

## **Innovation in Music — Performance, Production, Technology, and Business**

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At the outset, I must confess to being a struggling musician who works as an acoustics professor in an effort to fund my music habit, so this was the perfect book for me. Through 31 different chapters, I was brought on a journey through the most recent innovations in all aspect of music.

The book stems from a 2017 conference, “Innovation in Music,” held at the University of Westminster in London (UK). After the conference, contributors were invited to submit an article for this book, thus capturing a broad overview of modern innovations in the world of music. The book is divided into four main sections: performance, production, technology, and business. Each section brings a number of contributions from practitioners, experts, and academics.

Part One focuses on innovative examples of music performance, stagecraft, and composition. A number of case studies are presented. As a participant in many a “sing-song” in Ireland, I quite enjoyed a chapter focused on using the audience as a performer (Chapter 1). Here, we learn about the pilot performance of *The Singularity* at the 2017 Conference, where the audience of about 50 participated using a Nintendo Wii Remote. Another chapter makes use of the Commodore 64 (remember that!) to show why imitation is the sincerest form of flattery (Chapter 3), while another contribution notes that it is sometimes useful to explore the differences among live, non-live, and pseudo-live musical elements and to critically analyze what these difference do both *to* and *for* performance (Chapter 7).

Part Two discusses innovation in music production, incorporating models for collaboration, and identifying tools for enabling innovation in the studio. It begins with a review of the impact the production team of Mike Stock, Matt Aitken, and Pete Waterman (SAW) had on pop music in the 1980s (Chapter 10). Other chapters include a discussion on optimizing vocal clarity in the mix (where the harmonic centroid [HC] appears to be a useful predictor for vocal clarity — Chapter 13), as well as some tips on mixing and recording a small orchestral ensemble to create a large orchestra (Chapter 15).

Part Three focuses on new technologies within music and audio engineering. A variety of innovations are explored. Contributors share the development of a system to record ancillary microgestures (small movements that are part of the technique, but not involved in the sound production) in a pianist's technique (Chapter 17); another demonstrates that everything is music, from a laser room to a music suit (Chapter 22); while another contribution examines the impact of an acoustically transparent headphone system on recording studio performances (Chapter 23).

The book's final section evaluates contemporary issue around music business, copyright, publishing, and ownership. A particular interesting contribution examines blockchain applications for recorded music and notes how music makers and companies have the opportunity to recapture some of the value lost in the transition to online digital music (Chapter 28). The theme is continued with the eye-catching title of the next chapter (“Disruption as Contingency: Music, Blockchain, Wtf?”). The final chapter discusses the impact that continued cuts to council budgets and the ongoing lack of commitment to wealth distribution might have on the golden era of the creative industries in the UK. The author notes that, if more attention is not paid to secondary and tertiary education infrastructures, and music and creative provision are not included in curricula in the UK, then there will not be a creative future in which music-making in all its forms can flourish, a sobering but important note to finish on.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. As it draws material from a conference, all chapters are structured in a similar manner, including an introduction with background theory. In this way, the reader can leaf through the book, reading chapters at random, and without any prior knowledge can understand the innovation being discussed. I would say that it is a must-read for anyone conducting research in the area, but it should also be of interest to the casual reader with an interest in innovation in music (albeit with some background in acoustics).

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