solberg, 2014). In *Persona*, however, the

overstretched build-ups are left suspended and unresolved and therefore perpetuate an intensifying tension.

Senni explains that, as part of his musical exploration into notions of euphoria and prior to recording the EP, he sampled build-up sections from various trance music tracks and studied them thoroughly. From this initial experimentation he then developed his own, musical interpretation of euphoric notions, whereby "expectations are not given". Explaining this approach, he notes:

> For me the build-up is the most interesting part of a trance track, because while other [sections may define] the genre the build-up is where the artist can express himself in a very personal way [...] For me waiting for that drop after the build-up was something that could have been extended forever... This waiting is what we're actually looking for.

Associating such "waiting" with an initial longing that "keeps us going" in the early stages of a romantic relationship – as also evident in Brocato's discussions of first encounters – Senni was interested in stripping this sense of anticipation down to its very core. This includes keeping the elements introduced throughout the extended build-up deliberately "dry" and "unpleasant", as explained by Senni, as a way of maximising the perceived tension and conveying what he describes as a feeling of "being on the edge".

A final compositional element that Senni reworks in *Persona* is the coda or the "outro" section, which traditionally marks the ending of a musical piece. Discussing specific tracks like 'Rave Voyeur', he notes that his outros often occupy "half of the track" and introduce key melodic parts. Progressing from his experimentations with extended build-ups and their associated sense of prolonged anticipation, lengthened outro sections are used by Senni to suggest a contrasting sense of continuous blissful release, similarly to how the current study incorporate multiple outro-like recordings to suggest post-euphoria.

Articulating Concept

The point at which Senni's concept of "mutilated euphoria" started crystalising was in 2010, during his first musical experimentations with deconstructing and studying trance productions. Further suggesting the term "circumscribed euphoria", his interpretation of euphoric experiences seems to imply, through its adaptation of electronic dance motifs, an altered and distorted type of bliss that remains suspended and unresolved. When attempting to define how euphoria manifests in his music, Senni appears ambivalent: "I don't find my music melancholic, I also don't find it super euphoric... It's very subjective".

Yet coining concepts such as "circumscribed euphoria", "rave voyeurism" and "the never-ending build-up" are considered by the producer as fundamental to his practice, as it creates a framework for his music making and allows him to make sense of so-called "ambiguities" that fascinate him. He emphasises that these underlying theoretical conceptions evolve alongside his music: "I never forced the music in a certain direction... It came naturally with the concept, but the concept also helps in giving conceptual confirmation to what I was already making". In other words, the conceptual themes relating to euphoria both stimulate and help to describe Senni's musical aesthetics. "For me everything needs to be very tight and coherent, everything needs to link", he notes, adding that each creative decision made as part of his creative process needs to be well justified, both on a musical and a conceptual level. It is vital for him to identify what he defines as "the core of what I do" and to consider "how it makes sense to me", as a starting point from which to approach the creative process. Despite his apt introduction of concepts, Senni stresses he wants the music to speak for itself, rather than needing to explain and interpret his intentions verbally. The challenge then remains, in his words, how to "conceive or transform what you're doing, or the idea behind what you're doing".

Senni claims that, whilst making music, he steers away from thinking about how listeners may interpret his productions. He also acknowledges that some listeners may be drawn to his music without realising what its underlying conceptual themes are. It is therefore crucial, in his view, to balance between the experimental aspects of his productions and the extent to which they are

"listenable", as well as between his meticulous recording process – which may be transparent to listeners – and the feelings and emotions his music ultimately projects. In any case, he holds that succeeding in musically conveying complex themes, such as the ones with which *Persona* is concerned, requires vision and persistence. "You need to be the first to believe in something in order for other people to believe in it as well… It is only possible to do so if you do what makes sense to you".

In brief, the interview with Senni sheds light on ways in which mutated forms of euphoria can be musically interpreted using stripped-down and decontextualised dance music tropes and through employing unconventional compositional structures. Whilst Weiss, Takahashi and Brocato's work focuses on creating a retrospective subjectivity with which past euphoric experiences are recollected, Senni's *Persona* portrays – through its suspension of gradually intensifying and isolated musical motifs – a sense of absence and anticipation to euphoric moments that have yet to occur. His approach introduces another facet of post-euphoria from which this study draws, whilst additional parallels can be drawn between his creative approach, including thorough use of a preconceived themes and preliminary experimentation, and the conceptual framing that stimulated the current research.

Conclusion

The above interviews present several interpretations of post-euphoria as a conceptual theme in electronic music making and in the context of electronic dance music, including Weiss and Takahashi's notion of a party afterglow, Brocato's handling of reminiscence and nostalgia and Senni's suggestion of suspended and unfulfilled euphoria. These interpretations are valuable to the study in two complementing ways: they further inform my conception of post-euphoria, whilst also shedding light on creative practices. This has helped in shaping a foundation from which to approach the creative work undertaken for the study.

The next two chapters provide a discussion of the recordings produced as part of the study, whilst examining their underlying creative practices and the ways in which they correlate with notions of post-euphoria. These musical recordings expand and further interpret themes explored by the interviewed musicians and draw from practices they employ, such as coining conceptual terms as a creative framework and employing dance music tropes. At the same time, the recordings produced as part of my study differ from the ones discussed above. Whilst the aforementioned musical examples focus on instrumental production, the current body of work incorporates my singing voice and includes lyrical motifs. This enables new forms of expression with which to interpret post-euphoria – both verbally and through vocal articulation and production – which are not achievable in instrumental productions. In addition, and whilst the interviewed musicians employ analogue synthesisers and keyboards, the technical setup used for recording the current body of work is focused on utilising a DAW – given my access to and proficiency in using the DAW Ableton Live and to allow an in-depth exploration of its creative affordances. Lastly, the creative output of this study attempts to integrate concepts of afterglow, reminiscence and euphoric anticipation to suggest a broad perspective on post-euphoria as a conceptual theme in electronic music making.

Chapter 5: Research and Development

Introduction

In the sections below, I will discuss electronic music making practices developed whilst conducting the research and development stage of the research. The aim of the chapter is to identify and examine reoccurring musical motifs and overarching creative paradigms, which have been employed as I was establishing the aesthetic vocabulary that would come to define the body of work as a whole. I hereby attempt to conceptualise and categorise these motifs and paradigms, coining terms that draw from the previously reviewed literature and interviews and examining ways in which they serve to advance my musical interpretation of post-euphoria. In particular, the chapter focuses on music production, compositional and lyrical elements, setting out key creative approaches that informed, in turn, the final production of the individual recordings, as discussed in the next chapter.

Production Embodiments

As I was working on the recordings, I used production elements that create a figurative correlation between the audio processing applied on the sonic material and certain ideas and narrative that make up my concept of post-euphoria. For example, in what later would become the recording titled '22-122', I slow down audio samples to suggest prolonging of yearned-for, fleeting moments, whilst in 'Epilogue' I sustain a decaying echo to portray lingering residues of bygone euphoric experiences. I further apply audio effects and editing that fragment and transform the sonic material, as specified in detail in the next chapter, to connote the transformations occurring in the memory of recollected euphoric experiences.

I will hereby refer to such production elements as "production embodiments", to describe ways in which they attempt to figuratively embody – through the use of sound – the extramusical themes relating to post-euphoria with which the research is concerned. Following Berndtson's discussions of

embodiment in art (1960), I employ the word "embodiment", used in other contexts with reference to the human body, to describe the artistic process of giving determinate expression to otherwise internal and indetermined emotion. My notion of production embodiments can be further understood in keeping with the concept of "opaque mediation" (Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen, 2016) and as encapsulating what Demers defines as sonic metaphors (2010, p. 171), in that they create a referential, analogic relationship between sonic phenomena and external themes and narratives. Yet what I refer to as production embodiments is distinguished from Demer's sonic metaphors in that it not only creates a symbolic reference to external themes, but also a figurative likening between sonic phenomenon and non-sonic conceptual ideas and processes.

I classify the production embodiments developed and applied in my creative work for the research within four different categories, which largely overlap:

1. **Spatial embodiments** – these production elements use audio effects such as reverb, delay and stereo panning, as well as mixing techniques, to connote certain spatial environments – whether real or imagined ones – and to portray notions of distance and proximity. They also include the use of compression to create a sense of enhanced nearness and intimacy, particularly when applied on vocal parts. For the most part, however, the study utilises such production elements to depict a sense of remoteness (rather than nearness) in relation to lost euphoric experiences and to delineate how they may be recollected from a distantiated perspective.

2. **Temporal embodiments** – production elements that use techniques such as time-warping of audio samples and low-frequency oscillator (LFO) modulations to suggest a convoluted and non-linear temporality, as informing my conception of post-euphoria. These embodiments are used to aesthetically connote the ephemeral nature of euphoric experiences and to imply their mental reoccurrence as haunting memories, misplaced-in-time.

3. **Transformative embodiments** – a range of audio effects and production processes that modify the affected sonic material in apparent ways, to

connote meaning relating to transformation. For example, and as pointed out by Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen (2016), an equaliser may be used not only to enhance an audio mix but also in a way that emphasises and brings to fore the timbral changes induced by its application. This is also the case with other techniques employed in the study, such as the use of grain delay, vocoder, chorus, distortion, phasing and gating, which I utilise to disfigure musical elements. Different transformative embodiments are used throughout the different recordings to connote ways in which our perception of bygone euphoric experiences may transform over time.

4. **Reassemblage embodiments** – these production elements, which to some extent overlap with transformative embodiment, use software-based editing that disassembles and reassembles the sonic material to form a new reconfiguration, through applying techniques such as cutting and pasting audio segments, looping and re-instrumentation, audio-to-MIDI conversions and pitch shifting, amongst others. They are distinguished from transformative embodiments in that they present reconfigured, rather than altogether transformed, musical elements. Reassemblage embodiments are used in the study to interpret mental fragmentation of lost euphoric experiences and to imply their reconstitution as reimagined recollections.

Compositional Embodiments

In addition to using production embodiments, I employed reoccurring compositional elements that suggest symbolic meanings relating to my conception of post-euphoria. I differentiate between production embodiments and compositional embodiments and use the latter term to describe musical elements that define the structure of a musical piece and that are not exclusively peculiar to electronic music. Like production embodiments, compositional embodiments can be thought of as encapsulating a figurative analogy between musical elements and conceptual ideas presented in this research, in addition to bearing a musical and structural function within the pieces. Furthermore, and through repeatedly incorporating these compositional elements within the

recordings, they come to forge a distinctive musical vocabulary and aesthetic signature that will define the body of work as a whole.

Prominent compositional embodiment used in the recordings include:

1. **Brief compositional structures**: the recordings comprising the body of work are relatively short in duration and span approximately 2.50 minutes on average – less than the length commonly perceived as the average duration of a popular music song, which spans 3-4 minutes (Hawkins & Niblock, 2011, p. 52). Some recordings are particularly short and span under 2.30 minutes, with three recordings lasting less than 2 minutes. This tendency may not be at odds with experimental genres of music, such as those discussed in the interview chapter, which accommodate for less rigidly structured pieces. Yet it is contrasted with pop songwriting conventions employed in this project. By compiling a set of such short recordings, I ultimately created a collection of snippet-like pieces to suggest fragmented recollections of short-lived euphoric experiences.

2. **Repetition**: the produced recordings build upon extensive repetition and looping of instrumental motifs, lyrical phrases, harmonic progressions and audio samples. Such repetition can be seen as a trope of electronic dance music, which uses looped-based composition to stimulate euphoric sensations amongst dancing crowds and to induce pleasure through foregrounding the very process of repetition (Garcia, 2005). In addition, the use of repetition and the constant "revisiting" of previously presented musical material can be seen as suggesting a yearning to re-experience and recover lost euphoric moments.

3. **Fade-outs**: most of the produced recordings culminate in a "fade-out" – a gradual decrease in volume at the end of the recording, leading to complete silence. These slowly fading endings, commonly incorporated in popular music recordings, became a characteristic motif in the forming body of work and can be associated with certain symbolic meanings. For instance, it has been previously suggested that a fade-out indicates delaying closure and a sense in which a song "never truly ends" (Huron,

2007, p. 318; Weir, 2014). Drawing from such conceptions, fade-outs are employed here to imply the decay of and lingering on past euphoric experiences.

4. **Extended outros**: several recordings that are expanded in the final body of work, such as 'Forget U', 'Into Illusion', 'Emotional Call' and 'Second Spring', conclude with an outro section that marks a departure from the preceding parts the song. Indicating an imminent closure, these outro sections are marked by a shift in mood, arrangement, harmony and lyrical content and can be symbolically likened to an afterthought or a residual feeling that linger once an experience subsides. Other recordings included in the final body of work, such as 'Reprise' and 'Too Late', are characterised by a stripped-down musical structure and decaying intensity, for which they can be described as "stand-alone outros" – and figuratively likened to shattered afterthoughts.

Electronic Dance Music Tropes

The recordings incorporate electronic dance music motifs, which are used selectively and in a reinterpreted fashion. These motifs, to which I refer in keeping with Weiss and Takahashi's proposed terminology as electronic dance music tropes, are presented throughout final the body of work to connote euphoric experiences associated with listening and dancing to electronic dance music (Garcia, 2015; Solberg, 2014), creating in turn a musical aesthetic that is informed by but not aimed at the dancefloor. Electronic dance music tropes can be found in the works of the interviewed musicians and can be further associated with the work of producers like Burial, as discussed in previous chapters, which challenges and decontextualises the dancefloor-oriented aims of conventional dance music tracks (Harper, 2011, pp. 189-190).

Electronic dance music tropes are introduced in several ways throughout the body of work. Most prominently, they take the form of stripped-down elements of electronic dance music, which are presented as missing and incomplete. For example, recordings like 'Into Illusion', 'Emotional Call' and

'Forget U' were conceived from arpeggiated harmonies, synthesiser bass stabs and vocal "stutters" commonly used in electronic dance music productions (Marrington, 2017, p. 79), whilst refraining from using a kick drum. In addition, the recordings recreate intensifying "build-up" sections and equaliser automations characteristic of electronic dance music, without including a subsequent "drop" section as common in dancefloor-oriented music (Solberg, 2014). Through using such production strategies, the arrangement is presented as suspended and lacking and is being stripped off its core, "danceable" features, creating a sense in which the euphoria associated with dance music is only implied but not fulfilled.

In addition to incorporating stripped-down elements of electronic dance music, I use audio library samples of electronic dance music motifs and transform them in several ways. Whilst conceiving the recording '22-122', for example, I time-warped samples of house music synthesiser chords and electronic drums. In another recording, 'Too Late', a library house music piano sample is reconstructed with a MIDI instrument. Both recordings use electronic dance music motifs, but ultimately create – through the excessive manipulation of their samples – a new musical aesthetic that is not aimed at the dancefloor. Applying these different production approaches and electronic dance music tropes and incorporating them within non-dancefloor-oriented recordings allowed for developing a musical vocabulary that reimagines a mutated version of electronic dance music euphoria.

Self-Remixing

Several recordings developed here make use of reworked materials from other recordings produced for the study. Such use of reinterpreted, found musical elements is consistent with dance music-rooted practices of remixing, whereby reconfigured fragments of existing recordings serve as the basis for producing new musical works (Reynolds, 2011). However, whilst practices of remixing are normally associated with musicians who rework the work of other musicians, in this instance I rework and create alternative versions of my own work. The resulting reworked recordings can thusly be said to constitute an act of "self-

remixing", whereby I use my own creative output as source material for producing new work.

Such self-remixing practice was employed, for example, when working on 'Reprise' – a recording in which I apply a grain delay effect on a fragment of another recording titled 'Forget U'. By doing so, I create a new and reconfigured version of the original recording, which I previously recorded and performed. Self-remixing was also applied when working on the recording 'Residue', which rearranges a MIDI element from preceding recording 'Too Late', as well as in 'Epilogue', whereby I applied a freeze reverb effect on a fragment of previous recording 'Emotional Call'. The use of self-remixing has thoroughly informed the final body of work, which comprises several "pairs" of recordings that correspond with and reference one another.

The notion of self-remixing is realised not only in the way the recordings are produced, but also in how they are presented and curated. Through including these pairs of corresponding recordings within the same body of work – as part of the final production and curation stage – I sought to introduce a sense of intertextuality between the different pieces, in a way that deliberately emphasises the affinity between them. This intertextuality is further illustrated through the titles eventually given to the reworked recordings, which suggest retrospection and fragmentation (i.e. 'Reprise', 'Residue' and 'Epilogue'). In this way, self-remixing provides a means for conveying the overarching concept of post-euphoria and its dealing with impressions of past experiences – transformed through one's own subjective perspective.

Sampling without Sampling

Previously used in Lisa Busby's discussions of post-digital songwriting (2017), the term sampling-without-sampling describes the act of emulating processes and sonic characteristics relating to audio sampling – the practice of using fragments of existing musical recordings to produce new ones – without applying actual sampling. Addressing this production strategy, Busby further maintains that "rhythmic, textural, and compositional characteristics of sampling

and sequencing are increasingly forming an important part of the vocabulary of all contemporary songwriters [...] even where the hardware sampler or DAW is not" (p. 18). I build upon Busby's observation when conceptualising my use of sampling-without-sampling, which creates a musical aesthetic that is reminiscent of sample-based productions.

When working on 'Forget U', for example, I recorded myself singing a fragment of the lead vocal phrase from Zara Larsson's 'Never Forget You'. A vocal quote rather than a sample from the original song is thusly presented and further manipulated and edited as if it were a sample. Another example can be found in the recordings 'Too Late' and 'Residue', where I apply audio-to-MIDI conversions to recreate an audio sample as a MIDI clip. In this case, the sample is completely reconstructed in the initial stages of the production process to contain no traces of its original audio content. Other recordings, like 'In a Different Light', emulate sonic characteristics typical of sample-based works without using actual samples. This is done here through excessively applying a vocoder effect to portray the instrumental motifs as processed audio samples. Whilst these examples demonstrate emulating audio sampling, I have also sampled my own musical material, as discussed in the previous section relating to self-remixing, hence employing sampling techniques without sampling the work of other musicians.

Using these various techniques enables to bypass intellectual property issues that are commonly at stake when releasing sample-based work, thus serving as a practical method for producers interested in releasing music that references existing musical works. More crucial to the current study, however, is the way in which sampling-without-sampling creates a distinctive musical vocabulary that reimagines implied and absent samples to suggest recollection and reinterpretation of absent euphoric experiences. A similar analogy can be drawn between the referencing of past sampling technologies, as implied by using sampling-without-sampling, and the reminiscing of past euphoric experiences.

"Broad Brushstrokes" Production

My creative process frequently entailed applying audio effects on master or group channels, in such a way that affects and manipulates the entire piece rather than specific elements of it. Working on 'Epilogue', for example, I applied a "freeze" reverb effect on the master channel of another recording ('Emotional Call'), thus effectively affecting and reconfiguring the original recording in its entirety. Similarly, whilst working on 'Reprise', I applied a grain delay effect on the master channel of an earlier recording ('Forget U'), thus altogether transforming the original piece. Other examples can be found in '22-122', wherein two audio samples are decelerated simultaneously, as well as in 'Residue', in which equaliser and LFO effects are applied on an audio-turned-MIDI sample containing different motifs. In all these instances, audio effects are used to reconfigure multiple and often sonically disparate musical parts, which are treated as a whole.

Applying this production strategy afforded a broad brushstrokes-like workflow, whereby audio effects are used not only to treat specific musical elements but also to radically transform entire compositions. It also introduces an element of chance to the production process, generating unexpected results as audio effects are applied loosely on multiple musical motifs. Such broad brushstrokes production can be seen as common practice amongst sampling producers and DJs, who often manipulate "chunks" of sampled recordings and existing tracks containing various elements, using tools such as equalisers, time warping and pitch shifting. It can thus be argued that this production approach overlaps with incorporating tropes of electronic dance music and sampling practices, as discussed to in previous sections.

The use of broad brushstrokes audio processing and the seemingly imprecise results it achieves can also be associated with "lo-fi" production strategies, which according to Harper (2014) include using audio effects to deliberately obfuscate and obscure musical materials (p. 59). Such use of audio effects can symbolically imply, as further suggested by Harper, an obfuscation of past events and experiences to reflect upon notion of memory and decay (p. 378-379). Building upon Harper's observations, I obscure the musical elements

presented in the recordings to suggest the sense in which fragmented memories become vague and indistinguishable over time – to the extent that it is no longer possible to separate between actual recollections and new associations with which they become imbued.

Vocal Processing and Lyrical Strategies

Developing the recordings, I pursued a creative approach that applies software-based production integratively with songwriting – an approach that has been regarded as increasingly prevalent in DAW-based production (Bennet & Bates, 2018; Burgess, 2013; Hepworth-Sawyer & Golding, 2011). Moreover, the vocal-based recordings ('Emotional Call', 'Forget U', 'Too Late', 'Second Spring', 'Into Illusion' and 'In a Different Light') apply conventions of pop music writing, utilising song-based musical structures, lyrical narration and use of rhyming. However, and similarly to my treatment of electronic dance music tropes, the incorporated pop music elements are left missing and obfuscated. The lead vocal lines in particular are sonically processed in ways that highlight, expand and complicate their lyrical meanings, elaborating my interpretation of post-euphoria as an ambiguous and intricate concept. It can also be argued that the very incorporation of my singing voice throughout the body of work contributes towards depicting post-euphoria as a distinctively personal subjectivity – in keeping with the varying and subjective experiences described in my interviews with Weiss, Takahashi, Brocato and Senni. In particular, the use of first-person narration across the vocal pieces suggests a sense of introspection and reflection, furthering my interpretation of post-euphoria and complementing the instrumental elements.

The vocal processing techniques applied include several production embodiments. For example, I apply reverb and compression on my vocal recordings as spatial embodiments of proximity and distance, to suggest longing for fleeting, euphoric experiences. A high-pass filter equaliser is further applied on the vocal elements as a transformative embodiment that portrays the sung voice as fleeting and flimsy, alongside pitch shifting and grain delay effects that reinforce the sense of transformation. Reassemblage embodiments and

repetitive composition are realised in the form of digitally duplicating, splicing and reconstructing vocal parts, as well as through programming new vocal melodies, which bring to light new lyrical meanings forged by way of chance and collaging. In addition, the vocal production makes use of electronic dance music tropes and sampling-without-sampling, as vocal phrases are being repeated and fragmented and treated as stuttered, audio samples found in electronic dance music productions.

As the lyrical phrases are being fragmented, duplicated, juxtaposed and shifted in pitch, they become imbued with new, nuanced meanings. Furthermore, the repetition and digital reconfiguration of vocal "mantras" may serve, as suggested by Busby (2017), to both reinforce and obfuscate meaning, as it has become apparent whilst working on the recordings titled 'Forget U' and 'Too Late'. It should be observed that the lyrical narratives relating to post-euphoria are emphasised not only through vocal processing but also through instrumental production. 'In a Different Light', for example, experiments with gradual equalisation of synthesiser harmonies to suggest the change of heart and a sense of transformation described in the lyrics. In other cases, the instrumental production enabled to expand the lyrical narratives, as exemplified in 'Emotional Call' where spatial embodiments and stripped-down dance music motifs elaborate the ambivalent emotional experience described in the lyrics.

Conclusion

The production, compositional and songwriting strategies developed as part of this stage of the research and whilst developing the initial recordings provided a set of means and approaches with which to further my musical interpretation of post-euphoria, as presented in the final body of work. This includes using what I refer to as production and compositional embodiments to create a figurative correlation between the sonic and musical elements and the conceptual ideas that I associate with post-euphoria – particularly relating to the shifting memory of recollected euphoric experiences. Additional strategies developed include using electronic dance music tropes to suggest transformed euphoric experiences and employing creative techniques that reference remixing and

sampling practices, as well as broad brushstrokes-like production, to suggest recollection and reimagination of such experiences. Several recordings developed as part of this stage include vocal and lyrical motifs that draw from pop music making conventions and depict, in their lyrical and personal narration, the subjectivities that inform my concept of post-euphoria. These different motifs and creative strategies are then used to forge a musical vocabulary and an aesthetic language that have been expanded and refined within the final productions and that would come to define the body of work in its entirety. In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at individual recordings included in the body of work, examining their utilised creative practices and ways in which they interpret post-euphoria.

Chapter 6: Recordings

Introduction

The discussion that follows examines the ten recordings included in the body of work and considers ways in which they expressively interpret my concept of post-euphoria. Each discussion is dedicated to analysing one or two recordings and comprises a review of production and songwriting practices applied, followed by a reflective commentary that critically assesses the attempted practices. Each discussion takes a close look at creative practices that stimulated the making of the examined recording: from slowing down audio samples containing electronic dance music motifs, through quoting fragmented lyrical phrases and creating missing electronic dance music arrangements and to employing audio-to-MIDI conversions and using a range of audio effects.

The focus of the discussions varies in accordance with the practices attempted in each recording. For the most part, I concentrate on the utilised DAW-based production techniques and tools and the musical motifs they are used to forge, including elements of composition and arrangement. Where vocal and lyrical elements are prominently featured (particularly in the recordings titled 'Emotional Call', 'Forget U', 'Second Spring', 'Into Illusion' and 'In a Different Light'), a complementing examination of songwriting strategies and lyrical themes – and ways in which they are shaped by working with a DAW – is presented. The motifs and creative strategies are analysed within the conceptual framework of post-euphoria, to consider ways in which they serve to portray notions of reminiscing and recollection and convey missing to lost and faded euphoric experiences.

Several of the discussed recordings ('Emotional Call', 'Forget U' and 'Second Spring') were produced, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, in collaboration with fellow electronic musician Rotem Haguel. Contributing elements of analogue modular synthesis, these additions complement and elaborate the arrangements of the recordings and expand the use of electronic dance music tropes in the form of arpeggiated chords. They further provided audio material onto which I was able to apply audio effects and processing to

further my interpretation of post-euphoria. Whilst worthy of consideration in their own right, the added modular synthesis elements are not reviewed here to keep the discussion focused on DAW-based practices of production and composition, in keeping with the aims of the study.

It should be noted that the order in which the recordings are discussed below differs from the one in which they are presented in the body of work. The following sections present the recordings in the order in which they were conceived, whilst the sequence of recordings in the body of work is stimulated by conceptual and stylistic considerations, taking into account elements of tempo, arrangement and compositional structure. The sequence of recordings in the body of work further demonstrates how post-euphoria can be interpreted as a gradually unfolding and overarching narrative that reveals itself and becomes more apparent as the recordings follow on from each other, as done in popular music concept albums (Elicker, 2001, p. 229; Letts, 2011, p. 11). The recordings are thus meant to be listened to and perceived not as individual, stand-alone pieces, but rather as a part of the integrated body of work.

The final mixing process of selected recordings ('Emotional Call', 'Forget U', 'Second Spring', 'Into Illusion' and 'In a Different Light'), conducted in collaboration with my doctoral supervisor Justin Randell upon completing my own recording process, enabled to effectively fuse the different recorded elements to further interpret post-euphoria. It also assisted in emphasising spatial embodiments relating to proximity and distance and to highlight dynamic shifts incorporated in the arrangements, whilst also ensuring that the vocal elements are clearly audible within the mix. Following from here, a discussion of the first recording conceived, titled '22-122', will be presented.

22-122

In the recording titled '22-122', I attempt to establish a musical aesthetic that interprets the idea of an electronic dance music party afterglow, as defined in the introduction chapter. Using time-based audio processing tools and effects on a select set of audio samples containing electronic dance music motifs, I attempt to interpret the nuanced subjectivities associated with an afterglow and to musically capture the sense of reminiscing it encapsulates.

Production Practice

The piece was conceived through experimentation with production techniques that utilise Ableton Live and its built-in editing and audio processing tools. To begin, I preselected two audio samples from sample library packages containing characteristic element of electronic dance music: one sample containing a progression of sustained chords played on a synthesiser (Watson, 2015) and the other a percussive drum loop (Sample Magic, n.d.). Also informing my selection of samples is the title of the second sample package used, named "Euphoric House", which provided a starting point from which to reinterpret so-called euphoric musical elements and genres. I then looped and excessively slowed-down the tempo of the samples from 122 to 22 beats per minute, using Ableton Live's time-warping feature – a granular synthesis-based tool that elongates or abbreviates audio samples in sync with the overall tempo of the project and without affecting their pitch. A high-pass filter equaliser applied at the beginning of the recording gradually reveals the slowed-down samples, which are further modulated using a phaser plug-in. Through applying the plug-in and creating peaks in the frequency spectrum, a cyclic and sweeping motion is introduced throughout, whilst additional delays and equaliser effects are used to introduce repetitive patterns within the looped samples and affect the frequency mix respectively. Towards the end of the recording (2.32), the tempo is sped back up to 122 beats per minute, whilst a sustained reverb tail is left lingering at the very ending as the other elements subside.

Reflective Commentary

The production techniques applied in the piece attempt to interpret the notion of an afterglow, defined in the introduction chapter as a pleasant and subdued sensation that lingers after leaving a dance party. They further draw from the understanding of an afterglow as a retrospective reflection on yearned-for experiences that, similarly to Boym's conception of reflective nostalgia (2001), is playful and imaginative. More specifically, and through lengthening and stretching audio samples containing element of electronic dance music dubbed "euphoric", I attempt to symbolically portray a yearning to sustain – and a refusal to let go of – fleeting euphoric experiences.

The sampled motifs are used as electronic dance music tropes to connote dancefloor euphoria. Yet these tropes are presented, through their manipulation and processing, as mutated and transformed, suggesting what Senni defines as an atypical type of euphoria (2019) that in this case lacks the fast-paced, high energy associated with electronic dance music. Through foregrounding the excessive processing applied on the musical material as an act of "opaque mediation" (Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen, 2016), I create a temporal and transformative production embodiment of prolonged retrospection. Such production embodiment further enabled to suggest a rejection of linear temporality and to connote an afterglow feeling, whereby impressions of a party that has ended continue to linger.

The time-warping and protraction of the audio samples further reveal nuanced sonic details, which become sustained and therefore more noticeable. Similarly to how Weiss and Takahashi discuss their musical interpretation of an afterglow and "zooming into" sounds to break apart their "digital materiality" (2019), the current piece reveals miniature sonic elements that become audible through their elongation and by the use of additional modulation effects. In its reconfiguring of the audio samples, the piece further suggests a correlation between shifting recollections and the malleability of sound itself, exemplifying Prior (2017) and Demers' (2010) discussions of creative strategies that interpretatively foreground the "ontological plasticity" of sound (Prior, 2017, p. 1) to connote extramusical meanings.

The processing of the samples also obfuscates their reference to electronic dance music genres and puts forward their very obscurity, in such a way that, like reflective nostalgia, favours ambiguous reminiscing over accurate recollection. This sense of obscurity is further emphasised using the phasing effect, which produces an auditory illusion of a constant pitch glissando through reoccurring modulations in the frequency range. Such sonic illusion of a never-ending motion, which emerged by chance as I was experimenting with the phasing effect, can be interpreted as connoting a perpetual reminiscing of bygone blissful experiences. In addition, the delay feedbacks and the patterns that emerge from protracting the samples can be symbolically likened to lingering residues of a faded experience, reimagined retrospectively.

Finally, the overall compositional structure of the piece, which is relatively brief and looped-based, can be said to symbolically embody a fleeting and elusive flashback of a bygone experience. Gradually revealed with the equaliser filter automation and resembling an interlude-like piece that draws from Teengirl Fantasy's 'Glare' (2017), the recording can be likened to a transient afterthought that remains open-ended and inconclusive. The final reverting to the original tempo – as well as the recording title – further expose the production mechanism applied, foregrounding the transformation it induces within the musical material to reinforce its perceived meanings. As the prolonged reverb tail persists at the end of the piece, it is used to suggest resonating residues of an expired experience.

Insights

Applying time-warping, phasing, delay and equaliser tools, as well as compositional elements and echo effects, enabled me to interpret the notion of an afterglow as lingering and retrospective reflection on bygone yearned-for experiences. In particular, the time-warping of audio samples containing electronic dance music tropes provided an expressive means to musically interpret a sense of distorted and non-linear temporality and a mental revesting of lost night-outs. Employing such audio time-warping is used here to create what I defined as temporal and transformative production embodiments,

suggesting a longing to prolong and recapture fleeting euphoric moments through foregrounding the alteration of the musical and sonic elements themselves. In addition, and as the audio samples become warped and seemingly malleable, they connote a sense in which recollections of lost experiences shift over time and become imbued with new associations. The use of additional phasing and delay effects, alongside an equaliser, complements and emphasises the sense of retrospection achieved through time warping, by creating reoccurring sonic residues as analogy for residual impressions of party experiences.

Emotional Call and Epilogue

In two complementing recordings, titled 'Emotional Call' and 'Epilogue', I apply dance music tropes and songwriting practice and utilise a freeze reverb effect. Through incorporating stripped-down and decontextualised elements of dance music alongside lyrical motifs, I examine how feelings of emotional uplifting can be presented as ambivalent and lacking, whilst further employing spatial production embodiments and intertextuality between different recordings to explore notions of recollection and loss.

Production and Songwriting Practice

'Emotional Call' was initially conceived in the research and development stage as a vocal sketch and captured in its draft form using an iPhone voice memos application. I then rerecorded the vocal parts and created the instrumental arrangement, whilst applying a range of audio effects as described below. The song, which draws from conventions of pop music writing, comprises a verse-chorus-verse-chorus structure and culminates in an outro section, whilst maintaining the same harmonic progression throughout. The lyrical motifs include repetition on inflections of the words "feeling" and "emotion", and describe, partly using metaphors and visual imagery, a personal process of emotional awakening and a state of conflict and confusion.

The instrumental arrangement utilises a range of software instruments, with emphasis on Ableton Live's in-built synthesisers. In addition, it uses third-party, software synthesisers commonly applied in dance music productions, such as Native Instrument's Massive plug-in, as well as sampled percussive elements. The synthesiser parts have been duplicated and played simultaneously using different sounds and instruments, to create a rich timbre. The arrangement further incorporates elements that draw from dance music productions, such as arpeggiated chords (appearing at beginning of the recording and remaining throughout), equaliser filter automations, intensifying "swoosh" sounds (James, 2015, p. 48) and synthesiser bass stabs. At the same time, the production lacks

elements that can be described as characteristic of electronic dance music, such as a kick drum (Tagg, 1994). The vocal elements are processed using different settings of reverb, delay and compression at different points in the recording, whilst the vocal melody in the final section (2.38 onwards) is constructed from a short lyrical phrase that has been duplicated and transposed – with its original timbre maintained – as afforded by Ableton Live's "pro" transposition mode.

In 'Epilogue', the different elements of 'Emotional Call' are processed using Ableton Live's in-built reverb plug-in, which is applied on a return channel. The reverb is further set to "freeze" mode – a function that sustains a lingering reverb tail to create an impression of an infinite, never-decaying echo. In addition to the reverb plug-in, a low-pass filter equaliser is applied on the return channel to omit high frequencies. The return channel is then exported without its inputting channels, making audible only the perpetual, reverb-affected signal without the original channel output, and edited with fade-in and fade-out volume automations at the beginning and ending of the exported recording.

Reflective Commentary

Two practices are employed within this set of recordings in a complementary fashion: vocal-driven songwriting and experimental electronic music production. Working within a songwriting framework, as done in 'Emotional Call', enabled me to build upon my songwriting background to communicate verbal meanings and narratives, which are emphasised and elaborated as the song progresses from one section to another. Using production motifs, both in 'Emotional Call' and in 'Epilogue', I was able to further explore how nuanced meanings relating to my conception of post-euphoria can be interpreted through sound. The two practices are employed synergistically here and inform one another, to establish multilayered meanings relating to post-euphoria.

Electronic dance music is associated with euphoric sensations through its use of repetition and gradually intensifying arrangements (Solberg, 2014), as well as through introducing "uplifting" percussive, harmonic and vocal motifs that are meant to create a sense of heightened sensitivity amongst dancing

crowds (Garcia, 2011; Malbon, 1999; Reynolds, 1998). In 'Emotional Call', I borrow such elements in a selective and interpretative fashion. For example, I introduce repetitive, synthesiser bass stabs as done in electronic dance music productions, yet in a sporadic and stripped-down fashion. I refrain from using a kick drum – often perceived as the most significant, rhythmical element in post-disco dance music productions (Rietveld, 2018) – to suggest an inherently lacking and unfulfilled manifestation of dance music euphoria. The absence of the kick is further highlighted through the extensive inclusion of arpeggiated synthesiser harmonies, which are normally incorporated in dance music productions alongside pulsing percussive parts. Finally, the white noise-like and modulated synthesised motifs introduced in the second half of the track (2.38 onwards) can be read as disfigured and deconstructed percussive elements. Creating such partial and mutated electronic dance music tropes assisted in conveying a distinctive type of euphoria, which appears faded and missing.

Furthering this sense of ambivalent euphoria, the lyrics portray a complex and conflicted emotional state. The imagery used in the verses depicts the shift from day to night, suggesting a sense of transformation and tension between contrasting feelings, whilst the repetition and digital duplication of vocal samples containing words like "feeling" and "emotion" emphasise the affective and subjective aspect of intense emotional experiences. These ambiguities and ambivalences are further highlighted through the vocal production motifs, including the half-sung and half-programmed descending vocal melody in the final section, which blurs the boundaries between unprocessed and digitally processed singing. The overall vocal sound can be described as both intimate and alienated, due to the use of excessive compression that amplifies the whispery singing quality and makes it sound proximate, in conjunction with a gate effect that fragments and dehumanises the voice by removing breath sounds before each sung phrase. Elsewhere in the recording, a contrast between proximity and distance is implied through applying varying reverb, delay and equalisation settings on the vocal and instrumental parts.

The different elements in 'Emotional Call' are being further processed and manipulated in 'Epilogue', to such extent that they are no longer recognisable.

What results from such manipulation and from the application of the freeze reverb effect in an all-encompassing, broad brushstrokes-like fashion can be described as a dim remnant or echo of the original recording – reading more like a sustained drone rather than a fully-fledged song. The use of freeze reverb further demonstrates how audio effects can be utilised to embody notions of temporality and recollection. More specifically, the elongation and suspension of reverb applied on the original recording create a sonic trace that lingers after its actual occurrence, as if attempting to capture or "freeze" a moment in time. This production strategy can therefore be perceived as a temporal embodiment that suggests suspension of fleeting moments through prolonging decaying musical elements. In its sonic portrayal of an imagined echoing space, it can also be thought of as a spatial embodiment that suggests a remote perspective in relation to fleeting euphoric moments, as well as a transformative embodiment that indicates the shifting impression of such moments through the altering of the sonic material. The notion of a fleeting yet perpetuated experience is further embedded through compositional embodiments, as the structure of 'Epilogue' remains brief and lacks a definite beginning and ending.

The act of capturing the reverb channel's output and muting the original channels containing the musical elements can be likened to isolating the mere resonance of a given space, whilst removing the sound objects that inhabit it. What emerges here can thus be described as a pure ambience of an imagined space. In this way, 'Epilogue' depicts a reference-less and decontextualised trace of the musical recording – and the emotional experience – it seemingly echoes, calling to mind discussions of hauntology and their dealing with representations of absence and loss. The use of freeze reverb effect can also be understood in light of writing on the aestheticisation of "ruins" (Trigg, 2006), as the so-called musical ruins of 'Emotional Call' are being abstracted and decontextualised.

The intertextuality between the two recordings, created through processes of self-remixing, further shapes their perceived meanings and their interpretation of post-euphoria. As 'Epilogue' references, deconstructs and alienates 'Emotional Call', it brings to fore new meanings relating to recollection and transformation, which become apparent when examining the recordings

alongside each other. In this way, 'Epilogue' creates a symbolic – and actual – echo of 'Emotional Call', connoting the changing perspective from which euphoric experiences are engaged with at different points in time.

Insights

By applying elements of songwriting in conjunction with stripped-down dance music tropes, 'Emotional Call' suggests an ambivalent and muted type of euphoria that is presented as missing and subdued. The lyrical themes relating to emotional awakening and inner conflict are further highlighted through selectively applying elements of electronic dance music production – emphasising in effect the absence of ones not included. Additional vocal processing is used to convey contrasting feelings of intimacy and alienation and blurs the boundaries between real and imagined. Concomitant recording 'Epilogue' then reconstructs 'Emotional Call' as a mere echo of the original song. Employing a freeze reverb effect on the elements presented in Emotional Call, 'Epilogue' creates a feeling of constant suspension and suggests spatial, temporal and transformative embodiments and a correlation between the presented sonic echo and the felt, altered echo of a missed recollected experience. In doing so, and through foregrounding the intertextuality between the two recordings, shifting perspectives on missing euphoric experiences and their faded recollections are musically captured.

Forget U and Reprise

Two corresponding recordings, 'Forget U' and 'Reprise', are discussed in this section. The former recording uses vocal quotation and a dance music-inspired arrangement, whilst the latter employs a grain delay effect. Building upon these techniques as compositional strategies, the recordings suggest a musical interpretation of post-euphoria that is concerned with aspects of reminiscence and memory, as discussed in the following sections.

Production and Songwriting Practice

The first recording 'Forget U' centres on a vocal motif, which has been recorded, duplicated and edited in several ways. This vocal motif is based on a five-word phrase ("I will never forget you") from the lead vocal part in Zara Larsson and MNEK's 2015 single 'Never Forget You' (2015). The phrase was rerecorded using my own voice and further fragmented and rearranged digitally using Ableton Live's audio editing tools, creating in turn new lyrical combinations ("I will forget you"). The phrase is further fragmented into non-lyrical vocal stutters (noticeable from 0.42 onwards), whilst melodic variations of it are created using a third-party pitch and formant shifting plug-in. Varying reverb and compression settings are then applied on the repeating vocal phrase at different points in the recording.

The instrumental arrangement is predominantly synthesiser-based and utilises Ableton Live's in-built, virtual instruments. It references musical elements that are commonly used in electronic dance music productions, such as ascending "build ups" – an intensifying musical section that according to Solberg induces pleasurable, euphoric states (2014). Additional dance music-inspired elements include intensifying "swoosh" samples (James, 2015, p. 48) in transitions between sections, as well as delay affected synthesisers commonly used in electronic dance music genres like techno and trance (Bougaïef, 2013). However, and unlike electronic dance music productions, the current recording

lacks a kick drum-driven beat and its build-ups do not resolve into what Solberg defines as bass-heavy "drop" sections (p. 65).

Complementing recording 'Reprise' is produced as a derivative of 'Forget U' and presents a shorter fragment of the original recording, which is processed using Ableton Live's grain delay effect. This granular synthesis-based effect samples small segments or "grains" of an audio recording and adds additional delay between each grain, whilst also affecting pitch parameters (Sasso, 2012). In this case, the grain delay is applied on the master channel, thus affecting the entire arrangement and transforming its speed, pitch and timbre. The grain delay also causes the filtering of lower-end frequencies, resulting in an overall thinned-out sound and affecting the timbre of the vocal parts.

Reflective Commentary

The discussed production techniques and particularly the vocal quoting and editing techniques allowed for conveying certain subjectivities relating to recollection of longed-for, lost experiences, examining how the sung voice can be used – alongside digital software processing and mutated compositional structures – to connote such subjectivities. Experimenting with a grain delay further enabled me to consider how processes of transformation and reimagination can be musically embodied through the use of audio effects and by employing broad brushstrokes-like production.

The vocal quoting practices applied in 'Forget U', including re-singing, re-recording and re-editing an existing vocal phrase, show some similarities to other forms of musical quotation, such as recording and performing of cover versions. Yet whilst cover versions normally stay true to the overall structure of their referenced songs (Plasketes, 2010), in this instance only a small fragment from the original song is being borrowed to inspire a whole new composition, suggesting a more complex case of musical quotation. Other types of musical quotation, and particularly ones that are practiced in electronic music making, seem more consistent with the quotation applied here. These include practices of sampling and remixing, which according to Reynolds use reconfigured fragments

of performance severed from their original context to generate new ones (2011). Remix works are, however, less commonly associated with singing and songwriting practices employed on this occasion.

In 'Forget U', I employ the lyrical phrase from Larsson and MNEK's original recording as a creative stimulus around which the recording is constructed. I was particularly intrigued by the prospect of reinterpreting and recontextualising the original phrase, encapsulating a concise yet affecting message about remembrance and loss ("I will never forget you"), through its reconstruction. New lyrical combinations emerged as I was using my own voice and digitally editing it to create variations of the original phrase and transform its overall meaning. Through employing these production processes, I was able to examine different ways in which the ambivalences of reminiscence, remembrance and mourning can be thought of and portrayed musically.

Isolating and digitally duplicating the phrase "I will never forget you", I sought to both emphasise its resonating emotional impact and point out to its peculiarity. Through further reconfiguring the phrase and digitally cutting out the word "never" – conjoining the remains of the sentence to form the phrase "I will forget you" – I ultimately inverted its meaning altogether. Some similarities can be drawn between such lyrical reconfiguration and practices of Dada poetry, which fragmentated texts into individual words and reassembled them randomly (Tzrara, 1981). Yet whilst Dadaism was concerned with fragmenting language altogether, the lyrical reconfiguration presented here reveals the potential for conveying elaborated literal meanings – in this case relating to the tension between remembering and forgetting past longings – through digitally cutting and pasting audio fragments, as afforded by working with DAWs.

The pitch and format shifting automations applied on the main vocal motif enable to further create melodic variations of it and produce a set of different vocal timbres. What emerges from applying these vocal processing practices is a set of seemingly distinct singing voices, used at different parts of the piece: the phrase "I will never" maintains the original timbre of my voice, whilst the phrase "forget you" becomes deeper in timbre as the song progresses. This amalgamation of voices is further achieved using different reverb settings and

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compression parameters on different parts of the sung phrase, making the vocal parts sound near and intimate at times, and distant and remote at others. Presenting these half-present-half-faded vocals enabled a means to further portray the sense in which memories become faded and obscure over time, informing a post-euphoric subjectivity.

The applied practice of isolating, looping and editing vocal fragments is further consistent with conventions of electronic dance music production that incorporate fragmented vocal samples as non-lyrical emotive elements (Garcia, 2016). The main vocal motif in 'Forget U' becomes detached and obscure through its reconfiguration, serving not only a lyrical function but also a musical one – particularly as shorter fragments of it are being introduced as non-lyrical rhythmic elements (0.42). The instrumental arrangement and its use of electronic dance music tropes, including intensifying build-ups, frequency filter automations and looped vocal phrases, complement the vocal production as a reminiscent of dancefloor euphoria. However, as the piece lacks elements deemed fundamental in electronic dance music productions, such as a drum beat and a "drop" section, its euphoric essence comes across as muted and unfulfilled. In this way, the recording invites a non-dancefloor-oriented mode of listening that dwells on missing and absent experiences.

The process of quoting and re-singing existing vocal motifs can be understood as an act of sampling-without-sampling, as defined in the research and development chapter, as fragmented musical motifs are being appropriated without using sampling. Furthermore, the vocal strategies applied here entail a process of mediation, in the course of which the quoted phrases are channelled and recreated through my own singing body and subjective musicianship, thusly reimagined anew. Such mediation process can be symbolically correlated with the recollection and transformation of bygone euphoric experiences through one's own subjective perspective and through the prism of time past.

A transformed and mutated version of 'Forget U' is presented in 'Reprise', as the grain delay effect is applied on a fragment of the original recording. The radical transformation of the musical elements portrays them as fluid and malleable and just about recognisable, creating in turn a reconfigured,

afterthought-like derivative of 'Forget U'. Compositionally, 'Reprise' is constructed as a short, interlude piece that lacks a defined structure. It also lacks low-end frequencies due to the grain delay's pitch shifting, creating an overall flimsy and thinned-out sound. Embracing these production processes and compositional elements, a brief and fleeting flashback of a bygone experience is musically portrayed, whilst using the fragmentation of sonic grains to suggest how memories of yearned-for experiences may shift and become fragmented over time.

Lastly, the inclusion of these two recordings alongside one another as part of the integrated body of work highlights ways in which intertextuality between different musical pieces can be creatively harnessed through self-remixing and reconfiguring of one's own musical materials to connote themes of retrospection and reimagination. In this way, the use of electronic music making practices alongside strategies of curation and editing of an integrated musical portfolio provided additional means for interpreting post-euphoria.

Insights

Experiment with quoting, digitally editing and pitch shifting of vocal elements and employing stripped-down electronic dance music tropes alongside a grain delay effect, 'Forget U' and 'Reprise' demonstrate several ways in which processes of recollection can be musically interpreted. Whilst the fragmentation and reconfiguration of the recreated vocal motifs implies a tension between memory and its lack thereof, the use of partial and unresolved dance music tropes connotes a faded and missing euphoric experience. Finally, the use of grain delay suggests a more radical sonic transformation that is likened to the shifting memory and reimagination of fleeting euphoric experiences. These meanings are further conveyed through placing the recordings alongside one another as part of an integrated body of work, suggesting that 'Reprise' can be read as a faded afterthought of 'Forget U'.

Too Late and Residue

In this pair of recordings, I utilise audio-to-MIDI conversion techniques to portray processes of transformation and recollection in relation to lost euphoric experiences. The recordings examine the capacity in which such conversion tools can be used to inspire composition and arrangement strategies, whilst foregrounding the transformations they create within the sonic material to introduce distinctive meanings relating to memory and reimagination in the context of post-euphoria.

Production and Songwriting Practice

'Too Late' was conceived through editing and manipulating a four-bar audio sample obtained from a royalty-free sample package, titled '90s House Piano' (Toolroom Academy, n.d.). The sample contains a three-chord harmonic progression and, as the title of the package suggests, emulates characteristic piano motifs commonly used in house music productions. Importing the sample to Ableton Live, I used the software's audio-to-MIDI conversion tool – an automated feature that reproduces a given audio file as a new MIDI clip, based on 3 conversion modes designed for different types of musical information. In this case, I used the harmony conversion mode, which analyses notes in polyphonic audio recordings and regenerates them in MIDI format (Ableton Reference Manual, 2021).

Once the audio sample was converted to MIDI, I was able to assign different virtual instruments to the new MIDI clip to create new and re-arranged versions of the original sample. I then assigned a virtual synthesiser instrument to the newly formed MIDI clip and adjusted its parameters to create different timbral variations of the audio-turned-MIDI sample. I further applied several virtual synthesisers to the same MIDI clip, creating variations of it that informed different sections within the forming piece. In addition to experimenting with different virtual instruments, I also slowed down the original tempo of the sample and created different transpositions of the MIDI clip, whilst applying

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different audio effects like chorus, phaser and equaliser and reverb automations on the looped sample in different sections of the piece.

Apart from employing the abovementioned audio-to-MIDI conversion technique and applying it to the instrumental production, I have incorporated my own vocal recordings and manipulated them in several ways. The sung phrase presented in the recording is loosely based on the lead vocal line from Carol King's song 'It's Too Late' (King & Stern, 1971), which I re-recorded using my own voice. I have then edited the audio recording of my voice as a short fragment and duplicated it at different points alongside the looped, instrumental sample. I further pitch-shifted the vocal fragment and altered its timbre and reverb settings.

The complementing recording 'Residue' comprises the same, looped sample in its MIDI form, which in this case is assigned to a virtual sampler. Into the sampler I imported an audio sample, from which only a small section is audible when the MIDI notes are triggered. Additional low-pass equaliser filter is applied on the sampler's channel, including a low-frequency oscillator (LFO) that modulates the way in which the filter operates and creates a cyclic equalising pattern.

Reflective Commentary

I should firstly address the selection criteria that informed my sample choice. As the original sample references house music – a genre that is commonly associated with celebratory and "feel-good" sensibilities amongst dancing crowds (Rietveld, 1998) – it is treated as encapsulating euphoric sensibilities and serves as a starting point from which to explore post-euphoric subjectivities (similar selection criteria of audio samples have been applied in previously discussed recording '22-122'). In addition, and considering that the sample includes an isolated piano part, it was used to examine how stripped-down and decontextualised elements of uplifting electronic dance music can be further reinterpreted and transformed.

The production techniques used here and the audio-to-MIDI conversion in particular demonstrate how timbral and pitch variation can be applied to a reoccurring musical motif as a compositional and arrangement strategy. By applying different virtual instruments on the reconstructed MIDI loop and adjusting their parameters, as well as by creating several transpositions of the MIDI notes, I was able to create distinctly sounding parts – all based on a single, repeatedly modified loop – within the gradually forming pieces. Such compositional strategy can be regarded as drawing from electronic dance music, where repetition and textural variation play a key role, thus showcasing an electronic dance music trope in the form of adopting certain compositional workflows.

The discussed audio-to-MIDI conversion technique can also be understood in light of the transformations it creates within the sonic material. As it is being converted to MIDI information, the audio sample is altered through the agency of music production software. The software consequently reconfigures the materiality of the sample, in such a way that can be harnessed to emphasise conceptual meanings relating to transformation and mediation, as implied by Brøvig-Hanssen's "opaque mediation" conception (2018). In this case, I draw a correlation between the modification of the sonic material by technological means and the shifting mental image of recollected euphoric experiences.

It is important to note that musical information is inevitably lost and mistranslated in the course of the examined audio-to-MIDI conversion process. In this instance, some notes have been omitted and new ones were added to the newly formed MIDI part, whilst the rhythmic pattern has also been disordered. Embracing these automated, digital "glitches" as done in post-digital musical works (Cascone, 2002), I was able to explore how notions of digital "failures" and detritus can be harnessed creatively and conceptually. The misconfiguration of the audio sample was in this way emphasised and served as an aesthetic device through which to connote the transformations that occur in our perception of recollected experiences.

It can also be argued that the recording highlights the very idea of a "ruin" – be it the musical ruin of the processed sample or residual echoes of bygone

euphoric moments. The attempt to musically embody a "trace" or a ruin can be seen as drawing from discussions of hauntology and its dealing with residual traces of idealised and missed experiences, as well as from sample-based musical genres such as vaporwave that are said to encapsulate a "re-representation of memory" and the traces of it (Glitsos, 2016). Building upon such discussions, the recordings in question can be said to present a mutated and reincarnated evocation of the original sample, which is no longer present, and can be situated within a broader framework of musical practices and that deal with memory, recollection and loss.

Also worth considering are the practical affordances of audio-to-MIDI conversions as a practice that enables sampling-without-sampling. Utilising the creative possibilities of employing audio samples without presenting them as such, these conversions are particularly advantageous for bypassing intellectual copyright issues that are often associated with sample-based production. Whilst not strictly a creative consideration, this aspect of audio-to-MIDI conversions offers an effective and practical tool for musicians seeking to rely on samples without making them a prominent feature in their work. Furthering the idea of sampling-without-sampling, the vocal line in 'Too Late' quotes and fragments a lyrical and melodic phrase from a previous song, using my singing voice as a mediating, sampler-like device and whilst refraining from using actual samples. Through applying reverb, pitch-shifting and digital editing tools, this sung element is designed to sound as if it were sampled, despite not being extracted from an existing recording. These creative strategies, alongside the lyrical content and its implied dealing with notions of temporality and belatedness, are used to create a complex interpretation of a re-represented memory.

Comprising the same MIDI part, the two recordings reference one another, with 'Residue' being produced as a late derivative of 'Too Late'. By coupling these two recordings and presenting them one after the other, the idea of a sonic ruin or a "post" manifestation of an earlier occurrence is being further emphasised, shedding light on aspects of intertextuality within bodies of electronic music. Also notable is the fact that the MIDI part in 'Residue' is ultimately sounded through another audio sample, thus reverting the MIDI clip back to audio form.

Applying these techniques and creating a pair of corresponding recordings – a practice that has been used on several occasions throughout the portfolio – I examined how memories of past euphoric experiences and their transformation over time can be portrayed musically.

Insights

As 'Too Late' and 'Residue' experiment with audio-to-MIDI conversions, they foreground the transformations that occur within the sonic material as a compositional and conceptual strategy. As the sampled electronic dance music motifs are being recreated as MIDI elements, they become mutated and are being symbolically correlated with a reincarnated euphoric experience. What emerges from applying this production strategy can be described as a musical residue or "leftover", which again can be likened to residues of lost euphoric experiences. The resampling of the MIDI element then further alienates the source material to connote what can be described as a memory of memory – an impression that is reinforced by presenting the two recordings alongside one another. Performing such conversion also proved an effective compositional device, capable of producing diverse timbral variations within a reoccurring musical element. Further employing vocal quoting and fragmentation of lyrical matter dealing with belatedness, 'Too Late' can be said to embody fragmented memories and a sense of missing out on lost time that inform my concept of post-euphoria.

Into Illusion

'Into Illusion' explores production practices of digital synthesis, MIDI programming and employing stripped-down electronic dance music tropes. These practices are applied within a songwriting framework to interpret post-euphoria, whilst further building upon lyrical and compositional elements. Through its production, composition and lyrical narration, the recording further suggests a subjectivity that intermingles euphoria and melancholia, attempting to musically portray a foreshadowing of soon-to-be-lost experiences.

Production and Songwriting Practice

The recording comprises a song structure commonly applied in works of pop music, including a verse, a pre-chorus and a chorus (Sloan & Harding, 2020), which are repeated twice throughout the song with lyrical and harmonic variations. It opens with an arpeggiated synthesiser chord, to which additional synthesiser parts and percussive elements are added as the song progresses. The gradual addition of parts to the arrangement creates a sense of constant intensification throughout the different sections of the song, which ultimately resolves into a stripped-down outro section that fades out to silence as the track comes to an end.

The different sections of the song comprise different lyrical and melodic phrases, whilst first-person narration is used throughout alongside rhyming in the verses and pre-choruses. The first verse sets the lyrical narrative, describing an experience that is at once thrilling and short-lived:

> It's fleeting
> My beating is fast and I'm
> Feeding as long as it lasts (second verse: breathing as long as it lasts)

The lyrics in the pre-chorus then turn to describe a sense of instability and on a futile attempt to satisfy an assumed addressee:

I can promise you the world

Is turning insecure

And whatever it may bring

I try to give you more

The chorus presents a lyrically concise phrase by repeating the words "into illusion", which are digitally duplicated throughout and sung in different melodic variations. This repeated, mantra-like phrase can be read as reflecting upon the circumstances described in the previous sections of the song, suggesting indulgence in a precarious situation.

The production is characterised by extensive, software-based synthesiser work, which is being elaborated as the song progresses. Multiple digital synthesiser parts are gradually introduced and layered, whilst progressively equalised and processed using a flanger effect, pitch modulations and varying reverb settings. Four synthesiser channels are assigned to Ableton Live's MIDI arpeggiator effect, which transforms held chords into rhythmic sequences of separated notes. The arrangement further includes synthesiser bass, pad chords and white noise-like elements, as well as a single-hit sample of a tom drum that is being sent to a delay effect.

The composition and instrumental arrangement are largely based on duplicated parts, which are distinguished from one another through their assignment to different digital synthesisers with varying signal shapes, dynamic envelopes, frequency mixes and arpeggiated patterns. In addition to duplicating parts and playing them simultaneously using different instruments, some instrumental parts reoccur in different instrumentation at different points in the recording. For example, the melodic and rhythmic synthesiser bass part in the final chorus (1.52) is reiterated as a sustained pad chord progression in the outro section. Similarly, as the final chorus segues into the outro (2.50), the lead synthesiser part and its reverb tail are sustained and prolonged, creating "leakage" of musical parts from one section to another.

The different vocals parts are distinguished through employing different vocal delivery styles, which are partly determined by the registers in which they are sung. This discrepancy between differing vocal qualities is further enhanced

through means of production: whilst the lead vocals are relatively compressed and recorded with the microphone positioned at close distance, the backing vocals are treated with excessive reverb to sound remote and echoing, as well as with a high pass filter that makes them appear thin and flimsy. Furthermore, towards the final chorus (2.20), the vocal parts are being digitally fragmented to produce a short, non-lyrical melody, which is further manipulated and altered in melody and timbre using pitch shifting and vocal formant tools.

Reflective Commentary

Whilst most of the recordings included in the body of work focus on selected production techniques and present sparse to no lyrics, 'Into Illusion' brings together an array of production and compositional strategies, as detailed above, alongside lyrics-driven songwriting (a similar approach is applied in 'Emotional Call' and 'Second Spring'). In this way, the recording calls for a comprehensive interpretation of its various production, compositional and lyrical elements and raises questions about the way in which these elements are used conjointly to interpret notions of post-euphoria.

Firstly, the use of electronic dance music tropes enabled me to develop a sonic palette that suggests euphoric sensibilities associated with such genres of music. In particular, incorporating arpeggiated synthesiser chords typical of trance music – a subgenre of electronic dance music that gained popularity during the second half of the 1990s (Rietveld, 2018) – creates a rhythmic intensity and references so-called "uplifting" genres of electronic dance music (Agres, et al., 2017). Also contributing to the presented electronic dance music-inspired soundworld are equaliser filter "sweeps" (Wesolowski & Hofmann, 2016), commonly practiced by DJs when mixing two tracks together (Veire & De Bie, 2018), as well as delay effects applied on the synthesiser and percussion parts to generate elaborated rhythmic patterns and digitally duplicated vocal "mantras" (Busby, 2017, p. 122). The overall, gradually intensifying build-up in the arrangement further echoes the climatic structure of electronic dance music tracks, aimed at evoking pleasurable states of euphoria amongst dancing crowds. Importantly, however, the arrangement omits key, electronic dance music

components, such as a four-to-the-floor kick drum, whilst also not resolving the tension in the arrangement into a "drop" section wherein the implied kick drum normally returns (Solberg, 2014). In this way, the recording establishes a complex manifestation of electronic dance music euphoria, which is presented as lacking and suspended.

This sense of muted euphoria is further articulated as the lyrics depict the experience of holding on to something that is knowingly unsustainable and short lived. This experience is described in the lyrics using different narrating perspectives at different points in the song – from private introspection in the verses, through addressing another person in the pre-choruses and to the internalised understanding expressed in the choruses. Embracing these distinct perspectives and narratives helped in portraying a personal journey that includes different emotional states and ultimately leads to disillusionment and sobering. A closer examination of the lyrical structure also reveals literary devices such as enjambment – a continuation of a sentence from one line to another (Baumann, et al., 2018): in the verses, the word "world" links both to the first and to the second part of the sentence ("promise you / [the world] / is turning insecure"), creating two sets of interconnected meanings that fuse hope with uncertainty. Similarly, the word "turning" is used in the verses to describe both an impending change and the rotation of earth ("the world is / [turning] / insecure").

These lyrical themes are further highlighted through the processing and manipulating of the vocal recordings. The self-destructive situation described in the lyrics is underlined by digitally duplicating and repeating the phrase "into illusion" throughout the choruses, to suggest an inescapable, never-ending cycle. Furthermore, the progressive addition of reverb to the lead vocal part creates the impression of a gradual recession from a singing body, hinting at a nearing disappearance. This idea of becoming distanced from a sound source can also be attributed to pitch modulations applied on the main synthesiser arpeggio (0:40), which produce a Doppler effect-like pitch bend, as well as through delay effects applied on the synthesiser and percussive parts. Using these techniques, which emulate real-life acoustic phenomena, I musically embody the sense of

estrangement and dissociation described in the lyrics by replicating the experience of moving away from a sound object and hearing its echoes.

Also highlighting the lyrical themes is the whispery singing – emphasised through the use of compression – that can be said to suggest an experience on the brink of its "last breath" and creates a sound that is both intimate and alienated, due to its excessive compression. Similarly, the treatment of the backing vocals with excessive reverb and high pass filters makes them sound intangible and remote, in line with the fading experience described in the song. As the backing vocals are being further fragmented in the final chorus and shattered into non-lyrical fractions – suggesting the fragmentation of language itself – the vocal production can be said to embody an emanating collapse of the once familiar.

Moreover, and through introducing a missing electronic dance music arrangement, audio effects that portray musical elements as alienated and remote and contrasting lyrical perspectives, the recording suggests a subjectivity that fuses euphoria with melancholia – blurring the boundaries between these two seemingly disparate mental states. Such euphoric-melancholic subjectivity has been associated, for example, with the work of William Bevan as Burial, which according to Reynolds encapsulates "euphoria filtered through the prism of loss" and conveys an energy that is more suited to melancholic private reverie than to dancefloor action (2011, p. 393). Likewise, 'Into Illusion' draws from discussions of melancholia as an ambivalent, "complex and reflective emotion", which holds both "uplifting" and "exhilarating" qualities (Brady & Haapala, 2003) and through which post-euphoria is experienced.

Importantly, and whilst the recordings included in the body of work interpret post-euphoria as a retrospective subjectivity that dwells on past experiences, 'Into Illusion' presents post-euphoria as encapsulating a sense of anticipation in relation to near-future events that have yet to occur. Also examined in my interview with Lorenzo Senni, who employs implied trance music motifs and "never-ending build-ups", this anticipatory state of missing euphoria is further portrayed in 'Into Illusion' through presenting intensifying

arpeggiated synthesiser and incomplete electronic dance music motifs, which together with the lyrics create a dramatic anti-climax.

Enduring this sense of bleak anticipation, the recording can be said to embody "anticipatory grief" – a psychological term used in the context of terminal illnesses studies and borrowed to describe an aesthetic mode that forestates the mourning of an impending tragedy (Bahun, 2014). The recording can be said to not only suggest anticipatory grief, but also briefly imply an acceptance of a loss. This is evident in the final, instrumental outro section, where the subdued arrangement, lack of vocals and gradual fade to silence can be interpreted as a transition into a state of reflective introspection that follows a mourning process. A sense of transformation and reincarnation is further portrayed in this part of the recording, as rearranged MIDI elements are reintroduced and as the echoing synthesiser parts remain suspended to connote lingering traces of previous lost experiences.

Insights

'Into Illusion' explores post-euphoria as a complex subjectivity that encompasses melancholic sensibilities and an anticipatory mode. It does so by employing and creating correlations between production, compositional and lyrical motifs that suggest an impending loss and convey a sense of suspension and missing. In particular, the use of stripped-down electronic dance music tropes, a gradually intensifying yet never-resolving arrangement, repetition and audio effects that convey proximity and distance enabled me to interpret post-euphoria as an ambivalent state of mourning and to expand the meanings presented in the lyrics. The piece further demonstrates how elements of production and songwriting can be used in a complementary manner to introduce, emphasise and elaborate conceptual themes relating to post-euphoria. It also provided new insights on how linear compositional structures can be used to figuratively portray different phases of grief: from initial confusion and gradually intensifying arrangement in the first section of the song, through an increasingly felt sense of loss in the second, dramatic chorus and to a feeling of acceptance as reflected in the final, subdued outro. Extracting musical variations by

duplicating, layering, rearranging and sustaining musical parts, the recording further establishes an arrangement strategy and a musical aesthetic that highlight transformed musical "leftovers", as a way of connoting residual and lingering traces of a lost euphoria.

In a Different Light

As a short, outro-like recording, 'In a Different Light' uses processed synthesised sound and lyrical narration to portray inner reflections related to the experience of dawn, the moment of transformation between night and day. Further utilising equaliser filters and volume automations, as well as a vocoder effect, it depicts an introspective process of transformation occurring during that time of day and once a euphoric experience subsides. As the piece reaches its final section, previously presented motifs are reintroduced using a different instrumentation, alongside delay effect on a fragment of the vocal phrase, suggesting a reincarnated echo that lingers as an afterglow.

Production and Songwriting Practice

The final recording in the body of work, 'In a Different Light' comprises a five-line lyrical phrase that presents inner contemplation occurring during the break of day. Accompanying the vocal motifs are sustained pad chords and additional harmonic and bass elements, all recorded using Ableton Live's built-in synthesisers, which are added to the arrangement as the song progresses. Both the vocal and the additional synthesiser elements are processed using a low-pass filter equaliser that gradually reveals their high frequency range, whilst the main synthesiser chord part is processed using a high-pass filter equaliser that progressively exposes its low-end frequency range. Fade-in and fade-out volume automations are applied on the looped, instrumental elements at the beginning and at the end of the recording respectively.

The main synthesiser pad chords are further processed using Ableton Live's vocoder effect. Frequently used for vocal processing, vocoders utilise the frequency characteristics of an external carrier signal to process and change the timbre of a triggering modulator signal (Sasso, 2011). In this recording, however, the vocoder is applied on instrumental rather than vocal elements and is used without an external carrier signal. This has been made possible using Ableton Live's "modulator" vocoder mode, which utilises the modulator signal (in this

case, the synthesiser chords) also as a carrier signal, whilst resynthesising it through the settings of the vocoder. In this way, the synthesiser pad chords become filtered and granulated, with their timbre being altered through adjusting the vocoder's parameters.

The piece concludes with an outro section (1.46 onwards) containing the previously presented synthesiser-based MIDI chord part – only this time played using a sample-based piano instrument. Like the main synthesiser chords, the synthesiser-turned-piano chords in this section are processed using a vocoder and are further assigned to a delay effect that creates repeating echoes of each chord. The original chord part thus becomes faded and reverberating and is presented as transformed and mutated. In addition, the outro includes a duplicated fragment of the original vocal line ("give me a reason"), which is altered in timbre using a formant shifting effect and a high-pass filter equaliser.

Reflective Commentary

In its brief, lyrical portrayal of a break-of-dawn scene, the piece can be said to encapsulate the idea of an afterglow and the subjectivities associated with it. Further suggesting a sense of sobering and coming to one's senses ("voice of reason"/ "and when morning comes" / "give me a reason to stay on the ground"), it lyrically explores the transitional and reflective state characterising an afterglow (Malbon, 1999), leading to a process of soul searching – as evident in the final, isolated phrase "give me a reason". The lyrics and the title of the piece further imply a feeling of a changed perspective ("I see you in a different light"), which suggests that post-euphoria can be understood not only as a state of remorse and missing, but also as a process of ongoing transformation.

These lyrical themes are highlighted through the production elements, with the gradually revealed synthesisers used to connote a slowly unfolding sunrise. In particular, the gradual introduction of high frequencies within the instrumentals and vocal elements creates a perceived brightening of the frequency spectrum, which is used metaphorically to suggest an image of the sun coming up, as well as a growing sense of mental clarity. As high pass and low

pass filter equalisers are used inversely on the different synthesiser parts, the notion of simultaneously decaying and rising energy levels, as mentioned in Takahashi and Weiss discussions of post-bliss and afterglow (2019), can be seen as further portrayed to connote a dawn-time, post-party phase.

The application of the vocoder effect and its processing of the instrumental elements further suggest a transformative embodiment relating to a recollected experience that has, with time, become faded and indistinct. Moreover, the use of Ableton Live's modulator vocoder mode can be interpreted as embodying reference-less recollection, as previously discussed by Fabio Brocato (2019) and in relation to writings on nostalgia (Boym, 2011; Wu, 2010), as the synthesisers are being reconstructed in a self-generative fashion and without a reference, carrier signal. The resulting musical aesthetic can thus be figuratively described as an echoing residue or trace of a missing experience.

In the final section of the piece, as the main chords are being assigned to a different instrument, a process of transformation and reincarnation is further implied. Reintroducing this repeating element with a subdued and altered instrumentation, the idea of a late and mutated manifestation of a no-longer-present experience is brought to the fore, whilst the delay feedbacks further connote a lingering feeling by presenting sonic echoes. In addition, and despite the fact that the chords are played here using a MIDI instrument, their processing makes them sound like a degraded audio sample – thus further exemplifying sampling-without-sampling. Finally, the digital fragmentation and formant-shifting of the original vocal part, as done in other recordings such as 'Forget U', create an isolated and transformed sung phrase ("give me a reason") that emphasises a sense of solitude and alienation.

The open-endedness characterising the final lyrical phrase is further highlighted through the application of volume fade-in and fade-out automations, which make the recording seem structureless and fluid. Considered alongside the rest of the production and lyrical motifs and their dealing with a feeling of a changed perspective, the recording can be said to elaborate my interpretation of post-euphoria as a dynamic and constantly unfolding process. As the piece concludes the body of work and with its portrayal of a personal change of heart,

it also implies a new beginning – suggesting that a so-called "outro" can also be an "intro" of new musical piece or life chapter.

Insights

'In a Different Light' interprets post-euphoria as a reflective afterglow that occurs at dawn, after the party, whilst utilising production and compositional embodiments to depict a transformation process with which it is associated. This includes applying high-pass and low-pass filter equalisers and volume automations in a gradual and inverse manner to figuratively connote the break of day and the disappearance of the night, whilst further using a vocoder effect on instrumental elements to suggest the reconstruction of euphoric experiences as fragmented memories. These musical motifs complement the lyrical themes describing early morning reflections and a shift in perspective, leading to an outro section where rearranged instrumental motifs and fragments of previously presented vocal phrases suggest a transformed, residual echo of a faded experience.

Second Spring

In 'Second Spring', I use sonic elements and compositional motifs developed whilst working on the body of work to rearrange a song written before undertaking the study. This includes using stripped-down electronic dance music tropes, echo and delay effects and an extended outro section. The recording can be further seen as interpreting post-euphoria in that it was conceived as a rework of an existing musical piece and as a late addition to the body of work, hence embodying a belated perspective – also explored in its lyrics – on the song it reimagines.

Production and Songwriting Practice

'Second Spring' was the final recording to be added to the body of work. Written prior to conducting this study, it is hereby rearranged using musical motifs developed as part of the research. As the instrumental parts in the original production comprised MIDI elements, I was able to import them into an Ableton Live project containing channels used in other recordings included in the body of work. In doing so, I created rearranged versions of the previously recorded parts, utilising sounds and effects that have been designed and programmed to interpret post-euphoria. I have further incorporated production and compositional motifs explored throughout the body of work, examining how they can be applied to an existing musical piece and within a songwriting framework, as well as in relation to lyrical themes of belatedness.

These body of work motifs include characteristic elements of electronic dance music, such as arpeggiated synthesiser chords and stab bass parts (also incorporated in 'Emotional Call' and 'Into Illusion'), as well as sounds designed with virtual instruments associated with dance music production like Native Instruments' Massive plug-in. The recording further applies reverb and delay effects on the vocal and instrumental motifs, as well as equaliser filter automations and distortion on arpeggiated synthesisers parts. Compositionally speaking and further drawing from electronic dance music, the piece utilises

repetition and looping of musical motifs, including vocal phrases that repeat at different point in the recording with timbral variations and as fragmented vocals stutters. Expanding the notion of an extended outro, which is explored throughout the body of work, the recording presents an elaborate final section (1.39 onwards) that spans more than half of the song with the repeating vocal motifs being juxtaposed with new instrumental parts.

Reflective Commentary

'Second Spring' examines how the so-called post-euphoric musical aesthetic established in the study can be applied to additional recordings not initially conceived as part of the body of work. Utilising previously programmed sounds and audio effects, as well as production and compositional motifs developed during the study, further enabled me to examine how existing songs can be reinterpreted and rearranged through my post-euphoric musical lens. In addition, the recording demonstrates self-remixing as it digitally rearranges my own musical material.

Applying such process of revisiting and musically reimagining my own past recordings, I was able to consider how post-euphoria can be embodied not only through production and compositional motifs but also through adopting certain creative methodologies: just as the concept of post-euphoria deals with revisiting and recollecting past experiences, the act of rearranging and applying a new sonic palette to a previously written song entails reimagining past musical works from a new perspective. Moreover, the inclusion of 'Second Spring' as a late addition to the body of work suggests a sense of belatedness that I perceive as inherent to the concept of post-euphoria and that is also explored in the lyrics.

The piece expands the use of electronic dance music tropes explored throughout the body of work and applies them within a song structure comprising verses and choruses, as done in 'Emotional Call' and 'Into Illusion'. This includes juxtaposing repetitive, synthesiser-based loops and particularly arpeggiated chords with elaborate lyrical phrases, to form a musical aesthetic that draws from electronic dance music but retains a vocal and lyrical focus. The

incorporated electronic dance music tropes are further left stripped-down and sustained, through emphasising the absence of percussive elements and creating unresolved build-up sections. Such use of electronic dance music tropes as missing and incomplete musical elements can be said to embody a neutered type of euphoria, as conceptualised by Lorenzo Senni (2019), as well as the sense of wistful unfulfillment expressed in the lyrics.

The use of varying reverb settings, as applied on the instrumental and vocal elements, can be said to reinforce a disparity between proximity and distance as well as changing perspectives on yearned-for, missed experiences. In addition, they contribute towards creating a vocal delivery that is at times intimate and seemingly confessional and at others remote and alienated, presenting different narrating perspectives. The use of reverb with a particularly long decay time on vocal elements (for example, when transitioning to the outro section at 1.40), as well as echoing delay on synthesiser parts (such as the one applied on the high-pitched synthesiser chords throughout the outro), can be seen as embodying a faded echo of euphoric moments, calling to mind Weiss and Takahashi's notion of "an echo of an energy" (2019).

Finally, the extended outro section (1.40 onward) – not included in the original song structure – is presented as an afterthought-like addition, which lingers once the first part of the song subsides and as the lyrics turn to deal with a belated experience through imagery describing the arrival of spring ("now my second spring is here"). The repetitive and continuously intensifying arrangement presented in the outro, as well as its use of fragmented and echoing vocal stutters, further emphasise references to electronic dance music productions, whilst remaining suspended and unresolved. Ending with echoing remnants of the delay effect applied on the synthesiser chords, the piece suggests a sentiment that puts forward the lingering traces and residues of a faded experience.

Insights

The production of 'Second Spring' demonstrates how the sonic palette and compositional approach that have been developed during the project can be applied to additional recordings, to interpret and conceptualise post-euphoria as a musical aesthetic. By expanding on the use of electronic dance music tropes incorporated alongside lyrical motifs, whilst also utilising reverb and delay effects and an elaborate outro section, the recording suggests a feeling of wistful missing and restrained euphoria. The recording further illustrates how notions of post-euphoria can be embodied not only as musical elements but also as a creative workflow that reimagines past songs through DAW-based rearrangements. The ability to create such rearrangements as a "post-euphoric workflow" is peculiar to working with DAWs, as they allow importing existing MIDI information used in previous recordings and changing the virtual instruments to which it is assigned – creating in effect what can be figuratively described as a reconstructed, belated recollection.

Summary

In the ten recordings comprising the body of work, I have employed a range of production techniques to interpret the concept of post-euphoria: from time warping of audio samples and audio-to-MIDI conversions, through using stripped-down electronic dance music tropes alongside elements of songwriting and vocal quotation and to employing audio effects including freeze reverb, grain delay and vocoder, to name a few. These techniques are used here to create what I defined as production and compositional embodiments that figuratively connote notions of retrospection and reminiscing, as informing my understanding of post-euphoria. Doing so enabled me to forge a musical aesthetic that is concerned with missing residues of electronic dance music-related experiences and to expressively interpret the transformations that occur in the memory of such experiences, by foregrounding the reconfiguration of the presented musical material and emphasising intertextuality between pairs or recordings. The established aesthetic and the intertextuality between the recordings further define the body of work as an integrated artefact, as musical motifs reoccur to create an overarching and self-referential musical vocabulary. The presented interpretation of post-euphoria is thus realised and elaborated as the recordings follow on from each other and whilst experiencing the body of work as in its entirety.

The extended body of work invites the listener to immerse in a prolonged listening experience or "journey", as defined in Brocato's discussions of concept albums (2019), in the course of which the concept of post-euphoria is gradually conveyed – suggesting the gradual fading of a yearned for memory and ultimately coming to terms with its decay and fleetingness. This is also achieved through the ordering of the recordings, which furthers my interpretation of post-euphoria as a linear progression: starting with an initial invitation for retrospection ('22-122') and emotional awakening ('Emotional Call'), through a futile attempt to leave behind a euphoric experience ('Forget U', 'Reprise') and its gradual fading ('Too Late') and to the resurfacing of the recollected experience ('Second Spring', 'Residue') – followed by a melancholic mourning of the lost

experience and its sustained echoes ('Into Illusion', 'Epilogue'), which eventually indicates the beginning of a new chapter ('In a Different Light'). The narrative that unfolds from the curation of the recordings in such order is not only linear but also cyclic, as certain recordings ('Emotional Call', 'Forget U' and 'Too Late') reappear as self-remixed mutations ('Epilogue', 'Reprise' and 'Residue' respectively). This cyclic narrative further frames the body of work as a whole, with the opening and concluding recordings ('22-122' and 'In a Different Light') both depicting a dawn-time, after-party scene, suggesting a return to the initial starting point and time of day.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Responding to the question of how post-euphoria can be creatively interpreted through electronic music making, the outcome of the practice-based research is a musical aesthetic that relates to the recollection and reimagination of lost euphoric experiences. When commencing the study, it was clear that little practice-based research was available in the field of popular electronic music production – particularly around production practices that deal with notions of memory and recollection in the context of electronic dance music. I addressed this scholarly gap by experimenting with an array of DAW-based production techniques and by developing an original body of musical work that helped to expressively interpret what I have identified and defined as post-euphoria. The result is a series of ten new musical recordings from which the discussion draws insights as the basis for contributing new knowledge to the field of electronic music making.

Initially inspired by discussions of an "afterglow" feeling that lingers after a night out (Malbon, 1999; Reynolds, 1998), the study has expanded this idea to the concept of post-euphoria describing a subjectivity of reminiscing and retrospection on lost euphoric experiences related to electronic dance music. My concept of post-euphoria has been further informed by and refined in the course of the research and through undertaking the music production work, which enables the understanding of the changes that occur in the memory of such euphoric experiences as they are being recollected retrospectively. Pursing the inquiry, my understanding of post-euphoria became particularly focused on a residual and fleeting essence that lingers once euphoric moments relating to the experience of electronic dance music subside. The developed musical vocabulary and practices thus articulate this sense of fleetingness and missing to encapsulate post-euphoria.

Other music makers have explored themes that relate to my concept of post-euphoria. To understand how this is achieved, and how I could develop new ways to conceptualise post-euphoria as a musical aesthetic, the research firstly comprised three interviews with key electronic music practitioners: Nick Weiss

and Logan Takahashi (interviewed jointly), Fabio Brocato and Lorenzo Senni. The interviews demonstrated how themes of retrospection and longing can be musically interpreted using stripped-down electronic dance music tropes, audio effects and shortened and extended compositional structures. They also expanded my understanding of post-euphoria to include not only aspects of retrospection, but also a sense of anticipation in relation to unrealised euphoric experiences. Insights from the interviews helped in contextualising and stimulating the creative, practice-based work and the new approaches established whilst developing the body of work.

Conducting the creative inquiry, my musical interpretation of post-euphoria centres on employing what I define as "production embodiments", understood here as figurative electronic music motifs and practices that create an analogy between sonic and non-sonic phenomena. It is complemented by presenting what I further identify as "compositional embodiments", which are similarly employed to suggest symbolic meanings using elements of musical structure. The developed production embodiments, which creatively demonstrate and expand theoretical discussions of production mediations (Brøvig-Hanssen & Danielsen, 2016) and sonic metaphors (Demers, 2010), foreground production processes that are peculiar to working with DAWs and focus on symbolic meanings that arise from digitally manipulating and transforming musical material. In this way, the study proposes creative strategies with which intricate conceptual ideas – and particularly ones relating to processes of recollection and reimagination – are musically conveyed using DAW-based tools.

Utilising Ableton Live and its built-in tools, the developed production embodiments include slowed-down and warped electronic dance music samples ('22-122') and a sustained "freeze" reverb ('Epilogue'), which are used to symbolically connote a longing to prolong fleeting euphoric moments. Also incorporated are manipulated and fragmented quoted vocals ('Forget U', 'Too Late'), grain delay ('Reprise') and audio-to-MIDI conversion ('Too Late', 'Residue'), which reconfigure the presented musical elements to suggest a fragmented and transformed memory of perceived euphoric experiences. It is

important to note that these production techniques make use of processing capabilities that are uniquely afforded by Ableton Live, hence they are directly informed by working with this specific software. Additional compositional embodiments, including musical repetition, shortened musical structures, elaborated outro sections and "fade-outs", are further utilised to figuratively suggest – through foregrounding reoccurring motifs and concluding musical sections – haunting and decaying euphoric experiences. Employing these musical motifs in a symbolic and figurative fashion enabled me to imply notions of recollection and reminiscing associated here with post-euphoria.

Pursuing the music production work, I also engaged in reconfiguring characteristic elements of electronic dance music, to demonstrate how euphoric feelings associated with this type of music can be presented as mutated and missing. I recreated and reinterpreted these elements as stripped-down and decontextualised electronic dance music "tropes" – a term also used by musicians interviewed for the study. Yet whilst these musicians create electronic dance music tropes using analogue musical instruments, I utilise DAW-based practices of synthesis, MIDI programming and audio processing to create such tropes. These include intensifying "build-up" sections, as understood in the context of electronic dance music (Solberg, 2014), which are remodelled here as sustained and never-resolving – establishing a sense of unfulfilled euphoria by foregrounding the absence of key electronic dance music elements, such as a kick drum. Additional electronic dance music tropes that have been used to form my post-euphoric musical vocabulary include arpeggiated synthesiser chords, sweeping filter automations and duplicated vocal mantras, alongside actual audio samples of electronic dance music motifs.

These DAW-based musical motifs and creative strategies were integrated and applied within vocal-based recordings ('Emotional Call', 'Forget U', 'Too Late', 'Second Spring', 'Into Illusion' and 'In a Different Light'), alongside lyrical motifs and elements of songwriting. The lyrical motifs – used in conjunction with vocal processing techniques, including varying reverb settings, compression and digital editing – elaborate the meanings implied through the instrumental production and further my interpretation of post-euphoria within popular music

song. They further demonstrate how an electronic dance music-inspired production can be applied within genres of music that are not necessarily aimed at the dancefloor, whilst illustrating how working with a DAW informs creative paradigms of songwriting. The decision to work within a popular song framework also led to reimagining dance music production and the euphoria it evokes through an outsider perspective, as done by interviewed musician Lorenzo Senni, reinforcing a sense of estrangement that I associate with post-euphoria.

Additional production techniques that emulate audio sampling practices are employed throughout the produced recordings, particularly in the form of vocal quoting ('Forget U', 'Too Late'), audio-to-MIDI conversions ('Too Late', 'Residue') and excessive audio processing of synthesised elements ('In a Different Light'). Conceptualised here as presenting "sampling-without-sampling", these techniques provided a compositional strategy that reimagines absent samples of electronic dance music and references the use of previous electronic music production practices and technologies. They therefore contribute to symbolically implying the act of evoking a faded memory. Further adopting brush brushstrokes production and applying audio effects in an all-encompassing fashion, the produced recordings build upon the obfuscation and transformation of their musical motifs – furthering the interpretation of post-euphoria as dealing with vague and mutated recollections.

Finally, creating reworks of my own musical recordings as an act of "self-remixing", the study demonstrates how recorded music motifs can be reimagined to suggest reinterpreted and missing recollections. Moreover, the practice of self-remixing and the intertextuality it creates between different recordings included in the body of work provided means to musically portray the idea of transformed recollections – suggesting that post-euphoria can be musically interpreted not only through employing specific production techniques but also through presenting and curating an integrated set of corresponding recordings. Deciding upon the order of recordings and their presentation within the final body of work provided additional means for conveying post-euphoria as a linear and unfolding narrative that manifests

through the sequence of recordings, to suggest a gradually fading memory of a lost euphoric experience.

Limitations and Future Research

As the study was conducted using Ableton Live, its outcome was informed and shaped by the creative affordances of this particular DAW. Using a different software would have allowed other affordances and creative possibilities not utilised in the current study, including other virtual instruments, audio effects and audio editing and mixing capabilities, leading in turn to developing distinct musical aesthetics. Future research may also involve experimenting with non-DAW-based musical tools, including analogue synthesisers and acoustic instruments, as well as producing work that centres on vocal recording and processing to explore aspects of reminiscing and retrospection.

Future studies may further include the application of the creative practices and musical elements developed as part of this study on new musical recordings – a creative strategy that was briefly explored with a late addition to the body of work ('Second Spring') – and to interpret conceptual themes that are not directly related to memory and recollection. In addition, and whilst the study focused on creating a recorded body of work comparable to a popular music album, other musical formats of different duration, such as a series of individual recordings or a long duration piece, may be used to musically interpret post-euphoria. The same applies for the use of other musical mediums not examined in this project, including live performance, audio-visual work and installation-based projects.

Another possible avenue for future research that follows from the current project involves using unfinished sketches recorded here during the research and development stage but not included in the final body of work. Revisiting and presenting these sketches as "lost" fragments of unrealised musical pieces may provide additional perspectives on aspects of recollection and missing, as informing my concept of post-euphoria – demonstrating how they can be interpreted beyond the realm of DAW-based production and through a process of revisiting and spotlighting buried snippets of past recordings.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Ethics Approval

Ethics ETH1819-0006: Mr Guy Baron (Medium risk)

Date: 14 Nov 2018
Academic: Mr Guy Baron
Student ID: 3630628
Project: Post-Euphoria in Electronic Music Making
School: Arts and Creative Industries
Division: Creative Technologies

Theoretical Rationale

This doctoral, practice-based research project examines the capacity in which electronic music explores and embodies notions of post-euphoria and afterglow and asks how these themes can be presented musically. It does so by developing a musical body of work, which is contextualised by a theoretical inquiry and analysis of existing works by music practitioners, who will be approached and interviewed.

The interviews will be held in the form of open, journalistic conversations, to assist in further conceptualising the music production inquiry, and will form part of the contextual review stage of the research.

Procedure

As part of the research, I will conduct interviews with four music practitioners whose works explore themes of post-euphoria and afterglow using various music production techniques. This will include:

1. Making initial email approaches to interviewees and obtaining consent
2. Conducting open interviews and recording findings
3. Examining findings against hypothesis and key literature
4. Responding to findings with practice
5. Incorporating findings in the write-up
6. Sending the write-up draft to interviewees for approval
7. Making further amendments where needed

Are there any beneficiaries to the proposed research project?

Yes

If yes, who are they and how will they benefit?

The research will enable music scholars and music practitioners a more profound understanding of ways in which elements of production can be used symbolically as carriers of nuanced and complex meanings and will shed light on creative strategies used by electronic musicians to convey conceptual ideas.

Does any of your research fieldwork take place outside of the UK?

Yes – a field trip to the US will take place to conduct one of the interviews.

Research project start date

25 Sept 2019

Anticipated research project end date

01 Jan 2021

Ethical Risk

Does the research project have funding?

Yes

Does this research project involve other organisations?

No

Does the research project involve people as participants or in any other way?

Yes

Does the research project involve vulnerable groups?

No

Does the research project involve sensitive topics?

No

Does the research project involve secure data, or publicly available data in which individuals can be potentially identified?

Yes

Does the research project involve any situations where the safety of the researcher may be in question?

No

Does the research project involve recruiting participants via the internet?

No

Does your research project involve access to, or use of, material which could be classified as security sensitive?

No

Does the scope of the research project involve additional insurances over and above the University's standards?

No

Does the research project involve deceased persons, body parts, or other human elements?

No

Ethical Guidelines

All research conducted by LSBU staff and students should follow the LSBU Ethics Code of Practice. You should also follow the guidelines relevant for your discipline. Please indicate which discipline guidelines you will use below.

British Forum for Ethnomusicology (BFE)

Is there any special training of investigators needed to complete this research project?

No

Funding

Funder

London South Bank University

Grant type

Other

If other grant type, please provide details here.

Fee waiver

Funder grant number

N/A

Internal research reference number

N/A

Value of grant

£ 12780

Does this funding present any potential conflicts of interest or ethical considerations?

No

Human Participants: Information and Participation

Who will be recruited?

The selection criteria for the interviews will focus on music producers (i.e. electronic musicians), who utilise DAWs and whose work draws from/corresponds with elements of dance music production and culture (as also reflected in press releases, previous interviews, track presentation etc). Particular emphasis will be given to producers whose work corresponds with themes of post-euphoria, as defined in this research.

How will recruitment take place?

The interviewees will be approached through email correspondence, where they would be briefed about the nature of the research and asked to be interviewed.

Does the research project involve members of the public in a research capacity (participative research)?

No

How will you gain access to the research setting and research participants?

I will establish direct contact with the interviewees and will not have to deal with any gatekeepers and/or additional paperwork.

Will written consent be obtained?

No

If written consent will not be obtained please indicate why and how verbal consent will be obtained or what will be considered implied consent.

I will obtain implied, written consent as part of the initial email correspondence as well as at the beginning of the interviews.

Could the research project involve the sharing of confidential information beyond the initial consent given?

No

Does the research project involve visual or vocal methods where identifiability may be a concern?

No

Does the research project involve deception?

No

Is the choice to participate likely to be a sensitive issue?

No

Does the research project involve situations which may induce stress, anxiety, humiliation or pain?

No

Will incentives beyond reasonable compensation for time and travel being used in the proposed research project be offered to participants?

No

Human Participants: Method

Does your research contain any possible risk to participants?

Yes

If yes, please indicate which of the following risks may be entailed by your research project.

Potential psychological intrusion from questionnaires, interview schedules, observation techniques
Compromising professional boundaries with participants, students, or colleagues

How will these risks be mitigated?

Setting the interviews in a convenient, neutral environment whilst establishing clear boundaries with interviewees.

Does the research project involve intrusive interventions or data collection?

No

Will participants be debriefed?

Yes

If yes, how will participants be debriefed?

The interviewees will have the opportunity to see how excerpts from the interviews have been embedded in write-up draft and will be given sufficient time (within a given timescale) to provide feedback.

Data Collection and Sharing

Does the research project involve access to records of personal or sensitive information concerning identifiable individuals?

No

Which of the following data types will you be using?

Secondary/Archival data Interviews/Focus groups

For each data collection type please indicate how data will be collected and from what sources.

Data will be collected in the form of journalistic interviews. The focus group will include music producers whose work is concerned with the themes of the research.

What steps will be made to ensure the data collected will be anonymous or made anonymous?

Data will be collected as part of journalistic interviews, which are not anonymous by nature (unless involving personal, sensitive information).

Will data be stored electronically?

Yes

If yes, what steps will be taken to secure the data?

Setting a personal access password.

When will the data be destroyed?

The data will not be destroyed as it is of academic importance. Personal and sensitive materials will not be kept longer than is necessary for the completion of the project.

Although all forms of data analysis cannot be foreseen prior to data collection, please indicate what form of analysis is currently planned.

Discourse analysis.

Disclosure and Barring Service

Does the investigator or anyone else connected to the research project require a DBS check?

No

If no, please indicate why.

I will be conducting journalistic interviews with music practitioners, who are not vulnerable people are/or minors.

Has a health and safety risk assessment been carried out and, for applicants with supervisors, has the assessment been approved by a supervisory team?

No

Appendix 2 – Interview Invitation

To: [prospective interviewee – to be sent via email]

Subject: Interview and Consent Request for Doctoral Research

Dear _,

I am a doctoral researcher at London South Bank University, where I examine certain production aesthetics of electronic music.

Your work [name of work] seems to correspond with several themes I have been looking into, and so I was wondering if it would be possible to schedule a short interview to discuss some of the inspirations behind the work and the production techniques you have utilised?

The interview will be held in the form of an open, informal conversation conducted on Skype and would last approximately an hour. The audio will be recorded for note talking purposes only. Excerpts from the interview may be incorporated in the written part of the research – these will first be sent to you for approval, and you will have the opportunity to give your consent for including the interview or request amendments where needed.

I will greatly appreciate it if you will be willing to take part in the research and believe that your input as a music practitioner could be of great significance. Please let me know if this suits you, so we can schedule a time of your convenience for the interview.

Many thanks in advance for your time.

Appendix 3 – List of Equipment Used for Recordings

Home studio setup (research and development stage)

Operation system: MacBook Pro, macOS Mojave

DAW: Ableton Live 9 Suite (9.7.7)

Audio interface: Focusrite Clarett 2Pre USB

Microphone: Neumann TLM 102 condenser microphone

Monitors Speakers: Focal CMS 40 Studio Monitor

Headphones: Audio-Technica ATH-M50X

Vocal sketching: Voice Memos iPhone application

Edit suite setup (final production stage)

Operation system: MacBook Pro, macOS Mojave

DAW: Ableton Live 9 Suite (9.7.7)

Monitors Speakers: Genelec 8030CPM

Ableton Live audio effects: Auto Filter, Auto Pan, Chorus, Compressor, De-esser, Delay, EQ Eight, Filter Delay, Gate, Grain Delay, Limiter, Phaser, Reverb, Saturator, Vocoder

Ableton Live MIDI effects: Arpeggiator, Chord, Pitch

Ableton Live instruments: Analog, Drums (Kit-Core Heritage), Electric, Operator, Simpler

External plug-ins: MeldaProduction MAutoPitch, Native Instruments Massive

Analogue synthesisers: Korg DS-8, modular rig, Moog Little Phatty

Mixing

DAW: Pro Tools

External plug-ins:

Vocals: Brainworx bx_2098 EQ, Clariphonic EQ, Fabfilter Saturn distortion, Fabfilter Timeless delay, oeksound Soothe, Solid State Logic Vocalstrip, UAD LA2A compressor, UAD Neve 33609, UAD Studer 800, Valhalla delay, Valhalla Vintage Verb and Shimmer

Synthesisers: Fabfilter Pro-Q 3, GRM Shuffling, Softube TSAR-1 reverb, UAD Pulteq EQ, Valhalla Delay, Valhalla Vintage Verb and Shimmer

Master channel: Crain Song Phoenix, Millennia TCL-2C, UAD Neve 33609

Analogue mixing desk: Solid State Logic AWS924

Analogue compressor: Crane Song STC8

Remote streaming for collaboration with mixing engineer: Audiomovers plug-in

Appendix 4 – Lyrics

Emotional Call

When the day falls
Got to feel whole
Emotional Call

When the day fades
Darkness invades
Emotional toll

(I'm) feeling you not
(I'm) feeling a lot (I'm)
(I) got to be weak
(I'm) feeling defeat (I'm)

When the day falls
Got to feel whole
Emotional Call

When the day fades
Darkness invades
Emotional toll

(I'm) feeling you not
(I'm) feeling a lot (I'm)
(I) got to be weak
(I'm) feeling defeat (I'm)

Giving up to emotional call
Giving up to emotional call

Forget U

I will never forget you
I will never forget you
I will never forget you
I will never forget you

I will (forget you)

Never forget you
I will never forget you
I will never forget you
I will never forget you

I will never forget you (forget you)
I will forget you

Second Spring

There is spring and there is spring
An undergrowing fling
That I can't deny

There is spring and there is fall
I thought I've had it all
When he passed me by

Colours are too vivid now
I thought that I could love somehow
But I
Tried to fight the spring within
A way around the late blooming of mine

There is fountain, there is youth
I needed to have proof
Now I'm getting high

There's a double waterfall
I'm answering its call
Every time he lies

Colours are too vivid now
I thought that I could love somehow
But I
Tried to fight the spring within
A way around the late blooming of mine

Now my second spring is here

Into Illusion

It's fleeting
My beating is fast
And I'm feeding
As long as it lasts

I can promise you
The world is tuning on its edge
I can give you everything
Whatever comes instead

Into illusion

It's fleeting
My beating is fast
And I'm breathing
As long as it lasts

I can promise you
The world is tuning insecure
And whatever it may bring
I try to give you more

Into illusion

In a Different Light

Voice of reason
And when morning comes
Give me a reason
To stay on the ground
Voice of reason
And when morning comes
Give me a reason

Voice of reason
And when morning comes
Give me a reason
To leave all behind
Voice of reason
And when morning comes
I see you in a different light

Give me a reason