

Machines Hacking Humans: Performances Practices in Electronic Music during the 21st Century

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Abstract : This paper assesses the history of electronic music and its performance to illustrate that machines and technology have largely influenced how humans perform electronic music. The history of electronic music mainly focuses on the composition and production of electronic music with little to no attention paid to its performance by the majority of scholars in this field. Therefore, establishing a history of performance involves investigating what compositions of electronic music called for in the production of electronic music performance. This investigation into seminal works in the history of electronic music, therefore, illustrates the aesthetics of electronic music performance and the aesthetics established in the very beginnings of electronic music performance demonstrate the aesthetics of electronic music which are still prevalent today. The key aesthetics are the repurposing of technology and the hybridisation of technology. Performers take familiar technology (technology that society has become accustomed to using in daily life), not necessarily related to music or performance and use it as an instrument in their performances, such as a rotary dial telephone. Likewise, since the beginnings of electronic music, producers have always experimented with the latest technologies available to them in their compositions and performances. The spirit of performers of electronic music, therefore, revolves around repurposing familiar technologies and using them in new ways, whilst similarly experimenting with new technologies in their performances. This process of hybridisation plays a key role in the production and performance of electronic music in the twentieth century. Through various interviews with performers of electronic music, it is shown that these aesthetics are driving performance practices in the twenty-first century.

Keywords : body, hybridisation, performance, sound

Conference Title : ICDA 2019 : International Conference on Digital Arts

Conference Location : Venice, Italy

Conference Dates : June 20-21, 2019