An artistic framework for adapting existing works of electronic music to live performance.

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Adapting existing electronic music for live performance is often hard because:

• It’s created with non-real-time processes
• It’s hard to repeat the studio process on stage
• There is a wide variety of instruments/technologies
• Making emulating success less straightforward
• Performance is not often considered integral to the training electronic music artists receive
This is relevant to all artists

- Regardless of constraints
- The core task of adaptation is the same
- This is an artistic framework for an artistic challenge

Ableton, Pantha Du Prince: Live Setup <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOLRqVj5wo&ab_channel=Ableton> [accessed 18 July 2021]
The framework

The artists three objectives:

• To be authentic to the creative identity of their original fixed media work
• To be authentic to their creative identity as an artist
• To provide an engaging performance
Being authentic to the creative identity of the original fixed media work

Creative identity of the work

Compositional material

Foreground

Background

Artistic context

Emotive qualities

Aesthetic qualities
Being authentic to the creative identity of the artist

• Artists must know their identity and work to maintain it in varied avenues of presentation.

• Performance is one of these avenues.

Ableton, DJ Step1 Push 2 Performance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rp8TN08TpSk&t=2s&ab_channel=Ableton> [accessed 23 August 2021]
Provide an engaging performance

- Artists must understand their audience profile
- Artists must create connections between the visual and aural
Success and subjectivity

• Music is used to convey feelings. Experiences and evaluations of this are subjective.
• Artists and audiences determine success for themselves.

• But only artists are in control of the performance design and execution.
• They must design for their own definition of success, and the greatest potential success from their audiences perspective.
Examples
Examples

• Imogen Heap – Hide and Seek (Heap, 2005)
  • Glastonbury 2010 (maxwayneski, 2010)
  • NPR Tiny Desk 2019 (NPR Music, 2019)

• Floating Points – Anasickmodular (Floating Points, 2019)
  • Printworks 2019 (Resident Advisor, 2019)

• The Sleeping Giants – The Seriousness of Contentedness (The Sleeping Giants, 2020)
  • Box Hill Institute 2019 (Murphy, 2020)
Imogen Heap – Hide and Seek

Original fixed media work:
- Pop music
- Focused on voice and digital harmoniser

Renditions:
- Glastonbury 2010
- NPR Tiny Desk 2019
Creative identity of the work

Both performances were authentic to:

- Foreground focus: Emotive performance of lyrics
- Emotive importance: Melancholic, dramatic
- Aesthetic importance: digitally manipulated vocal harmonies
Both performances were authentic to:

An artist who works at the intersection of music and technology.
Providing an engaging performance

Glastonbury 2010
• Keytar: strapped to body and facing audience

NPR Tiny Desk 2019
• MiMu gloves gesture based controllers
Floating Points - Anasickmodular

Original fixed media work:
• Electronica dance music
• Featuring the Buchla modular synthesiser

Rendition:
• Printworks 2019

Using various equipment including the Buchla, a mixer and processing units.
Creative identity of the work

The performance was authentic to:

• Foreground focus: Buchla

• Emotive quality: “obtuse and aggressive” (Nast, 2019)

• Aesthetic importance: Buchla, aggressive processing/editing

Creative identity of the artist

The performance was authentic to:

- Playing live is “edifying and … important thing for me to do artistically” (Eede, 2019)

- Song + album was an exploration of the technology

- Forced a change in performance design: from ensemble to solo

Providing an engaging performance

- Lights and visuals operated by Hamill Industries.
- Enlarged gestures still included.
The Sleeping Giants – The Seriousness of Contentedness

Original fixed media work:
- Beats, jazztronica, downtempo
- Heavily edited drums

Rendition:
- Box Hill Institute 2019

Performed as a duo. Alex on drums, myself on Push 2 controllers
Creative identity of the work

Performance was authentic to:

• Foreground focus: Extensively edited and layered drum kit performance.

• Emotive importance: Juxtaposing contentedness against freneticism. Tongue in cheek.

• Aesthetic importance: Acoustic and synthetic merged, natural and unnatural.
Creative identity of the artist

Performance was authentic to:

- Balancing influences, histories, cultures of each performer.
- Conversation of styles.
Providing an engaging performance

- In the round.
- Performers engage with each other.
- Audiences freely move to engage with performers.
- Lighting balanced.
- Controllers angled.
Some notable points of comparison
The importance of the compositional foreground

• Each artist understood what to foreground.
  • This was often key to retaining the emotive/aesthetic qualities.
  • Especially with lyrics/text (Heap).
  • Live performance can even arguably enhance the foreground (The Sleeping Giants).
The electronic music artist’s identity

• Each artist places importance on exploring technology, tinkering, refining, reinventing.
  • E.g. Heaps development of the MiMu gloves, Floating Points shift to a solo performance design.

• Changing the live performance design (over time) may be key to remaining authentic to the creative identity of many electronic music artists.
The importance of visual and aural correlation

• Though methods / technology vary...
  • Vocal performance
  • Keytar
  • MiMu gloves
  • Large lighting / visual projection support
  • Enlarged gestures
  • Angled controllers
  • In the round staging

• Each clearly addresses the important visual to aural correlation.
Success within the framework

- Dissimilarities include: genre, musical style, audience size, location, staging, and technology.

- Similarities include: clear attention to the creative identity of the work and of themselves as artists, and providing an engaging performance for the audience.

- I.e. being successful within the framework.
Thank you

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References


• Floating Points 2019, Anasickmodular, Ninja Tune, UK.

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