Chapter for *Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event-Cultures*, ed. by Graham St. John. Bloomsbury (March 2017).

EDM Pop

A Soft Shell Formation in a New Festival Economy

FABIAN HOLT

> Upon a hill across a blue lake
> That's where I had my first heartbreak
> I still remember how it all changed
>
> "Don't You Worry Child," Swedish House Mafia (2012)

Since the late 2000s, a form of electronic dance music consisting mainly of commercial house music and contemporary top 40 pop music has enjoyed mass popularity around the globe. The music is often identified as "EDM" in popular media without being distinguished from other forms of electronic dance music below the mass media surface. This chapter identifies the new formation as EDM pop and situates it within broader evolutions in the popular music festival landscape. EDM pop has been covered by EDM magazines but also by rock and pop music magazines such as *Pitchfork* and *Spin*, and by the trade magazine *Billboard*. The trajectory of EDM into pop culture and into the corporate music industry reflected in this journalism has been subject to little research. While scholars have studied the growing industrialization of EDM in local contexts (Montano 2009 and 2011; Stahl 2014), a broader conceptual framing of EDM pop and its festivalscape has not yet appeared in print.

The aim of this chapter is to offer a broad analytical framing of EDM pop in terms of genre and industry. I argue that EDM pop is involved in mass culture and corporate industry formations beyond the conventional genre networks of EDM, but that similar situations have occurred several times before in the history of popular music. EDM pop can be interpreted as an example of a soft shell genre formation, a term I adopt from culture industry sociology to map the dynamics of popularization and corporatization.

A crucial point in the chapter argument is that, following the soft shell theory, the evolution of EDM pop festivals can not only be interpreted as a formation within the genre but also within the broader popular music and popular culture landscape. By contrast to earlier soft shell developments in popular music history such as the Nashville Sound in country music, fusion in jazz, “tropical” in salsa, or the “global pop” trajectories of diverse local traditions, EDM pop is based in a live event economy. Professionally produced cultural events play a key role in the contemporary cultural economy of regions and cities, in the music business, in corporate sponsorship, and in place marketing.

The chapter analysis therefore situates EDM pop more specifically within the new economy of popular music festivals. I argue that this economy involves three core evolutions: 1) The evolution of the popular music festival as format for the music business in the 1990s; 2) the evolution of popular music festivals as generic events to mainstream society and business[1] in the 2000s; and 3) the evolution of popular music festivals as social media events in the 2010s. These evolutions help explain fundamental aspects of EDM pop festivals and can inform more detailed musicological and ethnographic studies in the future.

The chapter is based on qualitative research on EDM pop festivals, with Tomorrowland in Belgium as the main example. I conducted field research at Tomorrowland in 2012 and 2013, interviewed the promoter ID&T, and researched the evolution in production, style, and business of Tomorrowland marketing videos and livecasts. Complementary research on Creamfields, Electric Daisy Carnival, Sunburn, and Ultra Music was conducted to explore general trends in the design and business of this festivalscape.

Conceptual Approach: Industry Sociology of Mass Culture

The scholarly literature on EDM can roughly be interpreted as a discourse for studying the underground formations that for decades formed the core base of the genre. The same can be said of the literature on popular music festivals, which has concentrated on countercultural festivals and which has not yet framed an agenda for their evolution into consumer culture festivals. These literatures have explored core aspects of culture and community and their capacity to constitute alternative realities in the individual festival sphere and in social movement contexts (Cantwell 1993; Giorgi et al. 2011). Electronic music scholarship has paid special attention to intimacy, trance, ritual, and utopia (D’Andrea 2007; St. John 2009). The cultural

landscape has changed considerably since the 1990s when festivals increasingly turned to mass popular music and evolved into industry-based events, awaiting analytical framing in the respective fields of scholarship.

This chapter marks a departure from the existing literatures by researching the mass culture side of festival culture and of EDM, framing it explicitly *as mass culture entertainment*. EDM pop festivals can fundamentally be conceived as consumer culture environments of live entertainment and have much in common with conventional mass culture forms. A general aspect is the prevalence of generic models (Holt 2007: 2) appearing in the form of hit songs, theme park designs, and brand culture. Another typical aspect is the psychological simplicity and emphasis on light emotions in the crowds and in the many songs about juvenile love and happiness such as "Don't You Worry Child" quoted above. Like 1970s' arena rock, for instance, EDM pop festivals are characterized by a fascination with magnitude and pyrotechnics. Like TV soaps, they do not shy from the superficial and mundane, as illustrated by the melodies and lyrics to which main stage crowds sing along. Many of the synthesizer riffs and ostinatos resemble elements of top 40 pop songs. Finally, the EDM pop festivalscape is industry-based. By 2015, it had become dominated by two corporate entities, SFX-IDT and Live Nation-Insomniac, which by then owned all of the festivals mentioned in the opening paragraph (except Sunburn).

How is industry-based entertainment commonly studied? There are traditions dedicated to this in the humanities within film studies, television studies, and cultural studies from which popular music studies and other areas have drawn much inspiration. These traditions have developed conceptual approaches to studying texts and audience experiences, as in semiotics and reception studies (Hall 1980, Fiske 1991). Semiotics could be relevant for analyzing how EDM pop festivals are differentiated from transformational festivals and boutique festivals, for instance, through their appeal to different lifestyle values, each gaining meaning in relation to one another through the principle of difference. Semiotics could also deliver analyses of the "language" of EDM pop, its visual festival design, and its discursive realities as a new global fashion (Bogart 2012; Dargis 2013) *and* a re-branding of 1990s' rave culture (Reynolds 2012). Reception studies, moreover, is relevant for studying how meanings are produced in live and socially mediated consumption. So semiotics and reception studies are relevant for understanding the culture, but to understand its industry dimensions we need to consider two other traditions, namely culture industry studies and political economy (Hall 1981; Ryan 1992). The theory of soft shell is

particularly useful in this study because it offers an explanation of the dynamics in the processes of popularization and corporatization that EDM is undergoing.

Soft Shell Theory

The concept of soft shell originates in Richard Peterson's magisterial *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Peterson 1997). The book is the product of twenty-five years of field research on the evolution of country music into an industry-based genre, from the first commercial recordings in the early 1920s to the genre's institutionalization in the early 1950s. A sociologist of culture industry, Peterson identifies a dynamic tension between a perceived core of the genre and its softer shell. The book is written as an empirical history, and the soft shell concept is presented in the form of an empirical typology and narrative, but the ideas can be adopted into a more general discourse for understanding similar processes in other genres. Consider the following framing applicable to electronic dance music (replacing the distinction 'hard vs. soft country' with 'underground vs. pop EDM'):

> The basic justification for hard country is that it represents the authentic tradition of the music called country and that it is by and for those steeped in the tradition. The corresponding justification for soft country is that it melds country with pop music to make it enjoyable to the much larger numbers of those not born in to or knowledgeable about country music. The leading hard-core artists have received the most attention from contemporary commentators and later scholars as well. At the same time, the leading soft shell artists of an era have tended to be more popular with audiences and to make more money than their hard-core counterparts (Peterson 1997: 150).

Peterson offers typologies and rich descriptions, but he does not offer a theory in the strict sense of explanations in a general and abstract language, although elements thereof can be deduced from his writing. At the core of his thinking about the term soft shell is a core-boundary metaphor, which appears in descriptions of contrasting of musical styles, artist personae, audiences, production systems (independent vs. corporate), and media spaces (local genre radio vs. national top 40). Peterson, moreover, adopts the term soft shell into a historical narrative of the genre's industrialization. While Peterson argues that hard and soft have co-existed throughout the history of the genre, it is clear that the relation between the two changes with corporate co-optation (in general, only the soft shell is co-opted).

Peterson describes how soft country co-evolved with radio-based country music in the 1930s. In this process, the industry worked to smooth over the raw edges of the genre to establish it as family entertainment and increase its popularity with audiences beyond those who identified as fans of the music. This industry-driven popularization is a key aspect of soft shell dynamics (Ibid. 229), and it is this point I interpret in the contemporary context in outlining the new festival economy provided on the following pages. The focus of the outline is the economic functions of festivals in a variety of commercial contexts *outside* the conventional boundaries of the festival sector and culture. Corporate culture industry develops, promotes, and exploits soft shell culture. Intrinsic to this process is the influence of interests and logics outside genre spheres, of genre-specialized artists, producers, and fans.

A distinction can be made between micro and macro formations of soft shell. At the micro-level are individual artists and productions, while the macro-level formation is a collective style that is named and systematically produced. EDM pop is an example of the latter and has parallels in country music with the Nashville Sound of the 1960s and in jazz with Creed Taylors jazz-pop productions of the same decade and later with the smooth jazz industry. The Nashville Sound and EDM pop are examples of soft shell formations that created a new image for the genre and the idea of a new beginning, in part because the mass penetration was so strong that foundational images of the genre were transformed decades after its formative stages.[2] Soft shell processes in these genres have not subsumed the genre in its entirety but the processes have affected the overall dynamics of the genre.

Three Evolutions in the Economy of Popular Music Festivals

Industry-based cultural events such as consumer culture music festivals involve economic activity across a number of local and international businesses, including musical entertainment, beverages, food, hospitality, media, and transportation. Interest in the economic value chain in the host community has been central to the nominal field of events research within tourism studies for decades. There, scholars have typically analyzed not the business of the festival organization itself but the impacts of the festival on other businesses in the community. This has led to a framing of the festival industry as a *mixed industry* (Getz 2012). The present chapter recognizes the value of this insight but does not use the term mixed industry because industry-based music festivals 1) are primarily framed within music markets, and 2) does not mix with but conducts business with *para-industries* of more general commodity markets such as advertising, hospitality, and media. Few firms in the

supply chain work only with festivals. In the present account, industry-based popular music festivals are identified as music industry, even as they are embedded in a network of para-industries.

1. The Festival Becomes a Format for the Music Business in the 1990s

Logic: Music Markets and Headliners

The growing market value of live music in the late 1990s (Krueger 2005) transformed the role of festivals in the music business. Festivals went from being viewed as idiosyncratic cultural projects outside the daily business of the live music industry to becoming a generic format and avenue of commerce for the music industry as a whole. The transformation happened gradually during the 1980s and 1990s and peaked with the boom in the 2000s (e.g., Waddell 2013) when the number of popular music festivals doubled in many countries and several of the biggest festivals had doubled in size since the 1980s.[3] By the 2000s there were more festivals, bigger festivals, and corporately owned festivals, some of which had started as a countercultural festival. Festivals have become one of the main areas of economic activity for artist agencies, managers, and concert agencies. The large-scale festival became such a lucrative format during the festival boom that many event and concert promoters began promoting festivals.

The secondary role of festivals in the music industry of the 1970s and 1980s was reflected in pricing of performing artists. Rock festival promoters, for instance, were able to book artists at a discounted “festival rate” compared with arena concerts.[4] This arrangement eroded when festival headliners became a major source of revenue for corporate concert promoters in the 2000s. Festival promoters sought to compensate for the growing expenses by selling one-day tickets. The latter contributed to the rise of an arena concert culture within the festival, with thousands going mainly for one headliner, while remaining spectators to the festival culture.

A distinct aspect of this evolution of the festival as an industry format is the role of headliners in drawing mass audiences. This is mostly the case in rock and jazz festivals, which are concert-based, but EDM pop festivals, too, need super star DJs to reach mass live and media audiences.[5] Tomorrowland and EDC Las Vegas market themselves as event brands, emphasizing the overall party experience rather than the lineup (Sherburne 2013; Mason 2012), but the lineups continue to feature

countless chart-topping DJs that are featured prominently in livecastings on YouTube and Yahoo! The lineups also reveal that the EDM pop festival model has stabilized: Tomorrowland, for instance, consistently drew from the same pool of EDM pop stars every year 2010–2015, including Avicii, Calvin Harris, Carl Cox, David Guetta, Deadmau5, Skrillex, Steve Aoki, Swedish House Mafia (with separate performances by the members after the trio split up in 2013), and Tiësto. The broad popularity of these DJs to contemporary youths explains why some among them have been adopted as part of the broader soft shell of rock and pop festivals such as Bonnaroo, Coachella, Rock Werchter, and T in the Park.

The intensified market logic has changed festival culture. The culture has become more centered around stars and main stage shows, and it has become more standardized as the same stars appear at more festivals owned by the same corporations with the same facility and service providers. Many festivals have similar lineups, architectural designs, hospitality services, and online ticketing services. The market competition for headliners results in higher prices on tickets, food, drinks, and more brand sponsorship and thus drives a general commodification of the festival environment. The market development, moreover, shapes the design and location of new festivals. New festivals are created based on market research and growing emphasis on commercial rather than cultural motivations; festivals proliferate in urban parks and former industrial facilities, designing the space primarily for the consumption of music and leaving out conventional festival spaces such as camping and grassroots participant spaces; and one-day tickets are offered to maximize profits, even though it involves more people coming for a show and not the multi-day festival experience.

A formative moment in this market and industry evolution happened when corporate concert promoters began buying shares in rock music festivals in the 1990s and developed them as brands to grow their appeal to mainstream consumers and sponsors (Anderton 2011). This business development culminated during the festival boom in the 2000s when Live Nation acquired a majority stake in Festival Republic, illustrating the shift of emphasis from club venues and concerts to festivals within the corporate live music industry.[6] By the early 2010s, Live Nation owned more than forty festivals in Europe alone, and the acquisitions accelerated in 2013–2015 when it gained ownership of major EDM pop and rock music festivals such as Insomniac Events and the Swedish EDM pop festival promoter Stureplansgruppen (Sackllah 2015; “Live Nation’s New Groove”; Hanley 2015). Meanwhile, industry mogul Robert

Sillerman who led the corporatization of the rock concert industry with the company that became Live Nation in 2005 moved on to do the same in EDM pop in the 2010s. Beginning in 2011, his corporation SFX Entertainment purchased hundreds of EDM pop events and festivals and grew media and advertising infrastructures around them. Within a year after the acquisition of Beatport, for instance, a partnership was established to market Beatport's top 20 radio show through Clear Channel's major-market hit radio stations (Mason 2014). These corporate evolutions have led to similar organizational structures and models of integration with media and advertising in rock and EDM pop. This is what culture industry sociologists call institutional isomorphism. Yet, the situation in each genre is unique. In indie rock, for instance, a soft shell development in the 1990s and 2000s also involved co-optation by major record labels, corporate sponsors, and big festivals, but the music is still defined as an urban niche culture distinct from mass culture (Holt 2014).

2. The Festival Becomes a Generic Event to Mainstream Society and Business in the 2000s

Logic: Service and Brand Management

In the 1990s, cities were generally uninterested in hosting popular music festivals or raves. Festival managers were not part of the city's elite networks. Dominant mass media stories focused on themes of hedonism, drugs, deviancy, and noise (McKay 2000; St John 2009). The relationship between popular music festivals and cities was dominated by a perceived need for minimizing negative impacts such as noise and waste.

The relationship between festivals and cities changed fundamentally in the 2000s when dominant narratives started focusing on the successful impact of festivals on city marketing and the local economy within a new and broader discourse of "the eventful city" and "the festival city" (Richards and Palmer 2010: 2-3). This shift resulted from several developments within post-industrial economies. During the 1970s and 1980s, city governments, informed by private consultancies, started to think of culture as an economic driver (Zukin 1995). During those decades, culture-led growth strategies typically involved museums, sports facilities, amusement parks, and the development of public spaces for middle-class consumption (Ibid.). In the 1990s, the cultural event became widely recognized by the advertising industry as an immersive medium and by city governments influenced by economic geographer

Richard Florida's ideas about creative cities (Florida 2002). The fascination with the publicity value of super star concerts in particular fueled in a craze of arena construction projects in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with a handful of O^2 arenas being constructed in major European cities, for instance. The arena trend was soon followed by a growing interest in outdoor popular music festivals and events because of their ability to transform the cityscape into a festive landscape. City center festivals and raves are given permission to use public spaces because they stimulate consumption and have the capacity to produce positive images of the city as an attractive destination for mass numbers of young people. This mindset has stimulated support of such diverse events as the Love Parade in Germany (and its international counterparts) and EDC in Las Vegas (Hitzler and Nye 2011; Jasper and Magaudda 2013).

As city governments and corporate sponsors approached various kinds of events from an economic logic, a regime of generic values arose, which applied to music festivals as well as film festivals, fashion weeks, sport events, and other kinds of pop culture events ("Big Brand Sponsors Target Music Festivals"). Generic values include quantitative measures such as the number of visitors and spending in hotels and restaurants. The generic logic also extended to the style of communication. Events across the diverse cultural landscape adopted the same mass communication and marketing techniques such as theming and visual identity. They also adopted the discourse of economic and marketing impacts from the tourism and advertising industry to rationalize public spending and gain access to corporate sponsors and political elites (Getz 2012).[7] Industry festivals now routinely manage their event as a brand and commission impact studies to communicate their economic value to stakeholders. Insomniac Events, for instance, has commissioned economic impact studies almost every year since 2010 from the Los Angeles consultancy Beacon Economics, which has many clients in the sport events industry and in the public sector (Shah 2015). SFX-IDTcommissioned a similar study from the same company on the first TomorrowWorld festival in 2013 (Ruggieri 2014). These studies play a role in countering skepticism of drug use, but above all situate the festivals in the top industry tier of culture and sports events. In the case of Tomorrowland, the enthusiasm of the host community has evolved into a challenge to brand management because a growing number of people and organizations are associating themselves with the festival to capitalize on its popularity even if they are not representing the style and values of the festival.[8]

3. The Festival Becomes a Social Media Event in the 2010s

Logic: Social Media Metrics and Mass Culture Semiotics

Before the international mass penetration of Facebook and YouTube in the late 2000s, music festivals depended on broadcast radio and television for mass exposure. In Euro-America, television coverage was limited to concert broadcasts from a small number of big rock music festivals, which continue to dominate. The evolution of the BBC's coverage of Glastonbury is a case in point: When the BBC started television broadcasting from Glastonbury in the mid-1990s, about twenty staff produced eight hours of daily broadcasting for an estimated audience of one million people. Within a few years, the broadcasts moved to a more popular channel, and by 2015 the BBC had about 200 people producing live streams across multiple radio, television, and online channels ("Glastonbury TV"). The BBC covers no other festival with the same intensity.[9] Few, if any, national media corporations provide television coverage of EDM festivals. The music director of NPR in the United States, for instance, explains that they focus on music discovery and find it increasingly challenging to do that, showing awareness of but not explicitly naming the processes of commodification and massification.[10] NPR's music discovery, however, focuses mainly on genres such as rock, folk, and classical music and not so much on electronic dance music.

In the early 2010s, festival mediations expanded dramatically beyond broadcast media and into socially mediated televisuality. Televisual online mediations had happened since the early 1990s, but did not proliferate until popular social media had created an infrastructure for audiences and for a new media industry looking for live content to attract audiences and advertisers. In this advertising-based digital economy dominated by Google, festivals generate traffic and brand value for sponsors and media corporations such as Google, Facebook, and Yahoo!, and their televisual mediations of festivals have in turn created a new source of revenue for festivals. The digital realm is a new source of revenue for the live music industry.

This evolution can be illustrated from the perspective of Tomorrowland. The festival started in 2005 by the Belgian branch of ID&T and was inspired by the company's Mysteryland festival (1993-) near Amsterdam. Mysteryland has a more hardstyle profile and fewer EDM pop stars (some DJs have graduated to Tomorrowland as they reached a mass market). Tomorrowland adopted Mysteryland's Disney-style design and New Age pop spiritualism, as apparent in the fairy-tale decorations, in the

naming of the festival and its individual areas, and in the location in a park area with trees and lakes. Tomorrowland also adopted the motto "Yesterday is history. Today is a gift. Tomorrow is mystery." The festival's soft shell orientation created a more gender-balanced audience with about 40% women, contrasting the more male-dominated audiences at ID&T's raves in the 1990s.[11] Tomorrowland is universally known by the male festival audience, also online, to attract women with appeal to advertising and fashion industry images of beauty. What is less known is that many males at the festival aspire to similar body aesthetics, typically shaved, shorthaired, wearing H&M-style summer pants and sporting a shaved, muscular torso. These elements—the fairy-tale design, the park, the stars, the pretty women and men, and the spectacular main stage architecture—have all been exploited for their visual appeal in the digital mediations of the festival.

It was the marketers of Tomorrowland who gradually built a digital sphere for the festival. Their first videos for YouTube in the late 2000s can be described as reportage, just like the other festival videos at the time produced by other festivals and by amateurs. The marketers then decided to produce a more ambitious video of a Moby show at the main stage in 2009. For that video, they developed a more elaborate stage design with fireworks and upgraded the equipment for producing a higher image quality. Enthusiastic audience responses encouraged marketers to go further in this direction and develop a style of cinematic festival video with image quality and editing at Hollywood industry standards. These immersive movies were framed as "trailers" and "after movies" and became folkloric texts in EDM pop culture, framing the festival experience for international audiences. The co-evolution of the physical festival world and the social media movies culminated in the defining 2011 after movie, which received more than 100 million views on YouTube within a year.

Why has ID&T continued to expand the Tomorrowland video productions when tickets have sold out repeatedly since 2010? The festival's YouTube channel features hundreds of TV quality videos, mostly recordings of single DJ sets. The evolution in production style also suggests growing ambitions, articulated through a Lord of the Rings style cinematography. The explanation for this cinematic intensification is that the festival marketers are affected by the massive audience enthusiasm and that the mediations generate sponsorship revenues. The more the livecasts and videos are watched online, the more negotiation power the festival has with its business partners, and the more it earns.[12] The development is stimulated by the broader advertising economy of social media. Since Google acquired YouTube in

2009, it has worked strategically to grow its competitive advantage with the film and television business. YouTube launched a “premium content strategy” in 2011 in which live events such as mass-market music festivals play a key role. YouTube partnered with festivals for exclusive live streaming, including Tomorrowland whose marketing team embraced the opportunity, viewing YouTube as “a global TV station.”[13]

Media evolutions have played a major role in the commercial development of events throughout history. An illustrative example is the television history of the Olympic Games, which has produced its own research literature. Following a broader convergence between sports and television in the 1960s, television replaced ticket sales as the main source of revenue for the Olympics by 1972 and since the late 1970s more than half of the TV rights fees have come from commercial networks in the United States (Real 2014). Mass media broadcasting created the basis for an evolution in corporate sponsorship, which became a major source of revenue with the 1984 Games in Los Angeles. These developments generated debates about the consequences of mediatization and commodication. Scholars continue to debate whether the media had a symbiotic or parasitic relationship with sports. Some argued that the growing influence of stars and sponsors challenged the fundamental Olympic values of equality and democracy (Ibid.; Roche 2000, 166). Moreover, television broadcasts altered the balance between the ritual elements of the event, with more emphasis on spectacle. It also boosted the transformation of sports into consumer culture. At the level of audience experience, the capacity of moving images to communicate emotional information intensified the audience experience of crowd emotions and star personae, thus contributing to the rise of celebrity culture, with Michael Jordan as a pioneering example. Global mediations of Jordan’s playing and his achievements were exploited commercially in celebrity-style ads for Nike’s Air Jordan shoe model from the mid-1980s. In those ads, Jordan was presented not as a conventional athlete but styled as a celebrity and with a line of life-style products (clothing and fragrance) named after him (Kellner 2002: 64). The media further created and exploited his celebrity status by reporting on his income and his life with a 56,000 square foot mansion, sports cars, and celebrity friends. EDM pop DJ stars operate in a different sphere of nightlife and party culture and are not praised by news media, for instance, the way Jordan was, but they are completely embedded in a celebrity culture. The handful of highest-earning DJs are on Forbes’ Top 100 list, featured in tabloid media stories about their private jets, parties with Paris Hilton, videos with female pop stars, luxury apartments in celebrity destinations such as

Miami and Hollywood, residencies in Las Vegas, and paparazzi photos. David Guetta had his name and picture on a series of Coca Cola bottles in 2012 and met with the United Nations general secretary in 2013 to support World Humanitarian Day. In 2015, Calvin Harris started dating Taylor Swift and modeled for Armani in a global campaign for their men's underwear.

In my analysis of Tomorrowland as a social media event (Holt 2016), I argue that the marketers used social media to expand consumption and marketing into an open-ended continuum, equivalent to the transformation of news media into a 24/7 cycle in the digital age. In this continuum, mediations circulate across the pages of corporate festivals and private persons, bringing traces of festival culture into the everyday through a more direct and complex relation between industry and audience. Mediatization processes are contingent to the specificity of changing media systems, but the changing balance between the ritual elements of the event and the multi-level commodification are obvious parallels with the mediatization of the Olympics and offer a perspective on the conversation about EDM pop festivals as a culture of sensations and spectacle as indicated by the editor's introduction to this volume. Most of my Tomorrowland informants, online and at the festival, were not yet thirty years old and did not have the experience to see the present moment as the result of a series of transformations in the history of EDM.

Conclusion

The chapter was motivated by the realization that the popularization of EDM in commercial media and festivals is one of the major developments in early 21st century pop culture, but that research is lacking on the core dimensions. The aim of this chapter has therefore been to offer an analytical mapping of the genre and industry dimensions of EDM pop, paying special attention to its place within the broader economy of popular music festivals. The sociology of genre and industry served as a useful tool for a raw framing in the beginning of the chapter. Genre theory opens up for structural and comparative thinking about a music, its media, discourses, and its networks of production and consumption. Comparative thinking about similar situations in other genres in the past is absent in writing about EDM pop.

The structural similarities with earlier developments in country music and jazz motivated the adoption of the soft shell concept from culture industry sociology. What initially might seem as a contrasting of aesthetics within a given genre is actually part

of more complex dynamics involving interests outside the genre's own distinct networks. EDM pop can be added to a long list of examples of how the corporate music industry popularizes genres for a mainstream market. Such soft shell formations therefore cannot be adequately analyzed within the boundaries of the individual genre. This chapter situated EDM pop in a broader popular music economy in which rock festivals in particular have had an instrumental role in the evolution of the corporate festival industry and the image of popular music festivals as desirable destination events for local host communities. EDM pop festivals have pushed this evolution further by adopting visual branding practices from the film and events industry and by their aesthetics of mass culture euphoria. The exploration of EDM pop within broader contexts beyond EDM indicates that its mass-market success can be attributed to a number of factors in what might be described as a perfect storm: Pop stars such as Madonna and Rihanna were looking for inspiration for a modern sound; a new generation of social media created a platform for mediating visually appealing festival worlds; neoliberal city governments with populist cultural views embraced pop culture events for millennials; a corporate festival industry had evolved and was ready to co-opt EDM; and, finally, there was a crisis in the recording industry and a sense that rock music was not evolving much anymore, with rock festival promoters complaining about the declining supply of headliners, and EDM pop having a generational appeal to millennial youth.

The chapter thus makes the case for looking beyond the internal hard vs. soft dualism than in Peterson's analysis. When soft shell formations evolve into global mass cultures, they exist rather distantly from the hard core and can therefore meaningfully be analyzed as relatively separate areas. The framing of EDM pop as a mass culture formation motivated my emphasis on the genre's life in the wider pop culture mainstream. Peterson focused on the life of soft shell within the genre because he was studying the genre's history and developed the distinction in this context. Soft shell should not be confined to the dualism of its boundary metaphor because it is also a matter of how a genre is popularized outside its own territory. Judging from past examples, we can assume that a soft shell formation has a shelf life in the mainstream, but also deeply transforms the genre's boundaries and identity, instigating ongoing negotiations with changing notions of mainstream pop music.

The general methodological point of this chapter is that genre theory has broad relevance for mapping new cultural formations, even when they seem to grow away

from genre and do not position themselves discursively in a genre. The basic vocabulary of genre theory does not have to be re-invented for every genre. Existing concepts developed decades ago can prove useful and help recognize the general and unique aspects of a situation. Once macro-structural mappings have been offered, they can be critiqued and nuanced by more specialized studies.

Notes

[1] This chapter refers to mainstream society and business according to terminology in the sociology of modernity (Slater 1998 and 2011).

[2] For a study of country music and jazz, see Holt (2007, chapters 3-4).

[3] In addition to such Billboard reports on the situation in the United States, the festival boom played out similarly in countries such as Denmark, Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom, except that the growth of EDM pop festivals were not as evenly distributed, with relatively few in the United Kingdom and the Nordic countries (Webster 2014; NIRAS Denmark with Holt 2010).

[4] Leif Skov, conversation with author, 10 August 2010.

[5] Adding superstars to the lineup drove the expansion of rock festivals when the biggest festivals grew from attracting 15,000 or 20,000 people per day, to 40,000 or more during the 1980s and 1990s.

[6] Festival Republic emerged from a reorganization of the company Mean Fiddler, which promoted concerts and managed club venues in London. In 2007, two years after Live Nation gained ownership, the venue portfolio was sold and the company was rebranded under the name Festival Republic to concentrate on festivals ("Festival Republic: About Us").

[7] I have witnessed how events use the impacts discourse in multiple situations in Roskilde and Copenhagen in my local role as an events expert at Roskilde University since 2006.

[8] Koen Lemmens and Christophe Van den Branden, ID&T, interview with author, 24 January 2013.

[9] Andrew Rogers, senior producer at the BBC, interview with author, 1 April 2015.

[10] Anya Grundman, director of NPR, interview with author, 4 February 2015.

[11] This information is based on interviews with managers at ID&T's offices in Antwerpen in January 2013. The managers also shared consumer data with me.

[12] The festival marketers at ID&T whom I interviewed in January 2013 said that I was correct in making this assumption, but they did not disclose any details of the economic arrangement.

[13] Koen Lemmens, ID&T, interview with author, 24 January 2013.

References

Anderton, C. 2011. “Music Festival Sponsorship: Between Commerce and Carnival,” *Arts Marketing: An International Journal* 1(2): 145-158.

“Big Brand Sponsors Target Music Festivals,” *CNN.com*, 17 April 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/videos/tv/2015/04/17/wbt-intv-andrews-music-festivals.cnn, accessed 17 June 2015.

Bogart, J. 2012. “Buy the Hype: Why EDM Could Really Be the New Rock,” *the Atlantic* 10 July 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/07/buy-the-hype-why-electronic-dance-music-really-could-be-the-new-rock/259597/, accessed 25 February 2013.

Cantwell, R. 1993. *Ethnomimesis: Folklife and the Representation of Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Dargis, M. 2013. “Debauchery and the American Experience (Woo-Hoo!),” *The New York Times* 14 March 2013, http://movies.nytimes.com/2013/03/15/movies/spring-breakers-directed-by-harmony-korine.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0, accessed 16 May 2013.

D’Andrea, A. 2007. *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Cultures in Ibiza and Goa*. New York and London: Routledge.

“Festival Republic: About Us.” http://www.festivalrepublic.co.uk/about-us/, accessed 24 July 2015.

Fiske, J. 2011 [1987]. *Television Culture*. Second Edition. London: Routledge.

Florida, R. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class, and How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Getz, D. 2012 [2007]. *Event Studies: Theory, Research, and Policy for Planned Events*. 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge.

Giorgi, L., M. Sassatelli, and G. Delanty, Eds. 2011. *Festivals and the Public Cultural Sphere*. New York and London: Routledge.

“Glastonbury TV.” The Television Company, http://www.the-television-company.co.uk/glastonbury-television/, accessed 4 August 2015.

Hall, S. 1980 [1973]. “Encoding/Decoding.” In: *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. by S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, and P. Willis, pp. 128-138. London: Hutcheson.

——— 1981. “Notes on Deconstruction ‘the Popular’.” In: *People’s History and Socialist Theory*, ed. by R. Samuel. London: Routledge, pp. 227-240.

Hanley, J. 2015. “Live Nation Sweden Acquires EDM Promoter.” *Music Week*, 5 March 2015, http://www.musicweek.com/news/read/live-nation-sweden-acquires-edm-promoter/061069, accessed 19 July 2015.

Hitzler, R. and S. Nye. 2011. “Where is Duisburg? An LP Postscript.” *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 2 (1), https://dj.dancecult.net/index.php/dancecult/article/view/303/289.

Holt, F. 2007. *Genre in Popular Music*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

——— 2014. “Rock Clubs and Gentrification in New York City: The Case of the Bowery Presents.” *IASPM@Journal* 4 (1): 21-41.

——— 2016. “New Media, New Festival Worlds.” In: *Music and the Broadcast Experience: Performance, Production, and Audiences*, ed. by C. Baade and J. Deaville. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jaspar, C. and P. Magauda 2013. “’Space is the Place’: The Global Localities of the Sónar and WOMAD Music Festivals.” In: *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, eds. G. Delanty, L. Giorgi, and M. Sassatelli, 173-189. New York and London: Routledge.

Kellner, D. 2002. *Media Spectacle*. New York and London: Routledge.

Krueger, A. B. 2005. “The Economics of Real Superstars: The Market for Rock Concerts in the Material World.” *Journal of Labor Economics* 23(1): 1–30.

“Live Nation’s New Groove: Electronic Dance Music and Scalped Tickets.” Bloomberg Business, 9 August 2013, http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2013-08-09/live-nation-jumps-on-electronic-dance-music-scalped-tickets, accessed 19 July 2015.

McKay, G. 2000. *Glastonbury: A Very English Fair*. London: Gollancz.

Mason, K. 2012. “Electric Daisy Founder Pasquale Rotella: ‘We Don’t Want to Book’ Superstar DJs Anymore.” Billboard.com, 8 June 2012, http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/touring/1094072/electric-daisy-founder-pasquale-rotella-we-dont-want-to-book, accessed 2 August 2015.

——— 2014. “John Sykes, Robert Sillerman on New Clear Channel, SFX Partnership: ‘We Want to Be the Best.’” Billboard.biz, 6 January 2014, http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/branding/5862290/john-sykes-robert-sillerman-on-new-clear-channel-sfx-partnership, accessed 27 July 2015.

Montano, E. 2009. “DJ Culture in the Commercial Sydney Dance Music Scene”. *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 1 (1):81-93. (http://dj.dancecult.net/index.php/journal/article/viewFile/3/6)

——— 2011. “Festival Fever and International DJs: The Changing Shape of DJ Culture in Sydney’s Commercial Electronic Dance Music Scene”. *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 2 (1): 63-89. (http://dj.dancecult.net/index.php/journal/article/viewFile/45/99)

NIRAS Denmark with F. Holt 2010. *Analyse af danske musikfestivaler* [Analysis of Danish Music Festivals]. Copenhagen: Danish Arts Council.

Peterson, R. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Real, M. 2014. "Do Media Corrupt the Olympics? The Role of Commerce, Commodification, and Television in the Olympic Games." Blog post on the website of Royal Roads University, School of Communication and Culture, 13 February 2014, http://scc.royalroads.ca/do-media-corrupt-olympics-role-commerce-commodification-and-television-olympic-games, accessed 8 January 2015.

Reynolds, S. 2012. "How Rave Music Conquered America." *The Guardian*, 2 August 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2012/aug/02/how-rave-music-conquered-america, accessed 17 June 2015.

Richards, G. and R. Palmer 2010. *Eventful Cities: Cultural Management and Urban Revitalization*. Amsterdam and elsewhere: Elsevier.

Roche, M. 2000. *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Ruggieri, M. 2014. "Economic Impact of TomorrowWorld: $85.1 Million for the State of Georgia." AJC.com, 8 April 2014, http://www.accessatlanta.com/weblogs/atlanta-music-scene/2014/apr/08/economic-impact-tomorrowworld-85-million-state-geo/, accessed 7 January 2015.

Ryan, B. 1992. *Making Capital From Culture: The Corporate Form of Capitalist Cultural Production*. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Sackllah, D. 2015. "Live Nation Takes Bonnarroo: The Ongoing Corporatization of Music Festivals," *Consequence of Sound*, 29 April 2015, http://consequenceofsound.net/2015/04/live-nation-takes-bonnaroo-the-ongoing-corporatization-of-music-festivals/, accessed 17 June 2015.

Shah, N. 2015. "How Music Festivals Pump Billions into the U.S. Economy." *Wall Street Journal*, 31 July 2015, http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2015/07/31/how-music-festivals-pump-billions-into-the-u-s-economy/, accessed 7 January 2015.

Sherburne, P. 2013. "Electric Daisy Chain: Insomniac and Dick Clark Prod. Plan 2014 EDM Awards." Spin, 21 June 2013, http://www.spin.com/articles/electric-daisy-carnival-insomniac-dick-clark-productions-edm-awards-2014/, accessed 19 July 2015.

Slater, D. 1998. *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. Malden, Massachusetts: Polity.

Slater, D. 2011. “Marketing as Monstrosity: The Impossible Place between Culture and Economy.” In: *Inside Marketing: Practices, Ideologies, Devices*, ed. by D. Zwick and J. Cayla, pp. 23-41. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stahl, G., Ed. 2014. *Poor, But Sexy: Reflections on Berlin Scenes*. Peter Lang: Bern.

St John, G. 2009. *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*. London: Equinox.

Waddell, R. 2013. “2013: Most New U.S. Music Festivals Launched in History.” *Billboard.com*, 6 March 2013, http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/1551222/2013-most-new-us-music-festivals-launched-in-history, accessed 6 July 2015.

Webster, E. 2014. *Association of Independent Festivals Six-Year Report*. Association of Independent Festivals, October 2014, http://aiforg.com/wp-content/uploads/AIF-Six-Year-Report-2014.pdf, accessed 27 January 2016.

Zukin, S. 1995. *The Cultures of Cities*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.