Competitive Labour Practice in Creative Economies: Contemporary Contests in Electronic Dance Music Networks

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Contents

Abstract

The rapid development and dissemination of the local DJ performance along with web hosted music production and remix competitions, facilitated by social media- fueled contest platforms, has led to immediate shifts in the creative practices of those involved in fields related to these sites and their offerings. These developments have reoriented certain labour practices into networks of competition, where DJs, producers, and their audiences are asked to engage with these crowdsourced competition platforms and their partners for a chance to sign away their work or play at a club or festival for the promise of exposure if they happen to be 'lucky' or 'talented' enough to win a contest. Often 'winning' these contests is only part of a process of further enmeshing creative workers and their networks in the social media- fueled ecosystems that these websites have set up. In order to begin to analyze these competitive practices I intend to draw a line of recent history and debate to reveal the web of connections that links local Electronic Dance Music (EDM) networks and their engagement with social media- fueled contest websites as well as local promoters of DJ contests and theirs backers. I will reveal the ideologies and discourses that bubble beneath the surface of EDM related networks and practices and how they allow for and rationalize these competitive practices, while at the same time permitting DJs to argue against the selling of their related creative works to the very media companies that own the websites they compete to labour on. In doing so I will study an array of people, practices, and discourses to reveal the rationalization of exploitative competitive labour practices, and call for the development of policies and protections by governments for creative workers who have little to gain and so much to lose by continuing to be involved in these competitions.

Abstrait

Le développement rapide et la diffusion des compétitions de DJ locaux et les plates-formes de concours associées aux médias sociaux ont conduit à des changements immédiats dans les pratiques créatives de ceux associés à ces sites ainsi que dans leurs offres. Ces développements ont réorienté certaines pratiques de travail dans des réseaux de concurrence, où les DJ et leurs publics sont invités à participer à ces concours 'crowdsourced' ainsi qu'avec leurs partenaires afin d'avoir une chance de renoncer à leur travail ou de jouer dans un club ou un festival pour la promesse d'exposition s'il sont assez «chanceux» ou «talentueux» pour gagner un concours. Bien souvent, «gagner» ces concours n'est qu'une partie d'un processus d'enferrement des travailleurs créatifs et de leurs réseaux dans les ecosystemes alimentés par les réseaux sociaux mis en place par ces sites internet. Pour commencer à analyser ces pratiques concurrentielles, j'ai l'intention de mettre en relations l'histoire contemporaine et des débats récents pour révéler le réseau de connexions qui relient les réseaux d'Electronic Dance Music (EDM) locaux aux sites web de concours alimentés par les médias sociaux ainsi qu'aux promoteurs locaux de concours DJ et leurs bailleurs. Afin de trouver ces liens, j'ai l'intention de «jouer à chat» avec les DJ et leurs réseaux. Je mettrai en lumières les idéologies et discours qui sous-tendent les réseaux et les pratiques liées à l'EDM et comment ils permettent de rationaliser et ces pratiques concurrentielles, tout en permettant en même temps aux DJs de s'opposer à la vente de leurs œuvres créatrices connexes aux médias propriétaires des sites sur lesquels les DJs luttent pour participer. Ce faisant, je vais étudier une série de personnes, d pratiques et de discours, afin de révéler la rationalisation des pratiques de travail concurrentielles d'exploitation, tout en lançant un appel au développement de politiques et de mesures de protection gouvernement pour les créateurs qui ont peu à gagner et beaucoup à perdre par continuer à participer à ces compétitions.

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Chapter 1: Theory and Methodology

"The DJ world is so deeply uncool, so radically unsophisticated, so mind-blowingly commercial, so thoroughly un-revolutionary, yet I'm still out there DJing. I love it, and have made my peace with it."[1]

– Tiga – Disc Jockey, Producer, and Owner of Turbo Recordings.

Introduction

At the heart of many establishments that have opened as part of the evolution of the creative city in the last decade are Disc Jockeys (DJs) and electronic music producers, who often provide the soundtrack for these venues and large outdoor festivals through their live performance of DJ related technologies (turntables, mixers, software, and midi controllers) or through satellite or internet audio systems that blast live or recorded mixes from clubs in Ibiza to London or offices in Berlin and Chicago. The rise of DJs and producers as entertainers is the result of a complex history of practices and technologically related developments, evolutions in nighttime venue and club business models, as well as changes to government policies surrounding creative economies at all levels. The outcome is a network of people, technologies, locations, regulations, and practices acting upon each other in a web of relations that has come to dominate many creative economies, in what is generally referred to as Club or Electronic Dance Music (EDM) culture.[2]

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[1] Tiga, "My 2013: Tiga," Vice Media Inc., accessed December 22,2013, http://thump.vice.com/en_uk/words/my-2013-tiga.

[2] Though the term can be problematic in that not all nightlife involving DJs and producers is necessarily electronic dance it has become a widely used term for recent "DJ studies" scholarship.

In the development of EDM related discourse, the figure of the Disc Jockey and her role in the creative economy have been a central part of these discussions. Bill Herman notes, "the DJ has ascended to be seen, and paid, as a superstar of the music industry."[3] The DJ is now a fixture in popular music production and dissemination, as well as the central figure in many performance venues, ranging from clubs to weddings to massive outdoor festivals. Furthermore, the joining of EDM producers and popular music artists has seen a major move toward EDM-based music gaining major radio airplay. All of these factors have resulted in DJs and producers occupying more space in the popular imagination and subsequent rise of the notion that "everyone is a DJ." In the last five years there has also been a clear shift in the study of EDM cultures and associated scholarly works away from seeing DJing as a purely club-based phenomenon, which has included the recognition of evolution in creative practices related to digital technologies for performance, music gathering, and networking.

Many have sought to find a definition through examining evolutions in creative practice, while others have sought to analyze emerging and evolving scenes and networks close up, through interview and ethnography. Simon Reynolds has noted that "historical thinking has grown foreign to the way they (young DJs) relate to music. The musical past has become spatialized."[4] He acknowledges that the web is affecting major changes on the current historical narrative; "similar to the emergence of merchant trade and early capitalism in parallel with a waning feudalism, a new system, fully integrated with the web,

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[3] Bill Herman, "Scratching out Authorship: Representations of the Electronic Music Dj at the Turn of the 21st Century," *Popular Communication* 4, no. 1 (2006).
[4] Simon Reynolds, "The History of Our World: The Hardcore Continuum Debate," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 1, no. 2 (2010): 73.

eclipses the older one."[5] The introduction of social media platforms, including Beatport.com, Mixcrate.com, Soundcloud.com, and Mixcloud.com, either implicitly or explicitly related to DJ and producer practice have had a profound impact on how EDM networks operate both locally and globally.

Ed Montano analyzes the trend toward digital performance technologies and argues that these developments are leading to a major break from old ideas of DJing: "it would seem that there needs to be a redefinition of the concept of DJing, and a reframing of the skills and abilities seen as being essential to DJ practice."[6] Bernardo Alexander Attias, in "Meditations on the Death of Vinyl, " notes "the DJ is an interpreter of the past, and when s/he works with vinyl recordings, s/he works with literal reproductions of past events."[7] On the other hand, "one can just as easily read digital technology not as the "death of vinyl" but rather as liberation from the physical limitations of the natural world. This liberation allows for the manipulation of sound in ways that simply aren't possible with vinyl."[8] Attias cautions scholars to investigate the possibilities of new technologies without taking sides in the analogue versus digital divide. Digital media and formats have opened up a range of possibilities for DJ and producer practice. The large availability of digital music along with the introduction of robust software suites for production and mixing has opened up a range of possibilities for amateur and professional DJs.

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[5] Ibid., 71.
[6] Ed Montano, "How Do You Know He's Not Playing Pac-Man While He's Supposed to Be Djing?': Technology, Formats and the Digital Future of Dj Culture," *Popular Music* 29, no. 3 (2010): 397.
[7] Bernardo Alexander Attias, "Meditations on the Death of Vinyl," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 3, no. 1 (2011).
[8] Ibid.

Other scholars have looked at evolutions in music making and distribution practices in relation to emerging digital production technologies. Hans Terpstra used drum 'n bass as case study to show that "independent digital music labels on the Internet can fulfill an essential role in gatekeeping through the current saturation of available music online."[9] Rebekah Farrugia argues "digital media technologies have created new distribution networks enabling artists to bypass traditional record labels – and the politics implicit in these institutions – and independently release their music into the ether."[10] Hillegonda C. Rietveld observes the turn to digital distributors for music by DJs and producers means they often "operate within a dynamic grey economy; some aspects legal and some others showing degrees of illegality or civil disobedience."[11]

Through these examples among many other it is clear the shift to digital media and formats by DJs has been well documented in scholarship and the popular press. My concern is how these shifts have affected DJ practice in relation to structures of power and labour, which are underrepresented in these studies.[12] While there are many sites of contemporary DJ and producer practice available for analysis, the introduction and evolution of local DJ competitions along with web based social media- driven music remix

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[9] H. Terpstra, "Transforming the Jungle: The Transition to Digital Labels in the World of Drum 'N Bass" (University of Amsterdam, 2011), 2.
[10] Rebekah Farrugia, ""Let's Have at It!": Conversations with Edm Producers Kate Simko and Dj Denise," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 1, no. 2 (2010): 91.
[11] Hillegonda C. Rietveld, "Disco's Revenge: House Music's Nomadic Memory," ibid.2 (2011): 10.
[12] Montano, "How Do You Know He's Not Playing Pac-Man While He's Supposed to Be Djing?': Technology, Formats and the Digital Future of Dj Culture."; Attias, "Meditations on the Death of Vinyl."; Terpstra, "Transforming the Jungle: The Transition to Digital Labels in the World of Drum 'N Bass."; Farrugia, ""Let's Have at It!": Conversations with Edm Producers Kate Simko and Dj Denise."; tobias c. van Veen and Bernardo Alexander Attias, "Off the Record: Turntablism and Controllerism in the 21st Century, (Part 1)," ibid.3, no. 1 (2011); "Off the Record: Turntablism and Controllerism in the 21st Century (Part 2)," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 4, no. 1 (2012); Simon Reynolds, "The History of Our World: The Hardcore Continuum Debate," ibid.1, no. 2 (2010). Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*, Revised ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

and production contests facilitated by creative contest platforms will be the focus of my research. Websites including Indaba Music, Genero.tv, Talenthouse.com, along with Beatport Play all aim to engage creative communities in competition for opportunities to collaborate with major artists and brands and win prizes or employment. These platforms are fueled by the networks of connections enabled through the highly developed social media APIs and protocols provided by Facebook, amongst others.[13] Competitions appearing on these sites range from opportunities to make official videos for major artists, including Moby, Afrojack, and the Flaming Lips, to an opportunity to photograph for the Thomson Reuters Foundation and Nokia, or remix a track for Tegan & Sara to be released by Warner music.[14] While these sites continue to invite a wide range of creative workers to submit to various contests, my focus here is on the EDM related contests offered by these sites. These contests aim to engage DJ and producer networks in regular competitions to rework provided audio samples or stems with the promise that the winner will be able gain a release of their remix on the contest provider's label and a chance to perform.[15]

Other music focused social media platforms that regularly host creative contests, including Wavo.me, Mixcrate.com, and Mixcloud.com, ask DJs to submit mixes, using already produced and released music, often promising their contest platform will help find the next superstar DJ. These platforms often service local clubs and festivals in providing

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[13] Facebook Connect was launched in 2008 and was quickly adopted by thousands of websites to provide a login service that could be used to easily connect to other websites using Facebook credentials. Graham Jefferson, "Facebook Connect Makes Signing into Your Sites Fast," *USA TODAY*, 2009 Apr 15 2009.
[14] Genero, "Moby Make the Official Video for Almost Home," Genero.tv, accessed Aug 10,2013, http://genero.tv/almosthome/. Talenthouse, "Photograph for the Thomson Reuters Foundation & Nokia Photo Award," Talenthouse accessed August 15,2013, http://www.talenthouse.com/photograph-for-thomson-reuters-foundation-and-click-4-change. Beatport, "Tegan & Sara Closer Remix Contest," Beatport, accessed Dec 10,2013, http://play.beatport.com/contests/tegan-sara-closer/.
[15] Stems distributed in contests are signature electronic samples from the original track made available for download in sample packs.

platforms for venues to host and grow contests and harvest social media communication related to the events. The rapid adoption and expansion of creative contests by local venues, festivals, and EDM artists, along with major corporations, including industry-related marketers and social media portals, has had a profound impact on how DJ labour is perceived and engaged with both inside and outside EDM networks.

The engagement of DJs and producers on social media fueled competition platforms has grown out of the many crises creatives in EDM networks have had to confront in their everyday practice. Traditional distinctions between the performative practice of Djing and the activities of bedroom or studio production have blurred with the rapid adoption of DVS and MIDI based performance and production equipment that encourages live production and remix.[16] While Djing and music production are in many ways distinct practices, club owners and promoters often expect DJs to produce as a way of promoting their live performances, while EDM producers are expected to be competent DJs as their main access to stable income is through touring clubs and festivals as performers. Competition platforms have accelerated the merging of production and DJ practices, often offering performance based rewards for competition winners. Success as a producer on these platforms is associated with becoming the next "superstar DJ," while DJs are encouraged to produce as a way of gaining access to exciting performances offered by the contests. What matters in contemporary creative networks is that contemporary DJs and producers are often engaged in competition platforms either as a way of gaining exposure for their

[16] DVS stands for Digital Vinyl System. Major players in the DVS market are Serato, with their Rane hardware based Scratch live software, and Native Instruments, with the Traktor hardware and software solutions. Many competitors sell a range of midi solutions, ranging from small controllers that compliment DVS systems to entire performance setups in a box. Midi, or Musical Instrument Digital Interface is a protocol that allows electronic music instruments and computers to communicate with each other.

original music productions or remixes or for promoting their roles as performers in local scenes. [17]

While performance-based competitions such as Battle of the Bands, Star Search and American Idol are not new to EDM– DJ competitions or 'battles' between Jamaican Sound Systems stretch as far back as the 1950s – the contemporary mode of DJ contests have produced and reflected a new form of work that asks DJs to continually 'labour to compete.'[18] These competitions consume more and more available hours of venue performance time while also asking DJs to compete to labour for a fraction of what is available as remuneration for a traditional DJ job. These nighttime venues have moved to exploit the relatively high number of DJs willing to compete in contests by selling the notion that competing is one of the few ways to gain exposure, while the venues also benefit from a competition product they can promote and exploit, also ensuring that competing DJs conform to a relatively rigid set of social and technological expectations. Frequent and widespread DJ competitions are supplied by large reservoirs of free labour. Venues then sell these event products back to the DJs and their audiences, expecting that their networks will buy into a product that includes their DJ friends. While a DJ may benefit in some ways from the chance to perform or practice in various nighttime venues, the costs and expectations of these contests, especially when multiplied by the multiple contestants involved, often far exceed the value gained by DJs as individuals or as a whole. With

[17] There is a great deal of overlap between what is traditionally defined as a DJ and what has been defined as a producer. For the purposes of examining competition platforms in relation to both DJs and producers I will often conflate their roles in EDM as it is their competitive practice in relation to dance that matters, not their distinct creative practice.

[18] Carl Stanley, "Looking Back at Jamaica's Sound System History," Louder Than War, accessed June 29,2014, http://louderthanwar.com/looking-back-jamaicas-sound-system-history/. See also Norman C Stolzoff, "Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 14, no. 2 (2002)., Chris Salewicz and Adrian Boot, *Reggae Explosion: The Story of Jamaican Music* (New York: Abrams, 2001).

relatively little to gain by individual DJs from competition to competition, event to event, or venue to venue, these practices ensures that a stable supply of regenerating contesting labour will be available for subsequent events, which often ask the same workers to compete once more for a chance to show their 'unique' talent.

Despite the presence of these contests in creative economies across the globe it is difficult to arrange the issues described above into a coherent analysis of exploitation due to the scattered and often ill-defined actors involved in these networks. Often DJ labour is diffuse and dispersed across wide oceans of urban space, as the scattered nature of their work in multiple venues or online has in many ways swept traditional spaces of meeting and organizing from under them.[19] DJs must frequently supplement their performance incomes with secondary employment, making the industry difficult to analyze. Furthermore, nighttime industries are in their very constitution fly-by-night, with venues often occupying spaces for short periods of time before they are repurposed into more legitimate industries, meaning that a thriving business and its resulting income reservoirs often disappear overnight.

In order to begin to analyze these competitive practices I intend to draw a line within recent history and debate to reveal the web of connections that link local EDM networks and their engagement with social media- fueled contest websites as well as local promoters of DJ contests and their backers. In order to find these connections I intend to 'play tag' with DJs and their networks. Specifically, I will unpack and examine the call for

[19] Reynolds, "The History of Our World: The Hardcore Continuum Debate." Reynolds has identified many of these changes.

#support that is involved in so much of socially-networked EDM communication.[20] By following the tags in both a real and virtual sense I will begin to reveal the ideologies and discourses that bubble beneath the surface of EDM-related networks and practices and how they allow for and rationalize these competitive practices, while at the same time permitting DJs to argue against the selling of their related creative works to the very media companies that own the websites on which they compete to labour. In doing so I will study an array of people, practices, and discourses to reveal the rationalization of exploitative competitive labour practices, and call for the development of policies and protections by governments for creative workers who have little to gain and so much to lose by continuing to be involved in these competitions.

Competition Platforms

In mid-2006, Jeff Howe, writing for *Wired*, coined the term crowdsourcing as a way of describing the rise of web-based practices in the early-2000s whereby corporations and non-profits began to outsource labour to the open market (the crowd) in hopes of tapping a vast network of talent and ingenuity to provide solutions to their organizational problems.[21] Early crowdsourcing initiatives, identified by Howe and others, included iStockphoto: a stock photography company that allowed submissions from any photographer through their web portal, Threadless: a company that opened up t-shirt

[20] In adding the hastag (#) to support I am invoking a primary tool of information linking and cross referencing operating in social networking environments. Miles Efron, "Hashtag Retrieval in a Microblogging Environment" (paper presented at the Special Interest Group on Information Retrieval, 2010). Lei Yang et al., "We Know What@ You# Tag: Does the Dual Role Affect Hashtag Adoption?" (paper presented at the International conference on World Wide Web, 2012).
[21] Jeff Howe, "The Rise of Crowdsourcing," *Wired magazine*2006.

design to the crowd and manufactured the results, and InnoCentive: a firm that presented R&D problems from major companies to the crowd and rewarded creative solutions.[22]

After Howe coined the phrase many writers and scholars rushed to define the terms of crowdsourcing and reveal the vast networks of people, and organizations, and technologies participating on these platforms.[23] Daren C. Brabham, a scholar who has presented many case studies of crowdsourcing platforms, defined the practice as one where "a company posts a problem online, a vast number of individuals offer solutions to the problem, the winning ideas are awarded some form of a bounty, and the company mass produces the idea for its own gain.[24] Brabham has argued that crowdsourcing "is a model capable of aggregating talent, leveraging ingenuity, while reducing the costs and time formerly needed to solve problems.[25] Eric Schenk and Claude Guittard similarly have described crowdsourcing as a process where "individuals may work simultaneously on a given project, the client firm will eventually choose the outcome that best meets its needs."[26] Further, "the client firm makes an ex post selection of its supplier in function of its offer. Therefore, eventual contract setting between the client firm and its supplier takes place only ex post. Roughly speaking, the client firm only pays for products or services that meet its expectations."[27]

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[22] Daren C Brabham, "Crowdsourcing as a Model for Problem Solving an Introduction and Cases," *Convergence: the international journal of research into new media technologies* 14, no. 1 (2008). *Crowdsourcing* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013).
[23] "Crowdsourcing as a Model for Problem Solving an Introduction and Cases." Eric Schenk and Claude Guittard, "Towards a Characterization of Crowdsourcing Practices," *Journal of Innovation Economics & Management*, no. 1 (2011).
[24] Brabham, "Crowdsourcing as a Model for Problem Solving an Introduction and Cases," 76.
[25] Ibid., 87.
[26] Schenk and Guittard, "Towards a Characterization of Crowdsourcing Practices," 3.
[27] Ibid.

As crowdsourcing platforms evolved along with social media websites, further research began to define and separate various crowdsourcing practices on the web.[28] Crowdsourcing opportunities emerged that integrated social media APIs as well as social media associated practices including voting, liking, and sharing to promote their projects to even larger audiences. These creative platforms began to push the boundaries of traditional crowdsourcing applications that Howe and others had argued required the fabrication and sale of a product or an idea at the end.[29] Crowdsourcing websites also came online that worked beyond the production logic of Threadless or Wilogo (a graphic design crowdsourcing site) that Schenk and Guittard described as an evolution of an offline marketing mode "into a major way of accessing the creativity of individuals.[30] A further evolution in crowdsourcing practice grew out of these websites in the late 2000s when a number of creative competition platforms emerged that centered their businesses on the use of social media to leverage creatives in competition to produce new works of art or culture, generally for the benefit of the platforms offering the competitions and their brand partners.

Platforms, including Talenthouse.com, Indaba Music, play.beatport.com, Genero.tv, along with Wavo.me, Blend.io and many others, matched established crowdsourcing practices of providing a platform for forming a crowd to solve creative problems, while also

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[28] Kyumin Lee, Prithivi Tamilarasan, and James Caverlee, "Crowdturfers, Campaigns, and Social Media: Tracking and Revealing Crowdsourced Manipulation of Social Media" (paper presented at the The International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media, 2013). Schenk and Guittard, "Towards a Characterization of Crowdsourcing Practices." Daren C Brabham, "A Model for Leveraging Online Communities," *The participatory cultures handbook* 120 (2010).

[29] Jeff Howe, June 12, 2006, http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com/cs/2006/06/customermade_th.html. Brabham, "Crowdsourcing as a Model for Problem Solving an Introduction and Cases," 76. How said product, Brabham has included ideas.

[30] Schenk and Guittard, "Towards a Characterization of Crowdsourcing Practices," 10.

pushing the undercurrent of competition that drove most crowdsourcing initiatives to the forefront. They did this by encouraging the crowd's crowd to interact with their websites through social media by allowing the sharing, liking, and voting of these contests by anyone who wished to participate. While creative crowdsourcing was nothing new and creative contests were attempted in the early days of web-based crowdsourcing, these companies developed neutral platforms that did not aim to solve significant problems. Instead the sites offered creative competitions for partner corporations and their marketers in the hopes of engaging a crowd of emerging artists and their audiences to produce creativity under the promise of prizes and exposure.[31] What these platforms allowed was for a company, brand, filmmaker, musician, or music label, to approach the crowdsourcing company and co-design a contest to 'solve' a creative problem in service of providing exposure for the brand partner through designing a contest that would engage a creative audience and their peers to provide the solution. By providing the solution the crowdsourcing platforms would also help their partner brands achieve a wider reach via social media websites by transmitting competitions and integrating the submission, voting, and judging processes across major social media websites, which would produce not only crowdsourced creativity but a deeper engagement between companies and creative networks with every like, share, or vote.

How these crowdsourced completion platforms have reoriented creative labour practices in EDM networks is the focus of my research. Contemporary DJs and producers are continually asked to engage with various creative contest platforms and their

[31] An early failed example was a Chevy marketing campaign. Julie Bosman, "Chevy Tries a Write-Your-Own-Ad Approach, and the Potshots Fly," *New York Times* 2006.

stakeholders as a significant part of their day to day practice. DJs or producers looking for work are often required to create mixes or produce new EDM tracks, which are then uploaded to these platforms as a showcase of their 'unique' talent. These practitioners are then asked and often required to pass their creativity through their socially networked connections to gain likes or votes, which directly impact their chances of winning contests and finding work either as local DJs or as EDM producers. As I will explore, creatives caught up in contemporary competitive practice on social media platforms are participating in new forms of creative labour practice that demand a great deal of their free labour, along with the work of their peers and audiences, in order to find even the most basic opportunities in their field of practice. At the same time, these creative platforms are engaging major EDM holding companies, labels, clubs, and festivals in the growing use of these practices, ensuring DJs and producers will be asked to compete on these platforms as a core part of their practice for some time to come.

Labour Theory

The rise of competitive practice in creative networks is a result of evolutions in technological and work-related practices that have occurred with the liberalization of labour in post-Fordist economies. While commonly promoted first as artists and performers in most popular rhetoric and scholarship, DJs are nonetheless still working people. Andrew Ross previously made the connection between the evolution of the DJ and her connection to labour arguing that, "there was no question in their minds that owners of live venues (beginning in the 1980s) welcomed and encouraged a DJ-based economy of pre-recordings or musical acts because it cut their overheads and labor costs by

eliminating drummers, keyboard players, guitarists, and vocalists. Killing off live music may have been sold to fans as a worthy crusade against the pretensions to authenticity of the rock aristocracy, but it was also a serious labour problem."[32] An examination of specific sites of DJ labour and conflict in creative economies should lend itself to a better understanding of the precaritization of work the last many years.

Ross has further observed that the "lopsided foot of neoliberalism" has invited a "condition of social and economic insecurity associated with post-Fordist employment and neoliberal governance, which not only gives employers leeway to hire and fire workers at will, but also glorifies part-time contingent work as 'free agency,' liberated from the stifling constraints of contractual regulations."[33] Angela McRobbie argues, "the flamboyantly auteur relation to creative work that has long been the mark of being a writer, artist, film director or fashion designer is now being extended to much wider section of a highly 'individuated' workforce."[34] Free agency and individuation have rolled into notions of Me Inc. or what Alison Hearn observes is "the 'reflexive project of the self' [which] has become an explicit form of labour under post-Fordist capital in the form of 'self-branding'."[35] The branded self is "a distinct kind of labour; involving an outer-directed process of highly

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[32] Andrew Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 180.
[33] Ibid., 40. Here I am also invoking discourses of precarity. Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: A&C Black, 2011).
[34] Angela McRobbie, "Clubs to Companies: Notes on the Decline of Political Culture in Speeded up Creative Worlds," *Cultural studies* 16, no. 4 (2002): 517.
[35] Alison Hearn, "Meat, Mask, Burdenprobing the Contours of the Brandedself," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8, no. 2 (2008): 198.

stylized self-construction, directly tied to the promotional mechanisms of the post-Fordist market."[36]

Notions of self-branding are tied to the rise of the "ordinary celebrity;" what Joshusa Gamson observes is recognition of a "heightened consciousness of everyday life as a public performance."[37] Exhibits of ordinary celebrity can be found in all forms of media from reality to talent shows, such as American Idol and The Voice, along with the introduction of a web generated "bottom- up, do-it-yourself celebrity production process."[38] Matt Stahl, in analyzing American Idol in relation to recording artists and labour has observed that "reality TV is playing cultural handmaiden to a systematic reconfiguration of social, economic, and political institutions under the banner of neoliberalism."[39] Furthermore, Alison Hearn argues these contests are "a representational expression of, and ideological legitimation for television's economic rationalizations and post-Fordist capital's desire to externalize its labour costs."[40] The development of web platforms is a further development of the externalization of cost by requiring participants to fund their creative projects in the hopes that they will win the contest and the attached prizes, which are often lump sum payments or vague promises of 'exposure.'

Many EDM scholars have researched and observed how neoliberal sensibilities of the branded self, micro-celebrity, and the overlap of work and leisure operate in dance

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[36] Ibid., 201.
[37] Joshua Gamson, "The Unwatched Life Is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture," *PMLA* 126, no. 4 (2011): 1068.
[38] Ibid., 1065.
[39] Matt Stahl, *Unfree Masters: Recording Artists and the Politics of Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 40.
[40] Alison Hearn, "Reality Television, the Hills and the Limits of the Immaterial Labour Thesis," *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 8, no. 1 (2010): 66. Drawn from Stahl, *Unfree Masters: Recording Artists and the Politics of Work*, 42.

culture. Tobias C. Van Veen has summarized that scholars "saw in acid house and rave culture not only its complicity with entrepreneurial capitalism and the neoliberalisation of work, but its influence upon the 'unstable' labour of the 'new culture industries', the 'transferrable skills' of rave culture – the multi-faceted events producer, designer, producer, DJ – have popularized the insecurity of precarious labour."[41] Furthermore, there is a spirit of entrepreneurialism in EDM, "which has led many practitioners to start their own businesses and hence become neoliberal champions (or, if not champions, then at least real world embodiments) of the merits of competition and wealth accumulation." [42]

The most current and broadly researched study on EDM networks and labour in recent years is Rosa Reitsamer's empirical research of DJs in Vienna, Austria in the late 2000s.[43] Reitsamer's study encapsulated many of the observations of issues around the neoliberalisation of creative labour in relation to EDM networks and the beginnings of social media practices that would soon be at the heart of creative work. In the study Reitsamer notes that "changing relations between culture and society, and between art and money, associated with neoliberal economics and post-Fordist models of industry increasingly force cultural producers to adopt an entrepreneurial position," a position "reflected in the self-(re)presentations of the DJs."[44] In order to analyze these changing relations of EDM practice Reitsamer invokes Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural fields, and

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[41] tobias c. van Veen, "Technics, Precarity and Exodus in Rave Culture," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 1, no. 2 (2010): 30. He quotes heavily from Angela McRobbie. McRobbie, "Clubs to Companies: Notes on the Decline of Political Culture in Speeded up Creative Worlds." Van Veen seems to broadly use rave culture in replacement of EDM.
[42] Alistair Fraser, "The Spaces, Politics, and Cultural Economies of Electronic Dance Music," *Geography Compass* 6, no. 8 (2012): 503.
[43] Rosa Reitsamer, "The Diy Careers of Techno and Drum 'N' Bass Djs in Vienna," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 3, no. 1 (2011). Reitsamer uses Techno in her piece to describe more popular forms of EDM.
[44] Ibid., 29.

analyzes DJ labour in relation to notions of *habitus* (which she notes as Me Inc.) and *illusio*, while also drawing upon Andreas Wittel's theory of Network Sociality to describe the "on- and off-line networking practices aimed at producing intensive, short-term relationships, along with the blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure and between friends and colleagues."[45]

For Reitsamer, the DJs operate with art and money in opposition, "which manifests itself in the disavowal of economics and the accumulation of cultural and symbolic capital."[46] She sees DJs as having been forced to adopt an entrepreneurial position which "marks a break with anti-commercial notions of creative activities."[47] In invoking Bordieu's concept of *Illusio*, Reitsamer observes that "DJ's faith in the 'game' of recognition… puts the DJs in competition with one another in the struggle for a legitimate position in the music scenes."[48] While acknowledging that, for Bordieu, *Illusio* was characterized by economic disinterest, Reitsamer posited that DJs none the less saw creative success as a path to economic success, which was exhibited in the work dedicated to original music productions, remixing, and label creation amongst the DJs she interviewed.[49]

Here it is important to acknowledge and attempt to account for the lineage of field studies associated with Pierre Bourdieu's sociology, modified by Sara Thornton in her book *Club Cultures* where she provided an influential analysis of youth club scenes and the

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[45] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). Andreas Wittel, "Toward a Network Sociality," *Theory, culture & society* 18, no. 6 (2001). Reitsamer, "The Diy Careers of Techno and Drum 'N' Bass Djs in Vienna," 36.
[46] "The Diy Careers of Techno and Drum 'N' Bass Djs in Vienna," 29.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 38.
[49] Ibid.

operation of subcultural capital within them.[50] In the book Thornton investigated the "cultural logics and socio-economic roots" or distinctions that club cultures embraced in developing "their own hierarchies of what (was) authentic and legitimate in popular culture."[51] Citing Bourdieu, Thornton argues "cultural capital is the linchpin of a system of distinction in which cultural hierarchies correspond to social ones and people's tastes are predominantly a marker of class."[52] Thornton further claims that creatives in dance cultures "all make a living from their subcultural capital. Moreover, within club cultures (DJs and organizers) often enjoy a lot of respect not only because of their high volume of subcultural capital, but also from their role in defining and creating it."[53]

However, in investigating modern DJ contests it is necessary to move beyond Thornton's distinctions between cultural and subcultural. DJs no longer make a living from subcultural capital; they are no longer "masters of the scene."[54] Instead DJs have found themselves in subservience to club organizers and promoters (as Thornton has cautioned), as well as to social media platforms, production and performance technologies that now define their practice. Local DJs and their peers are left to scrounge for scraps of recognition and tailings of gainful employment while publically traded corporations, along with the clubs and festivals they own and operate, gain significant revenues of the back of local creative labour and social media- fueled communication. Instead of enlarging some notion

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[50] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).
[51] Ibid., 3.
[52] Ibid., 10.
[53] Ibid., 12.
[54] Ibid.

of cultural status changes in creative practice among DJs and producers have further marginalized their status and ability to gain meaningful incomes in creative economies.

Social Networks and Discourse

Creatives operate in networks of entrepreneurial and social activity, where no single website or forum is the central location of exchange, yet in engaging with a range of platforms at once as part of their practice results in a bringing together of ideas and enrolment in legitimating contemporary creative practices. These networks work to legitimize broader ideas of artistic practice, inviting creatives and their networks, through social media APIs and hashtags, to participate. Acknowledging that competition platforms, social media website, local bars and clubs, along with various other corporations and marketers act to bring together DJ and producer networks to legitimize their practice, through socially networked- communication, opens up a way to consider how those exchanges enshrine and perpetuate exploitative labour practices in contemporary creative economies.

These creative networks or forums both encourage and legitimize positive discourses contemporary competitive practice among creatives while also masking the economic exchanges these members are implicated in through their participation.[55] They have propelled the continued idea amongst DJs and their networks that EDM culture operates largely outside of monetized practices, through a vocabulary of charity and #support. By including the hashtag (#) in support I am looking to recall and trace the

[55] Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). While I am not explicitly employing an actor network analysis, Fred Turner's work was influential in investigating contemporary EDM networks.

networks of creatives involved in competitive practice in DJ networks on social media, while also inviting consideration of the wide range of related scholarship on social media and labour that has been written in response to the rapid proliferation of the "social factory," an autonomist term describing a world where labour is "deterritorialised, dispersed and decentralised so that 'the whole society is placed at the disposal of profit.'"[56] Sarah Banet-Weiser has observed that "social media, marketers increasingly assume (and exploit) the existence of consumers' dialogic relationship with cultural products and emphasize an affective exchange between corporations and consumers. As a relationship based on exchange (even if this is an unequal exchange), branding cannot be explained as commodification or as the mere incorporation of cultural spheres of life by advanced capitalism."[57] For Rob Horning, a critic of the rapid proliferation of "socialised worker" on the web, social media "have furthered consumerism's ameliorating mission" by tempering "the anonymity and anomie that consumerism's mass markets tend to impose by concretely attaching our identity to what we consume."[58] He sees social media as sites where "consumerist satisfactions are captured and fed back into the production cycle as a component of the manufacturing process, regulating supply and furnishing innovation ideas."[59] Here Horning invokes the philosophy of Maurizio Lazzarato and his theorizing of productive communication and immaterial labour where "capitalism seeks to involve even

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[56] Mario Tronti, "Workers and Capital," *Telos* 1972, no. 14 (1972). Antonio Negri and James Newell, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 79. Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt, "In the Social Factory?: Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work," *Theory, culture & society* 25, no. 7-8 (2008): 7.
[57] Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 8.
[58] Rob Horning, "Social Media, Social Factory," *The New Inquiry*2011.
[59] Ibid.

the worker's personality and subjectivity within the production of value."[60] Lazzarto views "capital as wanting "a situation where command resides within the subject him- or herself, and within the communicative process."[61] For Horning and others, the social factory is where every member of a social network manages Me Inc. and produces affects that are traded as brands on the web market.

Ruth Page has examined the role of hashtags and self-branding on social media, arguing that participation online "is neither neutral, nor is it distributed evenly."[62] Participation "is constrained by market forces and hierarchies of power that interweave offline and online contexts. Far from abandoning the neo-liberal capitalism that shaped e-commerce prior to the dot.com crisis in the early 1990s, interactions in social media contexts may enable self-promotion strategies that result in social or economic gain."[63] According to Page, participation on social media platforms are "forms of labour undertaken by both elite and ordinary persons in order to achieve the visibility and influence deemed necessary to achieve status or fame in the offline world."[64] For Page these discourses are themselves valuable as 'searchable talk,' which "is exploited as a resource used by marketing and advertising companies."[65] The key point revealed in Page's research into hashtags is that social media communication largely benefits major celebrities and brands that broadcast their message to receptive audiences, whereas individuals are left to

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[60] Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo; Hardt Virno, Michael (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 135.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ruth Page, "The Linguistics of Self-Branding and Micro-Celebrity in Twitter: The Role of Hashtags," *Discourse & Communication* 6, no. 2 (2012): 181,82.
[63] Ibid., 182.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid. Searchable Talk is attributed to: Michele Zappavigna, "Ambient Affiliation: A Linguistic Perspective on Twitter," *New Media & Society* 13, no. 5 (2011).

promote their identity through affiliation with these established brands.[66] Social media then reinforces existing discourses and power relations that operate offline, while opening up new forms of exploitation through the broadcasting of popular people and brands by ordinary users attempting to individuate their micro-brand online.

Jodi Dean has broadly theorized about what she calls "communicative capitalism" and social networks and their impacts, arguing they operate under the value of abundance where messages are "simply part of a circulating data stream."[67] For Dean "the use value of a message is less important than its exchange value, its contribution to a larger pool, flow, or circulation of content."[68] Dean invokes Gamson's research on Gay Media consolidation in the 2000s to show how enthusiast media has shifted "from organizations answering at least partly to geographical and political communities into businesses answering primarily to advertisers and investors," as corporations identified and exploited the exchange value of those networks "to deliver a market share to corporations."[69] Gamson has observed that for corporations trying to profit off media consolidation and social movement activities "serving the community and penetrating the market are one and the same."[70] Since DJs are representative of the new class of creative entrepreneurs operating in social media as spaces of both work and play, they arguably benefit a great deal from the value of the exchanges of messages and affects in the networks of communication. As I will trace further,

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[66] Page, "The Linguistics of Self-Branding and Micro-Celebrity in Twitter: The Role of Hashtags," 198.
[67] Jodi Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics," in *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*, ed. M. Boler (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 107.
[68] Ibid., 108.
[69] Joshua Gamson, "Gay Media, Inc.: Media Structures, the New Gay Conglomerates, and Collective Sexual Identities," *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice. New York: Routledge* (2003): 259. Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics," 112.
[70] Gamson, "Gay Media, Inc.: Media Structures, the New Gay Conglomerates, and Collective Sexual Identities," 265.

rather than seeing and implicating themselves in these capital exchanges DJs and their networked communications are exploited within competitive networks through the masking of market forces at work in their interactions.

Rhetoric and Ideology

Research into how the rhetoric of entertainers and artists is underpinned by certain ideologies has revealed that many working in creative networks are reluctant to implicate themselves in market practices despite their explicit association with capital in their day-to-day activities. In a revealing study of local rock musicians in the late 1980s, Stephen B. Groce employed qualitative sociology to examine how the actors had "developed a complex ideology to rationalize and justify what they [were] doing."[71] In defining ideology as a set of "interdependent ideas, held by a social group…, which reflects, rationalizes and defends its particular social, moral..., political and economic institutional interests and commitments," Groce saw these local performers as operating in situations where they have little to no control so they found "a system of definitions and assumptions which organize lived experience."[72] He summarized that "in addition to providing individual musicians with a system of definitions and assumptions which organize lived experience, ideologies function to organize and give meaning to collective social experience as well."[73]

Groce's study divided rock musicians into two categories: that of original musicians, who make and perform their own music, and copy musicians, who performed other

[71] Stephen B Groce, "Occupational Rhetoric and Ideology: A Comparison of Copy and Original Music Performers," *Qualitative Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1989): 405-06.
[72] Ibid., 393-94,406.
[73] Ibid., 407.

people's work. Through interview it was revealed that the copy musicians were entertainer-oriented. As entertainers they were practical about their role as performers in clubs, expecting economic reward, espousing technical competence, and expressing an audience orientation. In other words they saw their role as workers, who show up to do their work at a club with an orientation to customer satisfaction and an expectation of appropriate compensation. The original musicians were far less willing to classify their role in relation to performance and their music, repeatedly explaining that the creative process was more important than live performance or generating income. In rationalizing their precarious positions as local original rock musicians original musicians turned their attention toward copy musicians to criticize and put them down for having 'sold out,' rather than examining their role within structures of popular music over which they have little control.[74]

The contemporary DJ is asked to be at once both an entertainer and artist. These dual demands placed by their networks of relations in EDM confuse and conflate these traditional entertainer/artist distinctions. In practically and rhetorically merging these practices DJs have attempted to privilege their role as artists over their function as entertainers. Returning to Rosa Reitsamer and her study of Vienna DJs, she argues there is an erosion of the distinction between art and money as DJs increasingly "defined themselves as 'avant-garde,' music producers and club hosts, [distancing] themselves from the mainstream."[75] Their faith in the game demands that DJ networks engage in competitive practice as a fulfilment of a heavily socialized notion of artistic identity. To gain

[74] Ibid.
[75] Reitsamer, "The Diy Careers of Techno and Drum 'N' Bass Djs in Vienna," 40.

recognition as an artist in social media legitimizes their practice rather than their role as club entertainers that are at the core of their technical practice. Clubs, companies, and marketers encourage and demand DJs labour on social media to engage their networks in creative practice through competition websites. In doing so, the businesses engaged with EDM networks gain audiences, affect, and income of their own off the backs of largely free labour provided by the DJs. Seeing themselves primarily as artists, DJs engage others with their practice in calls for support – a word that masks and reveals so much of the current ideology that operates in these creative networks.

Rhetoric of Support

The power of a single word – support – to invoke so much of what goes on in contemporary creative and competitive practice is revealed in the rhetorical evolution of the term from its roots of holding up or giving assistance toward its contemporary association with the politics of war and enlisted military members. In response to the increased use of the term in the early 1990s, with the Gulf War, and continuing with contemporary conflicts, media and scholars have examined how the use of the term support has evolved and changed since the Vietnam War.[76] These examinations reveal that support has gained significant rhetorical currency that extends well outside the bounds of military politics in contemporary discourse.

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[76] Roger Stahl, "Why We “Support the Troops”: Rhetorical Evolutions," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (2009). Patrick G. Coy, Lynne M. Woehrle, and Gregory M. Maney, "Discursive Legacies: The U.S. Peace Movement and "Support the Troops"," *Social Problems* 55, no. 2 (2008). Chris Cobb, "How a Simple Phrase Got Tied up in Symbolism, Politics; Whether the Slogan 'Support Our Troops' Is Pro-War or Pro-Soldier Is in the Eye of the Beholder, Writes Chris Cobb," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 2007 Jun 23 2007.

In examining the discursive legacy of support, Patrick G. Coy, Lynne M. Woehrle, and Gregory M. Maney define discursive legacies "as well-established, repetitive, restrictive, and culturally recognized ways of talking and writing about a particular issue over time."[77] For the authors these discourses "have triumphed in the contention over the terms of public debate on a recurring issue," which "often roughly reflect existing power relations."[78] Further, "discursive legacies deliver packages of normative understandings that because of their familiar and authoritative nature are difficult to question (e.g., the troops deserve our support, or, true patriots must support the troops)."[79] The authors go on to show how websites setup to "support the troops" are not only a product of the discursive legacy of support but also act to continually "reproduces that legacy."[80]

In *Why We "Support the Troops": Rhetorical Evolutions*, Roger Stahl examines the history and broad debate surrounding contemporary American involvement in conflicts and the "subtle discourse that has taken a central role in directing public attitudes."[81] In examining rhetoric of support in relation to military and the men and women in uniform, Stahl observes that the notion of support has two major functions: deflection, "which is the redefinition of war from a struggle to attain an external objective to an internal struggle to save the soldier," and disassociation, "a discourse that conditions the image of the proper wartime citizen."[82] For Stahl the rhetoric of support does not justify war, rather it "constructs a war that needs no justification and a citizen who has no business engaging

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[77] Coy, Woehrle, and Maney, "Discursive Legacies: The U.S. Peace Movement and "Support the Troops"," 163.
[78] Ibid., 163, 64.
[79] Ibid., 164.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Stahl, "Why We "Support the Troops": Rhetorical Evolutions," 534.
[82] Ibid., 535.

the question publicly."[83] He concludes that notions of support are used to "foreclose debate rather than encourage its citizens and representatives to engage directly the reasons for killing."[84]

The investigation into notions of support by Coy, Woehrle, and Maney, as well as Stahl, shows that the term support has a legacy that deflects and dissasociates rhetoric from a criticism of those in power toward a language that leaves no room to debate. The onging use of support in relation to the military and troops has transformed the term from that of lifting others up or bearing an expense to a word that forcloses debate and enforces stable power relations and legitimate particular agendas.[85] For these researchers the antidote to forclosed support rhetoric is to bypass these rhetorical devices and engage directly with those in power, to "valorize civic deliberation," and to direct attention back to questions of legtimacy.[86]

These investigations and proposals for change lie at the heart of my investigation of creative networks and their calls for support in relation to contests and competition platforms. While the stakes may not be as high as those of the military and armed conflict, support has none the less come to deflect and dissasociate critical debates among creative workers from the structures of power that continue to exploit their creative labour from competition to competition. Although scholars have not examined links between the use of support in the militaristic sense and the use of the term in the creative sense, my

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., 535, 36.
[85] Coy, Woehrle, and Maney, "Discursive Legacies: The U.S. Peace Movement and "Support the Troops"," 164.
[86] Stahl, "Why We "Support the Troops": Rhetorical Evolutions," 559.

experience in creative communities reveals that discourses of support among creatives and their networks reproduce the very same discursive legacy involved in the politics of war.

In researching the evolution of crowdsourcing and its impact on creative communities, Daren C. Brabham has made the connection between discourses of creativity and the language of war in relation to debates between professional and amateur artists interacting on crowdsourcing platforms.[87] Through extensive analysis of debates surrounding amateurism Brabham argues that "[t]he distinction between amateur and professional, then, may be better explained as a continuum of work relationships between individual and organization."[88] The evolution of crowdsourcing and competition platforms, consequently, has threatened professionals in new ways. Brabham's analysis shows how a great deal of early media attention toward crowdsourcing platforms framed their evolution as a threat to professionalism. Brabham reveals that debates pitting professional and amateur were presented in media "with the language of war and conflict, widening the amateur–professional chasm conceptually for readers and underscoring the tension. The language of war in the corpus – 'a small army of amateurs', 'an army of amateurs out there', 'recruited an army of eager amateurs to dismantle ... the inner workings' – connects to the 'continuing tussle between pros and amateurs' and the 'tension between experts and amateurs'."[89] These tensions are not over creative competition per se but over who has access to authority and symbolic capital. Brabham concludes that "[p]rofessionalism is thus simultaneously about an individual's identity and about his or her location within, and

[87] Daren C Brabham, "The Myth of Amateur Crowds: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Crowdsourcing Coverage," *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 3 (2012).
[88] Ibid., 402.
[89] Ibid., 403.

worth in relation to, the dominant economic system of our time. A threat to professional status, then, is both an abstract concept and a real attack on professional individuals' livelihoods and self-worth."[90] For Brabham these crowdsourcing platforms create an illusion of creative control over the production of work on these sites. Although amateurs traditionally have had a lower status than professionals "the label of amateur conjures a democratic, 'of the people' impression of what is really taking place on a crowdsourcing Web site."[91]

If professionalism is being rhetorically and practically reduced to amateurism through these competitions, if all entertainers are to be artists under these crowdsourced platforms, then discourses of support legitimize and reproduce exploitation and precarity. By asking us to "support the creative troops," this rhetoric invokes normative understandings of what creativity looks like under a regime of competitive labour and competition platforms that ask all creative workers labour to compete. By masking the capitalist logic at work within these local competitions and on competition platforms, all creatives are reduced to amateur status where they must engage in the support of their creative communities to find creative success. The crisis of the creative community becomes the crisis of the individual creative soldier. Only he or she can be saved by the support of the public who will lift up the artist and send him or her to back to fight to win the next creative contest.

At a practical level, the rhetoric of support that surrounds creative practice is a key device in which artists and their stakeholders enroll each other in each other's creative

[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 406.

networks. Calls for support that are involved in so much of creative rhetoric elegantly enlist other creatives in networks of practice but also serve to orient artistic practice outside structures of power that define their relation to labour in creative economies. Support, as a rhetorical device, both affirms membership in creative networks while also excluding those who refuse to play the game of support in pursuit of financial compensation. Compensation is often seen as an individual pursuit that sacrifices the goals of entire creative networks in pursuit of selfish ends. If you do not "support" us we do not "support" you. We cannot "support" your push for financial reward, which necessarily sacrifices your creative integrity. Furthermore, these rhetorical devices allow members of creative communities to engage with creative platform providers and aligned marketers while still justifying their position outside the precarious reality of contemporary creative economies.

Ethnography and Note on Interview

My investigation of contemporary remix contests enabled through crowdsourced competition platforms grew out of a program of "insider ethnography" undertaken between August 2012 and March 2014. I drew guidance from Ed Montano's "industry based analysis" in Sydney's commercial club scene, situating the DJ and producer at the centre of my research.[92] As a working DJ and as a participant in club and web based creative competitions, I was able to gain critical insight into systems of ideas and discourses that motivate local clubs, labels, DJs and producers to engage with remix competition platforms . The analysis that follows taps into my own networks of people,

[92] Ed Montano, "Ethnography from the Inside: Industry-Based Research in the Commercial Sydney Edm Scene," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 5, no. 2 (2013): 114.

places, and technologies that inform my DJ practice. Any discussion of these networks then is informed by some level of reflexivity about my work in creative economies, my interactions with other DJ actors, and my own entrance into the proliferation of social media-based contests that have arisen over the last many years. As with Montano, I occupied multiple positions in my research as both an "insider" DJ and as an "outsider" researcher. My engagement with these contests stemmed from both scholarly pursuits and creative interests, understanding full well I would confront and have to manage many of the issues and debates that have evolved out of contemporary competitions that I detail below. If claims about contemporary DJ contests seem vague, I hope that my situation within current DJ networks will develop productive knowledge of the issues at hand to lend voice to those most affected in hopes of an eventual escape from labour precarity.

A significant amount of qualitative interview-based research has been done on EDM networks. This research has often involved questioning DJs, producers, promoters, club owners, and audiences.[93] Further, interview-based researched has also been used to examine social media communities and participants on crowdsourcing websites.[94] Despite the extensive use of interviews by many of the researchers, papers, and books that inform my own research on competitive labour, this method is not sufficient to get at the heart of the issues surrounding these new competition practices. Primarily my research attempts to

[93] "Dj Culture in the Commercial Sydney Dance Music Scene," *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 1, no. 1 (2009). Tara Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2010). Ahmed Ahmed, Steve Benford, and Andy Crabtree, "Digging in the Crates: An Ethnographic Study of Djs' Work," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (Austin, Texas, USA: ACM, 2012). Reitsamer, "The Diy Careers of Techno and Drum 'N' Bass Djs in Vienna."

[94] Daren C Brabham, "Moving the Crowd at Threadless: Motivations for Participation in a Crowdsourcing Application," *Information, Communication & Society* 13, no. 8 (2010). Carsten Winter & Julia Heinrich, "The Added Value to Music Culture through Collaborative Online Platforms," in *Keep It Simple Make It Fast* (Porto, Portugal2014).

examine and give voice to the thousands of DJs and producers entering creative contests globally. Most of the available interview data suggests that the winners are often the only ones available or sought out to be consulted in studies of these platforms, despite their specificity as high-profile members of the networks and a minority of total contest participants.[95] While an argument could still be made for finding a range of contest entrants to interview, including winners, my own experience in the field along with research into discourse of support show that creators, along with those in charge of contests, mask and rationalize away the exploitative issues at play in their involvement with competitions. As a result, the interview is only useful to show these rationalizations at play, which can be revealed through other methods. Finally interview methods in many ways obscure the pursuit of connections between humans and objects that informs my research. While it might be easy to interview a contest winner and the promoter of a local contest to understand their motivations, it is much more difficult to understand the role of Facebook's APIs or the hashtags that bridge social media- fueled contest promotions through interview.

In order to reveal how these ranges of discourse and debates operate in EDM economies I will first briefly examine the introduction and proliferation of local performance based DJ competitions and the web of clubs, promoters, music hosting sites, and creatives that are engaged with them. I will then examine whose notions of support operate in EDM and how they allow for and justify competition among local DJs and producers as well as the companies, marketers, and superstar DJs that benefit the most

[95] "The Added Value to Music Culture through Collaborative Online Platforms."

from a reorientation of creative practice toward crowdsourced competition. Finally I will examine the competition platforms in detail with the example of Talenthouse.com. Through my examination I will argue that these platforms represent a break from earlier crowdsourcing websites by demanding more of creative labourers while providing less rewards than ever before. I will conclude by proposing a new way of seeing these networks of competition and exploitation and argue for a reconfiguration of creative policy by government to combat the impact they are having on contemporary creative practice. In all the middle chapters I will examine how these competitions are impacting EDM networks in real-time through case studies of recent competitions in Montreal and online through play.beatport.com and Talenthouse.com.

Chapter 2: Contemporary Club Contests

Introduction

The contemporary DJ contest finds its origins in the social media- fueled club and bar networks that have grown around the introduction and adoption of social media networks since the mid-2000s.[96] 2009 was a key year for EDM-based practices and rhetoric as the DMC World Championships held their 25th anniversary contest while its networks were being quickly translated through the filter of mass culture. The rise of EDM-fueled pop music in the same year saw Lady Gaga win the Grammy for best dance recording for "Poker Face." At the same time David Guetta began to conquer Billboard charts, with his collaborative singles "When Love Takes Over" which featured Kelly Rowland and "Sexy Bitch" featuring Akon.

DJ performance technologies also underwent rapid changes between 2009 and 2010, with the release of improved Digital Vinyl Systems, a solution to manipulating digital files through vinyl and CD formats, as well as the rapid release of DJ-focused midi controllers. The rapid digitization of music collections, along with the mass consumption of MP3-related devices for playback, meant individual music consumers were required to curate mass music collections almost overnight. DJ practice was challenged through rapid shifts in expectations around sizes of music collections and formats, as well as with the

[96] Disco Mix Club Championships and related competitions are in many ways the forerunners to contemporary social media- fueled contests. How they may have set the terms of contemporary contests was explored in my previous work, where I suggested that early battle networks in New York City were translated into regular competitions by DMC championships, which were then copied by local clubs. With the introduction of social media to club promotion practices since the mid-2000s and subsequent introduction of crowdsourced competition platforms these local club competitions became enmeshed in wider discourses and practices of competition explored here. DMC, "Dmc World Dj Competition History," DMC World, accessed August 27,2013, http://www.dmcdjchamps.com/about.php.

popularization of the notion that anyone with a large music collection could be a DJ. The result was a massive recruitment and enrolment of actors into EDM and DJ networks over a short very short period of time.

Club and bar networks reacted to all these rapid changes by shifting their music formats toward popular music, which now included Electronic Dance, while also expanding their presence on social media websites. The shift was so rapid and total that social media quickly ascended into the center of the network, becoming a major passage point for DJs, promoters, club owners, the public, and the media.[97] Major alcohol and energy drink corporations, including Red Bull with their Canadian Thre3style competition, along with digital download and remix sites such as Beatport.com with their frequent remix contests, as well as DJ technology providers, began promoting social media- fueled DJ competitions at local and national levels to plug into the ample branding opportunities they provided. Most mainstream and underground clubs quickly followed suit, with many offering their own versions of social media-based competitions by 2010 or 2011.[98]

The popularization of DJ practices amongst influential and digitally-connected youth networks was a major marketing opportunity for clubs and related businesses in local creative economies. By offering DJ contests over their social networks, venues were able to translate their web presences, DJ practices, and engaged youths, into new marketing opportunities and sales that involved promoting youth networks and DJ networks back to themselves through the cult and mystique of DJ performance. By providing an opportunity

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[97] Tom Horgen, "Mobile Is the Night: Social Media Are Changing the Nightlife Experience at Local Bars, Restaurants and Clubs," *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, 2010 Jul 09 2010.
[98] Canadian Musician, "New Contest Searching for 2011 Pioneer Dj Ambassadors," *Canadian Musician*2011. Vaughan Carson, "20 Competitors Set to Spin-Off in Annual Dj Contest," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 2010 Jul 09 2010.

for DJs to perform at desirable clubs, nighttime businesses virtually guaranteed those DJs and their audiences would engage other actors with their operations and mobilize all of these actors into a stronger engagement with their industry.

New social media platforms have begun to mediate these networks by offering platforms for the dissemination and tracking of DJ competitions. Websites like Wavo.me, talenthouse.com, and play.beatport.com have sprung up to service the social media-driven contest industry. While my focus here is on DJ performance, there has been a concurrent rise of EDM producer remix competitions on those same websites, that will be explored in chapters 3 and 4, which often crossover by offering DJing opportunities to the winners. These websites mediate and translate the strength of various contest networks into marketing value and other shared benefits through the social media-based hosting and voting tools they provide. These tools allow DJ competitors to invite their networks into these social media- fueled web portals to increase their standing within the competitions. While many contests claim that artistic merit is their primary decision point in the network of possibilities for judging creative talent in these competitions, it is often the DJ who has best mobilized her network to engage with the social media marketers, through clicking like or voting, that wins the contest. These websites and nighttime businesses have curated systems of competition that are transparent popularity contests in the hopes that those engaged in contest networks will not only bring their DJ practice to the websites and venues, but their entire network as well. What follows is an analysis of a 2013 DJ contest hosted by Circus HD in Montreal, Quebec that encapsulates contemporary issues and debates surrounding local performance based DJ competitions, which acts as an

introduction to the broader relations these contests and their participants have with major companies, brands, and platforms in electronic dance music economies.

Circus Resident DJ Contest: A Case Study

On April 10th, 2013 Circus HD, a Montreal afterhours club and oft-rated number one dance venue in the province of Quebec, posted a call for submissions for their semi-annual DJ contest on their Facebook page and twitter feed.[99] The call read "CIRCUS DJ CONTEST! Have you always dreamed of playing at the Circus? You think you have what it takes to accomplish this feat? Join our DJ competition right now!"[100] The rules were simple. Any DJ interested in entering should upload an audio file of no less than 45 minutes to one of many music streaming sites, including Soundcloud.com and Mixcrate.com, and send an email to their marketing partners at Wassap.com. The construction and upload of the mixes enrolled these DJs and their productions into the networks of Circus afterhours and their related marketers and promoters. Circus' DJ and patron networks, in Montreal and surrounding areas, quickly lit up with the news. Tweets about the contest were passed around through re-tweets, and the contest pages and invites were liked, shared, re-shared, and liked again. DJs and interested parties quickly lent their own views of the contest proceedings with one DJing exclaiming "I'm in. Got some special groove I've been cooking up that I need to show the rest of the world," and another suggesting the contest was "not as easy as it looks I'm very sure of it, this isn't a studio this is an afterhours. Lots of power and lots of stuff going on!" Circus, through a simple series of social media posts, mobilized

[99] Brian Boyd, "Decline of Great Us Rock'n'roll Is the Elephant in the Room," *Irish Times*, 2011 Mar 11 2011.
[100] Afterhours is a term used to designate clubs that are permitted to operate passed designated city curfew. They are often only permitted to sell non-alcoholic beverages. Typically entrance fees to the club are higher as a result.

an incredible number of actors and networks to provide free work for the club over the next five months under a contemporary approach to DJ competition and labour practice that has become commonplace through the use and reconfiguration of DMC, turntablism, and competition aesthetics within current nighttime economies.

365 mixes were submitted over the next two weeks, each representing an individual DJ's music tastes and style and which, strung end to end, represented over two weeks of continuous performance. Considering the networks of music download websites, technologies, and the mental engagement required in the construction of each mix, the time that went into the construction of completed works each represented up to four times the length of the submission. Moreover, based on estimated music download costs, software recording costs, DJ performance technology costs, and time, these submissions represented tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars in production costs. Expenditures like these have come to define ongoing requirements of production in contemporary DJ practice, whereby music, technology, and promotion costs have been further offloaded onto the DJ through the rapid expansion of midi- or controller-based DJ performance solutions and the adoption of digital files as a result of the ongoing replacement of traditional vinyl- and CD-based solutions since the early 2000s.[101]

Many DJs submitting to competitions like these might claim to be hobbyists or 'bedroom' DJs, yet the amount of effort and costs required to even enter a contemporary contest would indicate there is more at play. From my own situation as an eventual

[101] I acknowledge that has never been cheap to be a DJ. Contemporary costs have replaced previous expenditures that including owning a large record collection. What is problematic is that most contests are supported by brands and related technology partners that encourage the purchase of expensive DJ or production equipment to work for free.

participant in the Circus contest and as an observer of these competitions across many DJ networks over the years, it has become clear that the hobbyist rhetoric is often used to deflect any criticism or disappointment by the DJ and their networks if their very public job application is rejected. As job applicants the DJs were expending large numbers of hours, financial costs, and mental energies against the small chance they might be selected to perform at Circus and eventually gain meaningful employment in Montreal's nighttime economy.

Of the hundreds of mixes submitted, 47 were selected and those DJs were invited to compete in quarter-final rounds hosted at a location setup up by sponsors of Circus and the DJ competition. These heats were hosted over four weeks at a storefront, WASSAP, which specialized in the promotion and dissemination of club tickets and club related paraphernalia. Each DJ was asked to prepare and perform a 20 minute live set that would be openly broadcast to a busy area of downtown Montreal and online via WASSAP and Circus social media networks. Over fifteen hours of live performance, involving hours of preparation per DJ, was translated by the club and its sponsors into free labour from which they extracted a great deal of promotion and some advertising revenues for their digital platforms. As is the case for many of these contests, these initial rounds were supervised and judged by a single member of the promotional team of the sponsoring storefront, who at best seemed completely disinterested in the proceedings besides ensuring that the members of the DJs' networks who attended the performances didn't get in the way of other customers.

By July, almost three and a half months after the initial call for submissions, sixteen DJs were selected to perform over two nights at Circus. Each DJ was required to prepare a one hour set that would be performed in succession during a regularly ticketed night at the venue, with the cost of those tickets ranging from $15-25. The DJs' names and network affiliations were printed on various posters and uploaded to various social media networks. The DJs were then encouraged to share and promote their performances to their colleagues, friends, and family, who were then expected to be added to guest lists maintained by various circus promoters, who offered pre-sale and day of tickets at a discounted price. These lists were tallied and tracked and were later revealed to be an explicit part of the contest judges' criteria.[102] In order to succeed in the contest and in hopes of gaining meaningful employment, DJs had to convince their networks to purchase tickets to an event where they would be performing for free.

Once those sixteen hours of free performances were finished, eight DJs were selected to go through the same cycle of preparation, promotion, and practice, for an event that would be held in late August. After five months of various levels of competition, hundreds of hours of live and studio performance, vast expenditures of time and money, and the engagement of a large number DJ and fan networks, a single winner was crowned.[103] Each of the sixteen semifinalists was compensated $100 for their performance

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[102] Francis Circus in response to a query about guest lists. "I didn't keep your name because the number of people on the guest list is going to be a factor too, I prefer having you doing proper bookings than the contest, hope you understand and that it has nothing to do with your talent, on the contrary, I very much love how you play." It is implied in this exchange that in not bringing a crowd to pay entrance for the competition night is a factor in judging. The expectation is you bring in paying guests to watch you perform freely as a contestant.

[103] Stahl, *Unfree Masters: Recording Artists and the Politics of Work*. In his chapter on American Idol Stahl identifies similar processes at work in vocal competitions. "Largely unscripted contest, stretched out over an entire season, in which individual participants compete to valorize— to add value to— themselves and keep

at the club on the night of the competition. The winning DJ was also awarded a commemorative certificate and additional chances to perform at the club over the next many months. All sixteen semifinalists were quickly invited back to Circus to play at least one more time over the fall schedule.[104] Each DJ would be given a two hour timeslot opening for more established DJs, who often seek to benefit from these young and relatively fresh DJ networks to increase their night's popularity. As with the competition, each DJ would be expected to prepare, promote, and then perform on their given night for their network of 'fans' that were expected to purchase tickets and attend. After the cycle is complete, the club resets the competition and opens their network channels for a new fall competition that will surely be met with another web of enthusiastic responses and submissions.

Contestants made little immediate financial gain from the experience. The music preparation costs for two hour DJ sets alone would price the personal production cost of this work at upward of $50-75.[105] If preparation and promotion time are factored in, along with opportunity costs associated with the relatively low availability of DJ hours in the Montreal market, each DJ came out financially no more ahead than where they started. Moreover, if one factors in the five months of mental and practical labour that went into successive stages of the competition, the contests represents an incredible level of

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and enhance their social places, and it does make extensive use of low-cost amateur talent and vulnerable, underpaid, non-union production labor."

[104] These spots were compensated at about $130 for a 2-4 hours set. Some payments were never received by some DJs.

[105] Again, the music cost itself is not an issue per se. It is the encouragement or requirement to purchase music in the service in competing for opportunities to work.

investment for very little financial reward.[106] While Julia Heinrich and Carsten Winter have shown, through interview, that winners of online contests feel a positive bump in their creative careers, there is little solid evidence that online or local contests provide the promised chance at stardom that is often advertise. As I will develop in chapters 3 and 4 it doesn't generally matter who participates or wins these contests; it only matters that creatives participate.

Conclusion

Extrapolating the Circus competition process across the vast numbers of contests available on municipal, provincial, national, and international levels spread across physical and virtual network passage points, illustrates a vast exploitation of virtually free creative labour for the benefit of venues, promoters, marketers, and social media networks. Surely DJs must realize that their time and energy, their networks, their aspirations and personal goals, are being exploited under the pursuit of a career in an industry notorious for chewing up and spitting out individuals under the steamroller of sex, drugs, and electronic dance?[107] Instead DJs and their networks have rationalized these exploitations as part of their artistic freedoms and unique individual talents. Furthermore, debates within DJ networks over merits of their practice often look toward other DJs and their relative skills as performers rather than at the clubs and promoters that exploit their labour.

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[106] Heinrich, "The Added Value to Music Culture through Collaborative Online Platforms."
[107] Stanley W Beeler, *Dance, Drugs and Escape: The Club Scene in Literature, Film and Television since the Late 1980s* (Jefferson, Carolina: McFarland & Company Incorporated 2007).; Daily Record, "Exposed: Spiral of Club Drugs Abuse; Fears for Dance Scene Kids," *Daily Record*, 2001 Jan 20 2001.

Contemporary DJ networks continue to rationalize the persistent nature of competitive labour through their own networks as well as in translating wider network activities into their own. Often these DJs become competitive friends, engaging each other's networks in their various and ongoing competitions. Following the Circus competition, many requests for likes and votes, on Facebook and otherwise, were distributed by these DJ networks for contests ranging from a festival opening spot for Chris Lake to a remix competition for Josh Wink. Club promoters are heavily invested in these networks and will often encourage DJs to enter any available arena of contest. The interest of venues remains not in finding individual talent but in ensuring the sustainability of all competitions that continue to provide access to virtually free DJ labour. Contemporary competitions are fueled by mobilizing vast networks of young DJs and interested parties into endless competition. In doing so contemporary venues gain the benefit of vast reserves of free and enthusiastic labour to service their businesses week after week.

In the following chapter I introduce major EDM related companies, brands, and crowdsourced competition platforms to map out their role in encouraging both performance as well as music production competitions in local DJ and producer networks to start to unravel their push to mediate creativity among digitally connected creators as central planks of their business models. How the introduction and adoption of these contests has impacted creative workers will explored through a further study of Circus HD that will examine how club owners and promoters encourage the active participation in contemporary contests as a part of their own business plans, leaving the DJ and producer, often as a precarious contractor, to work for both a local club as well as crowdsourcing platforms in their day to day creative practice.

Chapter 3: Networks of #support

Introduction

The adoption and evolution of the language of support in creative industries is rooted in the rhetorical evolutions of the word that passively or actively aims to distance and disassociate workers from precarious reality of labouring in creative economies.[108] The term support both mask the flows of capital through creative practice and enlists creative workers in denying the economic realities of their practice in the pursuit of nobler ideals of achieving creative success through talent, ingenuity, and a community of likeminded artists who help each other achieve creative success by enlisting each other's help. These evolutions in support rhetoric have been powerfully enlisted by social media platforms and crowdsourced competitions, along with their financiers and marketing partners, to engage creatives in various free labour practices. Of particular interest for my examination is how notions of support encourage or even require creators to engage with these social media contest platforms in particular ways while masking their desire for financial compensation. Further, notions of support may act to humble any creative workers who might overtly signal their desire for compensation. If a creative attempts to go at it alone they are no longer members of a network of support. As a result they may fall outside these networks of encouragement and validation, while the companies that run these platforms continue to exploit the vast reserve of free creative labour that continually engages with their contests and their platforms.

[108] Stahl, "Why We "Support the Troops": Rhetorical Evolutions."

In examining the language of EDM networks it is clear the term support has gained significant currency in socially networked communications. Support is invoked by club owners, promoters, DJs, marketers, and audiences on the ground and in social media to reflect their desire or need for assistance in relation to their participation in EDM. The calls for support are often invoked to encourage other members of a participant's network to engage with his or her interests in advancing their creative careers. For club owners support is used to ask other DJs and their audiences to engage with their club, through attending club nights or telling their networks about upcoming events. Promoters ask DJs to support their night through participating as performers or through cross-promoting each other's nights. DJs and producers will ask their networks to support their performances at events by attending and purchasing tickets, or support their productions or mixes by following links to media, as well as support their aspirations as professionals by voting and sharing their participation with social media fueled competition platforms. Friends and fans of these owners, promoters and DJs cast support nets even wider, invoking their own networks of friends and families to consider aiding their friends of colleagues. If the language in describing these various relations seems strained it is because the term and language of support has come to replace individuals in these circles. Owners become supporters of promoters and DJs. Promoters support the clubs with their talent - the DJs – who support the promoter's night in return. DJs are surrounded with support and supporters. While there are clearly structures of power in EDM, in these associations the rhetoric of relations are all made horizontal under the rubric of support.

In the following sections I trace the history and rhetoric surrounding support in relation to the creation of SFX Entertainment and acquisition of Beatport.com among other

EDM companies to analyze how support both reveals yet masks so many relations of power in creative networks. Support acts as both a digital trace that can be followed through social media as well as a marker of discourse that circulates relating to participation in or around contemporary competitions. While my analysis is qualitative it is quite accurate to suggest that a simple count of the number of times a particular member of EDM networks enlists the term support in relation to their creative practice, along with particular adjectives and adverbs, would reveal their relative power within these relations. In order to begin to examine these relations the threads of support that run through creative rhetoric, social media platforms, and contest websites must first be outlined.

From Top to Bottom: SFX Entertainment and Beatport Play

On December 8th, 2013, an article by John Constine, a technology journalist specializing in "deep analysis of social products," appeared on Techcrunch.com, detailing the recent "bloodbath" of layoffs occurring at the Denver, Colorado offices of Beatport LLC.[109] The article and its circulation are at the heart of an ongoing dialogue in Electronic Dance Music networks over notions of current and future practices. The layoffs were a "push to cut the fat from Beatport" as a response to the poor stock market debut of Beatport's parent company, SFX Entertainment.[110] Headed by media entrepreneur Robert F.X. Sillerman, the "magnetic mogul who changed the concert business from a network of individual fiefdoms into a single empire," SFX Entertainment was a resurrection of a

[109] Josh Constine, "Beatport "Bloodbath" as Dance Music Startup Lays Off Engineers," AOL Inc, accessed Dec 8,2013, http://techcrunch.com/2013/12/08/beatport-layoffs/.
[110] Ibid. Ben Sisario, "Sfx Entertainment Strikes Wrong Chord with Investors," *International Herald Tribune*, 2013 Oct 11 2013. "Tepid Opening for Promoter of Electronic Dance Music," *New York Times*, 2013 Oct 10 2013.

company responsible for buying up and packaging live concert promoters through the mid to late 90s.[111] Together those companies were sold to Clear Channel Communications in 2000 for 4.4 Billion dollars and eventually spun off as Live Nation Entertainment, the largest live events company in the world.[112] When Sillerman returned to the SFX brand in 2012, it was to resurrect this consolidation model, in a drive to find the same success in the market of EDM and its networks of clubs, festivals, Disc Jockeys, producers, and promoters that fueled his company's rise in the 90's.

With over 1 billion dollars at his disposal, Sillerman announced himself to EDM networks by quickly buying up some of the most well-known event companies and websites in what SFX described as "Electronic Music Culture."[113] Rapid acquisitions of promotion companies Disco Donnie Presents and Live in Color were followed by a majority purchase of Dutch promotions company ID&T, the organization behind the major outdoor festival brand Tomorrowland. SFX bought Beatport in early 2013.[114] While the model for acquisitions and consolidation was the same as the one employed by SFX in the 90s, the reincarnation of the brand set its sights on what Sillerman described as "Digital Natives music, made by Digital Natives for Digital Natives."[115] The SFX website reflected these ambitions, presenting the company as interested in more than the live promotion of EDM

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[111] Kerri Mason, "Empire State of Mind: After Conquering Both Radio and Live Music, Robert F.X. Sillerman Now Has $1 Billion to Spend and His Sights Set on Electronic Dance Music's Explosive Live Space," *Billboard*, 2012/09/08/ 2012.
[112] PR Newswire, "Clear Channel Communications, Inc. And Sfx Entertainment, Inc. Announce Merger," news release, 2000 Feb 29, 2000. Wall Street Journal, "Clear Channel Gives Details on Spinoff of Live Nation Unit," *Wall Street Journal*, 2005 Dec 15 2005.
[113] Mason, "Empire State of Mind: After Conquering Both Radio and Live Music, Robert F.X. Sillerman Now Has $1 Billion to Spend and His Sights Set on Electronic Dance Music's Explosive Live Space."
[114] Ben Sisario, "Sfx Buys Site for Electronic Dance Music," *New York Times*, 2013 Feb 27 2013. Kerri Mason, "Sfx Swoops in on Edm," *Billboard*, 2013 Feb 09 2013.
[115] Bloomberg, "Electric Dance Music Not a Fad: Sfx Ceo Sillerman," Bloomberg TV, accessed Dec 15,2013, http://www.bloomberg.com/video/electric-dance-music-not-a-fad-sfx-ceo-sillerman-uGODta5ITqGa_UqunuFdQg.html.

events: as "enabling a movement" through "music discovery, online content, and connectivity with other fans and events."[116]

The acquisitions by SFX and subsequent initial public offering of the consolidated companies were met with a great deal of skepticism in EDM communities and the broader market. Despite the insistence of SFX and Sillerman that the corporation would encourage and incubate creative culture in the electronic dance field, many of those embedded in EDM and those who wrote about its everyday ebbs and flows saw a great deal to be concerned about in SFX's rapid moves toward consolidation.[117] Measurable unease was expressed over the 'monetization' of dance culture that Sillerman claimed was his ambition in a *New York Times* interview, in which he asked, "Can we monetize that? [EDM] If we can, this will dwarf the first SFX. That's the whole game."[118] The Future of Music Coalition's Policy Fellow, Daniel Lieberman, expressed his fear of the "ethos of exclusion rather than inclusion" that came to define the Live Nation experience.[119] For Lieberman and, I argue, for most of those practicing in EDM networks, the world of dance music is perceived as "much more than a 'game,' rather as an art form that functions beyond the sole economic confines of profit and loss."[120] To those embedded in electronic dance, Sillerman and SFX quickly became the target of antagonism and mockery over the notion that EDM could be 'bought out' or 'sold down the river' through high ticket prices and soulless live events.

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[116] SFX Entertainment, "The Sfx Vision," SFX Entertainment, Inc., accessed December 14,2013, http://sfxii.com/about-sfx-entertainment/.
[117] Derek Staples, "Sfx Entertainment and Their Monetization of Electronic Music Culture," The Frontliner, accessed Dec 14,2013, http://thefrontliner.com/news/sfx-entertainment-and-electronic-music-culture-30730.
[118] Ben Sisario, "A Concert Mogul Is Betting on Electronic Dance Music," *New York Times*, 2012 Jun 06 2012.
[119] Daniel Lieberman, ""Live Nation Part 2" - Will Ownership Consolidation Ruin Edm?," Future of Music Coalition, accessed Dec 20,2013, http://futureofmusic.org/blog/2012/06/26/live-nation-part-2-will-ownership-consolidation-ruin-edm.
[120] Ibid.

When the IPO struggled and cuts to Beatport, amongst other holdings, were made in advance of SFX's first quarterly report as a listed company, many in EDM communities saw the 'bloodbath' as proof that the monetization had started and that it would only get worse as SFX Entertainment conquered more and more EDM territory. Rumor and conjecture spread like wildfire over social media sites, with major DJs and labels expressing their discontent at Sillerman and his company's arrogance in "killing off EDM culture."[121] The response was so swift and so loud that SFX President Tim Crowhurst turned to Billboard to respond to the backlash and assure the community that the corporation had their best interests in mind.[122] In Crowhurst's expansive rebuttal of the fears expressed – to the effect that SFX was set to tear apart the fabric of Beatport's community platforms in light of poor revenues and the acquisitions of web companies Arc90, Fame House, and Paylogic – he revealed that the Beatport was relatively safe and, further, that the corporation was especially bullish about a significant part of its social platform, Beatport Play.[123]

Beatport was founded in 2004 as a platform for selling electronic music to DJs as part of the evolution of DJ related practices from physically- to digitally-oriented media and formats.[124] Beatport evolved over the decade from a small digital retailer, specializing in the sale of MP3 and WAV files, to what Beatport CEO Matthew Adell recently described as

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[121] As an example, Joris Voorn, a popular house producer and DJ from the Netherlands, posted the Techcrunch article to his Facebook along with the tongue in cheek rumor that "SFX secretly bought all vinyl pressing plants worldwide and now taking down Beaport. The end of the digital DJ age." Joris Voorn, "Sfx Bloodbath," Facebook, accessed Dec 10,2013, https://www.facebook.com/jorisvoorndj/posts/10152022610082789.
[122] Reggie Ugwu, "Sfx President Tim Crowhurst Talks Beatport Layoffs, Company's Future (Exclusive)," Billboard, accessed December 10,2013, http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/digital-and-mobile/5820037/sfx-president-tim-crowhurst-talks-beatport-layoffs.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Montano, "How Do You Know He's Not Playing Pac-Man While He's Supposed to Be Djing?': Technology, Formats and the Digital Future of Dj Culture." Attias, "Meditations on the Death of Vinyl." The shift to digital media and formats by DJs has been well documented in scholarship and the popular press. My concern is how these shifts have affected DJ practice in relation to structures of power and labour, which are underrepresented in these studies.

"the world's largest community of dance-music fans in any one location online."[125] Beatport's concurrent growth with social media platforms and evolution away from simply serving music files was enmeshed with the platform's role in the rapidly expanding EDM business, especially in North America, from the late 2000s to today.[126] By 2013 Beatport had moved well beyond its roots as an online record store to a major passage point for DJs and labels, along with producers and their networks, in the rapid expansion and development of EDM related practices on the web.[127]

Beatport Play was introduced in early 2012 as Beatport's platform for hosting remix contests offered by EDM labels, artists, and related companies marketing themselves in the Beatport ecosystem.[128] The release of Beatport Play and its initial success was part of a trend towards social media platform releases designed around the facilitation of web-based talent contests. In the debates surrounding SFX and the acquisition of Beatport.com, among other major EDM related companies, the rhetoric of charity and support is deployed by all sides, including publically traded corporations, major DJs and producers, social media portals and competition platforms, along with local clubs, DJs, promoters, and their peers, in coming to grips with major evolutions in contemporary EDM economies and

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[125] Michaelangelo Matos, "Beatport's Matthew Adell on Shazam Deal, Why Music Biz Is a 'Disaster Model'," Billboard, accessed Dec 17,2013, http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/digital-and-mobile/1538517/beatports-matthew-adell-on-shazam-deal-why-music-biz-is.

[126] Nicole B Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1 (2007).

[127] Reitsamer, "The Diy Careers of Techno and Drum 'N' Bass Djs in Vienna." Ahmed, Benford, and Crabtree, "Digging in the Crates: An Ethnographic Study of Djs' Work." The shift to online practices by DJs, Labels, and producers is well documented along with the shift to digital performances practices indicated above.

[128] Juliette Mutzke-Felippelli, "Beatport Launch 'Play'," Development Hell Ltd. , accessed December 11,2013, http://www.mixmag.net/words/news/beatport-launch-play. Remix contests in EDM involve the release of 'stems,' that are samples used in the production of a track. These stems are offered so that they can be remixed by music producers into alternative versions of the original song. These contests usually offer that that winning track will be released by the label or original artist on Beatport along with other prizes. Often there is a fee for downloading the remix samples.

creative practices. Notions of support are deployed by all sides to mask the real financial stakes of these acquisitions and related debates either to justify further consolidation of EDM business and the further expansion of creative contests by major EDM related companies, or to maintain notions of authenticity and creative independence by amateur and professional creatives caught up in these transactions.

Tracing #support

Two months prior to the 'bloodbath' at Beatport, Nick van de Wall, better known by his stage name Afrojack, travelled to New York City to ring the NASDAQ Stock Market closing bell, alongside Robert F.X. Sillerman, in celebration of SFX Entertainment's IPO.[129] The exchange was one of many stops on Afrojack's whirlwind tour in promotion of his new single *The Spark*, which was released through Island Records, part of Universal Music Group, two days later. *The Spark* was an uplifting progressive house or popular dance electronic dance track, with inspirational lyrics by Spree Wilson that encouraged us all to see the spark, or special something, in ourselves. The tour stop in New York followed a series of appearances, interviews, and web video releases on Rollingstone.com and You Tube that framed the song release in relation to Afrojack's humble origins in the Netherlands and his ascent to stardom on the back of raw talent and a dream to make it big.[130] Despite Afrojack's fame and relative power in EDM networks, as a record label owner and signed artist to a major label, he framed his visit to New York as a "takeover" of

[129] NASDAQ OMX, "Sfx Entertainment, Inc. [Sfxe] to Ring the Nasdaq Stock Market Closing Bell in Celebration of Ipo," news release, 2013 Oct 09, 2013.
[130] Erin Coulehan, "'March of the Afrojack' Chronicles Dj's Swift Stardom - Premiere: Check out the Rise of One of Edm's Most Influential Artists," Rolling Stone, accessed September 25,2013, http://www.rollingstone.com/music/videos/march-of-the-afrojack-chronicles-djs-swift-stardom-premiere-20130925.

the NASDAQ exchange and a result of 'making it big' from humble origins, exhibiting an undercurrent of rebelliousness and revolution that runs through EDM networks despite the increasing associations with big labels and big money.[131]

When Afrojack was interviewed alongside Sillerman he suggested that, "with SFX on NASDAQ and going public, you [would] see dance music entering the commercial, mainstream world." Further, SFX provided "bigger opportunities to do way bigger festivals, way bigger production and have even more creativity."[132] Tying the proliferation of large festivals, which are SFX's core strength, to expanded creative opportunities, on the floor of a stock exchange, summarizes how rhetoric in EDM networks mystifies the economic reality of their practice with notions of creativity and personal achievement at every turn. Standing behind Afrojack, Sillerman and his company have positioned themselves to gather up those sentiments and exploit them through their products and platforms for their shareholders. While that would not necessarily be harmful if EDM networks were partners in these exchanges, the entire practice of DJing has shifted toward free competition and labour as a way of producing marketable exchange rather than through the investments and development that factor into the basic rights and necessities of local creative workers. Instead of making demands of SFX Entertainment, or turning away from these large producers and companies, local DJ networks are producing more and more work for these powerful actors in the hopes of making it big. To be clear, for many, if not a majority of DJs working in contemporary club networks, making it big is analogous to being rich and

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[131] Afrojack, "Yessir! Edm Took over Time Square and the Nasdaq Today!," Facebook, accessed Dec 20,2013, http://instagram.com/p/fRHwFsItBm/.

[132] Andy Gensler, "Robert F.X Sillerman on Sfx's Ipo, Stock Prices, Future Acquisitions, Afrojack," Billboard, accessed Dec 15,2013, http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/legal-and-management/5755260/robert-fx-sillerman-on-sfxs-ipo-stock-prices-future.

famous as a music producer and DJ, though this is rarely expressed in terms beyond those of reaching a certain creative potential as an individual artist.[133]

Throughout Afrojack's career he has enlisted the term support to propel his music career, his brand, and related businesses. Afrojack regularly expresses his gratitude for support from friends and colleagues through his social media presence on Twitter and Facebook. In an interview with Rolling Stone in the lead up to his release *The Spark,* Afrojack reflected on his association with David Guetta, a French producer and major EDM mover and shaker: "Support like this is everything to an artist on the way up and he inspired me to want to give back in the same way to others… I worked hard for it, but it can happen to you if you really want it."[134] Afrojack often uses the term support to indicate he will play forthcoming tracks of other EDM producers, a common practice among DJs at local and international levels.[135] Support is often invoked by Afrojack to indicate other DJs who are performing alongside him at various clubs and festivals.[136] His label has offered remix and video production contests through Beatport and Genero.tv, claiming to thereby support creative communities and find unique talent.[137] The calls for support often engage networks of DJs and their audiences to find their way to Afrojack's links and promoted websites to engage with the actor in echoing his calls for support or entering related contests.

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[133] Gamson, "The Unwatched Life Is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture."
[134] John D. Luerssen, "Afrojack Pays Tribute to Mentor David Guetta: Dj Releases Last Installment of 'March of the Afrojack'," Rolling Stone, accessed Nov 25,2013, http://www.rollingstone.com/music/videos/afrojack-pays-tribute-to-mentor-david-guetta-20131023.
[135] Spinnin' Records, "Leon Bolier - Disco Davai (Official Music Video) [out Now]," Facebook, accessed Nov 27,2013, https://www.facebook.com/SpinninRecords/posts/682305188462055.
[136] Afrojack, "Afrojack Facebook," Facebook, accessed Dec 20,2013, https://www.facebook.com/djafrojack.
[137] Beatport, "Announcing Afrojack and Quintino's Selecta Remix Contest," Beatport, accessed Dec 19,2013, http://news.beatport.com/blog/2011/06/14/announcing-afrojack-and-quintinos-selecta-remix-contest/.

Nowhere in Afrojack's social media presence and related media are there explicit references to networks of power and money that flow through EDM practices. Calls for support in these cases often mask the very real relations to networks of capital that flow through Afrojack and his brands. Instead of being supported by other producers, such as David Guetta, Afrojack has entered creative partnerships, where he was initially, and likely remains, an unequal member. These partnerships produce creative works that are bought and sold among major and minor labels as real exchanges for real money. Afrojack has leveraged his relative power in EDM networks to sign producers to his label, amassing a portfolio of creative works that he markets and sells. Invoking support in relation to releases on partnered labels is a cross-promotional practice that associates various DJ brands with releases similar to the way major corporations have a portfolio of starts they use for promotion of their brands. By lending his name to these releases, Afrojack invites his network to engage with other DJ networks and brands along with the marketers of various labels and the platforms that are ready and willing to sell these tracks to enthusiastic audiences. Enlisting ideas of support in relation to other performers at his live events masks an entire range of complex negotiations that are involved in most major performance contracts. Are these supporting artists part of Afrojack's requirements; do they include a local DJ, or perhaps a contest winner? In supporting Afrojack, are these supporting artists being paid to perform or do they give away their labour in the hope of gaining notoriety, through association with Afrojack and his networks, as a reward? Clearly in many of these situations the relations operate barely under notions of support, but it is

the continued reluctance to acknowledge these associations by DJs across EDM that is so striking.[138]

Multiplied by the thousands of notable DJs currently working in EDM and their expansive networks, which includes their audiences, labels, marketers, and countless websites, it reveals a striking separation from the reality of economy and creative labour that are at the heart of their day-to-day practices. Transmitted down to the hundreds of thousands of DJs working across local networks, it is nothing short of astonishing how notions of support mystify and exploit creative practice across EDM.

Local #support: a Case Study

My case study of a 2013 Beatport Play remix competition and the discourses of support that mobilized local DJs and producers to engage with the contest website is a direct result of my own participation in an earlier club competition in the spring of the same year. My placement in that club competition in Montreal, Quebec "won" me access to regular meetings at the venue, which were assembled to engage local DJs and promoters in the promotion of future events. What I witnessed in these meetings and what is detailed below was a confirmation of similar discussions and actions surrounding remix competitions that I witnessed as a working DJ in Calgary, Alberta.

On Thursday, December 5th, 2013, a monthly DJ meeting was held at Circus Afterhours to discuss recent developments at the club and talk over upcoming events.

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[138] Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*. There are parallels here to Fred Turner's analysis of the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link.

Circus was preparing to host the biggest event in its history, the Circus Maximus New Year's Party that was planned for December 31st.[139] With a planned budget of approximately $100,000, the party would use all available club space to pack 1600 revelers into the venue with tickets for entrance priced anywhere from $65 in advance to $95 at the door. The meeting of DJs and the main promoter at Circus centered on issues of promotion and sales for the big night. Of the forty resident DJs and producers (DJs who performed at Circus approximately once a month) twenty arrived to hear the pitch. Twenty three DJs were scheduled to play between three rooms on New Year's Eve. Of those, some were Circus residents, while others were national or international DJs flown in for the night.[140] The remaining DJs were asked to sell tickets for the event in support of the club. The justification was that by supporting the club's promotion of the biggest event of the year all DJs engaged in Circus's network would benefit.

The logic behind this assertion was explained in two parts. First, the event's success would help sustain the club and allow them to bring in more acts. Second, it would allow Circus Afterhours to further support local DJs through increased notoriety and the opening of secondary rooms on a regular basis. "Support us as we support you" was an oft repeated refrain from the primary promoter, who insisted that by freely promoting ticket sales for the event all DJs would benefit. In addition the promoter encouraged all DJs to produce music with the goal of spreading the productions across EDM networks to associate the

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[139] Circus HD, "Circus Maximus Mmxiv – New Year's Eve," Circus HD, accessed August 7,2014, http://circushd.com/blog/circus-maximus-mmxiv-new-years-eve?lang=en.

[140] The term resident refers to DJs or producers who would have regular spots at a club, usually playing at a venue once or twice a month. With that regularity would come internal club communications and other benefits, such as free entry to the venue when not Djing. It is a term used in wider EDM discourse to refer to regular tour stops or larger contracts that major DJs have.

club with original productions. The thinking went that if Circus DJs were exposed and recognized in wider EDM markets, then Circus Afterhours would benefit similarly.

In asking for support, the promoter, as an employee of Circus, was asking for a significant amount of free labour from a precarious workforce of liminally connected DJs, requesting that they promote shows in which many were not working as performers or entertainers. Further, petitions for support also came with a threat that if these DJs did not respond to the request their status as a resident could be in jeopardy. Rather than explicit communication over expectations for work at the club and associated remuneration, the promoter chose instead to speak in vague terms of growing communities of DJs and EDM. Each DJ was given five tickets, with a responsibility to return $325 before the date of the event. With that in mind the meeting ended and DJs took to social networks to begin their promotion.

While Circus spent lavishly on promotional banners, print and web advertising for the New Year's event, a far cheaper, personal, and more efficient promotional machine was engaged when the resident DJs of Circus and their networks of friends and fans took to Facebook, Twitter, and Beatport to market Circus Afterhours and their New Year's event. Most DJs made individual posts on their personal pages and fan pages (a common practice amongst local DJs, which is used to provide information to a wider audience about their shows and releases), along with engaging Twitter to spread information about the event. The local DJs who were enlisted for one hour sets at the New Year's event, with the agreement they would be paid a nominal amount of money, were sent special digital posters and banners to replace their Facebook/Twitter profile pictures and cover photos.

Similar generic graphics were sent out to individuals closely associated with Circus networks, encouraging them to support the club by promoting alongside them.

Calls for support rang out from these social networks in relation to Circus and the New Year's Eve party. Resident DJs asked for support by having their audience attend their performance on the night, while other unscheduled DJs asked for their networks to attend the event in support of their club. Many resident DJs also took up the second promoter request and either began or searched out new production opportunities in the hopes of engaging and growing their networks along with those of the club. While producers associated with Circus released tracks on a regular basis, either for free on social media or through various local labels on Beatport, a particular remix contest, hosted on Beatport Play, enrolled a number of Circus DJ/producers into a competition that translated the support of local EDM networks into web impressions and revenue for the competition platform and its related labels and marketers.

The remix contest for Tiga vs. Audion, *Let's Go Dancing*, appeared in early November following the original's release to Beatport and ITunes in mid-September 2013.[141] Beatport News released contest details asking DJs to "join the ranks of hot-hand producers like Maya Jane Coles, Breach, and Solomun, among others, who've been tipped to remix Tiga vs. Audion's single, *Let's Go Dancing*, on Turbo Recordings."[142] Beatport news encouraged DJs and producers to imagine themselves "alongside like-minded label artists like Duke

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[141] Montano, "Ethnography from the Inside: Industry-Based Research in the Commercial Sydney Edm Scene."
[142] Jason Black, "This Week on Play: Win Dj Gear from Novation and Get Released on Turbo Recordings in Tiga Vs. Audion's "Let's Go Dancing" Remix Contest," Beatport, accessed Dec 10,2013, http://news.beatport.com/blog/2013/11/12/this-week-on-play-win-dj-gear-from-novation-and-get-released-on-turbo-recordings-in-tiga-vs-audions-lets-go-dancing-remix-contest/.

Dumont, Azari & III, and Clouds."[143] The website offered audio stems for download and asked DJs to upload their remix to play.beatport.com for a chance to win various DJ related technologies along with a "bonus" release of the track on the contest's host label.

By the submission deadline on December 8th, 2013, 560 remixes of *Let's Go Dancing* had been uploaded to Beatport's servers. Remixes ranged in style, length, and production quality, but all were represented through Beatport Play's algorithms as greyscale rectangles sorted on a list down the webpage with a voting button, comment section, and hotlinking to the producer's DJ page that contained a history of their activity on the site. The website translated the character and quality of individual creative productions into a bar of exchange that could be moved up and down as if they were entries on an accounting ledger. As the contest progressed votes slowly rolled in, moving entries up and down the list as DJs enlisted their networks to visit the Beatport site and vote. Comments were left on the website in support or in critique of the various entries, which were often closely monitored and responded to by the entrants and their fans.

Despite a lack of guarantees that top entries would be even considered for the grand prize, with the contest offering only a smaller prize to the entry with the most votes, DJs enthusiastically sent the contest links around their social media pages, enlisting their friends and networks of EDM-related contacts to head to Beatport to vote. Even with the lack of guarantees it is generally accepted in EDM contest networks that only the most popular entries will be considered as the number of people DJs are able to send to these contest sites is a major factor in the selection process. The potential to have those votes

[143] Ibid.

translated into music sales for the label through Beatport is very persuasive for labels that rely on the sale of digital files as a primary source of income.

No less than four Circus residents submitted mixes as part of the *Let's Go Dancing* contest. Throughout the submission and voting process calls for support rang out on Facebook and Twitter. Scott James, a house DJ at Circus, posted his remix to both his Facebook personal and Facebook fan pages. His call for votes was in relation to a number of posts he curated attempting to position him as a serious producer. Many posts were made over successive days attempting to engage his network to vote for his submission. Scott James's contest page was shared on social media networks no fewer than 98 times over a two month period.[144] Despite the considerable number of links James's submission was listened to only 185 times, garnering 13 votes. Marc Luciano, a Deep House specialist at Circus, regularly posted his contest link with calls for support; "Our track is chilling on the first page right under the tracks of the people who have been spamming to get votes. If You haven't voted, check out the track and if you like it, your support would mean so much! REPRESENT MTL."[145] Luciano was nominally successfully, garnering over 500 plays of his remix along with 48 votes, despite sharing his link far fewer times than other Circus residents. Joe Mesmar, a resident Techno DJ at Circus, submitted to the contest and engaged his network a number of times with calls for support. "Take a listen & vote for me if I deserve it! ;) Thanks to every person who's supporting me! Not asking for more :)."[146]

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[144] HD, "Circus Maximus Mmxiv – New Year's Eve".
[145] Beatport, "Lets Go Dancing (Thoseguys from Mtl Remix)," Beatport, accessed December 28,2013, http://play.beatport.com/contests/tiga-vs-audion-lets-go-dancing/52a5079cb8ed74474677770e.
[146] Post made to Joe Mesmar's fan page. "Tiga Vs Audion - Let's Go Dancing (Joe Mesmar Remix)," Beatport, accessed December 28,2013, http://play.beatport.com/contests/tiga-vs-audion-lets-go-dancing/529cf593753a0d72a972ca82.

Mesmar was able to better engage his networks to vote and by contest end had well over 1300 plays, 120 comments and critiques, and the most votes in the contest.

For Circus Afterhours, the exposure of its DJs through social media and contest platforms is a vector for free promotion and sales of New Year's Eve tickets, in addition to other events. For the DJs involved in the contest, it is a way of promoting their own brand, while engaging their audiences, the club promoters, and Beatport labels in cross-networking and promotion. While goals of wider exposure and more performances at Circus are more immediate, the aim for fame and improved economic status operate beneath every Facebook share or tweet. Turbo recordings, and the label owner Tiga, have been provided with over 500 music file submissions, which represent hundreds of hours of work, thousands of dollars of sunken technology costs, and the social network- driven communications of hundreds of DJs and thousands of individuals in their networks.[147] Despite the costs in hours, money, and promotion involved in these contests and the eventual expectation of creative or economic reward, the dialogue in and amongst those involved remains couched in notions of charity and support. While Afrojack continues to recall his humble beginnings and encourages anyone that will listen that we all have the spark, Sillerman and SFX gather up competitive exchanges and package them into Beatport music sales, all fed into quarterly reports and reflected in the day-to-day trading of SFXE on the NASDAQ market.

Conclusion

[147] Tiga, "My 2013: Tiga".

Notions of support have simply become part of the data stream, with contest entries providing another addition to the pool.[148] Tracing support from local clubs to Wall Street reveals how affect masks and mystifies the economic reality of a large industry that relies heavily on precarious creative labour to fuel its operation. Actors at the top develop platforms for engaging with broader networks in the gathering of creativity for exploitation on their platforms. Star DJs and label owners continue to transmit and enforce the language of humility and creative potential that trickles down and impacts local EDM discourse. Local creative labour continues to provide for these companies in serving the demands of local clubs and their promoter, while also furnishing their brands, and striving to be the next Afrojack or Tiga. Bringing DJ rhetoric down from an expression of ideals to an expression of the current realities of EDM markets would be far more productive and helpful for all involved. In order for a new orientation to emerge in these exchanges the language needs to shift from notions of support to notions of economy.

[148] Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics."

Chapter 4: Crowdsourced Competition Platforms

Introduction

Contemporary competitive practice among creative in EDM is almost entirely facilitated by crowdsourced competition platforms. These platforms both facilitate and encourage competition with and among creative networks on the web and in local venues. By developing neutral platforms that integrate deeply with social media to provide creative competition these websites represent a significant evolution in crowdsourcing development that threatens the definitional and ethical boundaries of the practice. Where traditional crowdsourcing platforms transmit a problem to the crowd for a solution that usually results in the manufacturing of a product or idea these competition platforms crowdsource creativity and creative networks in the service of enmeshing those individuals and their audiences with the contest brands, while often providing little reward other than nominal compensation and vague promises of exposure. Further, these platforms and related marketers usually require that the creatives sign away the rights to their work when entering the contests, while generally discarding the vast majority of submitted creativity and rarely doing much with winning entries beyond the limited terms set out in the call for submissions. For these platforms and their partners creativity only matters as long as it leads to another share or another like. As a result, creativity that once would have made its way onto a mass produced t-shirt or stock photo database, an already precarious development in creative labour, is further reduced on these platforms to a

vector for generating a few extra twitter followers and a few more hits on a brand's YouTube channel.[149]

Despite these developments creative workers and their networks seem all too eager to engage with these contest platforms as a chance to find exposure for their creativity. Artists have flocked to these sites to produce filmed advertising, logo design, and photography, along with music production and remixes in the hopes of winning these contests and finding a path to creative and economic success. Creative networks have pushed toward the contemporary experience of creative competition as the demands of competition are what drive their reality. Rather than examine their role in these contests and the vast exploitation involved in the process of these competitions, creatives are all too willing to join in on the contest as a path to creative success. Further creative networks are driven to do so by institutions that surround them who have gutted traditional access to creative markets, instead leaning on crowdsourcing platforms to provide the most talent at the lowest possible cost. What's more, local creative institutions demand that their workers engage with these platforms to help expose their brands to the socially-networked communication these contests platforms provide.

In order to examine the phenomenon of these platforms and their relation to exploitative in labour practices in creative networks I will first investigate Talenthouse.com and its Sponsored Engagement Engine, a core product for the company that provides its

[149] Almost every scholar who has written about crowdsourcing has examined it effect on workers who participate or who might have worked in related industries before their development. As an example, Brabham has examined how iStockphoto and related sites has virtually wiped out traditional stock photography businesses. Daren C Brabham, "Moving the Crowd at Istockphoto: The Composition of the Crowd and Motivations for Participation in a Crowdsourcing Application," *First Monday* 13, no. 6 (2008).; Howe, "The Rise of Crowdsourcing."

partner brands powerful tools for wringing out all possible socially-networked communication through their sponsored contests. I will then interrogate the promise of exposure that drives so many creatives to compete under the mantra of amateurism and support. Finally I will provide a case study of a recent Talenthouse remix competition with their brand partner Dr. Pepper that exemplifies these issues and debates and argue for a reorientation in how these platforms are both seen creatively and regulated by government and industry.

Sponsored Engagement Engines

In mid-2009, Talenthouse.com rolled out is creative competition platform, emerging alongside other crowdsourcing websites, including Idea Bounty, Indaba Music, and Beatport, seeking to position itself as a "a global creative community where artists [could] earn money and recognition for their work."[150] Accompanied by a logo from West African Adinkra that meant "to achieve the impossible," Talenthouse unveiled its Creative Invite Initiative, where major artists or brands could "partner" with "the best new creative talent" and "have it seen by a global audience"[151] What Talenthouse provided was a neutral marketing platform for brands that allowed marketers to initiate creative competitions that would engage Talenthouse's network of creatives through proprietary "Facebook voting,

[150] Talenthouse, "About Talenthouse," Talenthouse, accessed July 21,2014, http://about.talenthouse.com/.
[151] "Talenthouse Essentials: A Quick Guide to Get You Started," Talenthouse, accessed July 21,2014, http://about.talenthouse.com/basics/. Marketwired, "Boy George Seeks Emerging Music Artists, Djs to Collaborate on New Dance Track Via Talenthouse," news release, August 5, 2009, http://www.marketwired.com/press-release/boy-george-seeks-emerging-music-artists-djs-collaborate-on-new-dance-track-via-1213736.htm.

Twitter voting and distributed cloud architecture" technologies.[152] As a way to engage creatives with the Talenthouse platform, the company offered artists the promise of a "once in a lifetime collaboration opportunity" with associated brands and celebrities and the opportunity to be seen by a global audience.[153] Further, the platform allowed for and encouraged creatives to build a profile on the Talenthouse website that they could share with friends through social media to build a fan base, while also supporting and gaining support from other artists.[154]

While the initial launch of the Talenthouse platform provided little in the way of community interaction and suffered from a dearth of brand partnerships, the website soon signed partnerships with Universal Music Group, artists and celebrities including Naomi Campbell, along with Reliance Entertainment, and quickly expanded into other markets, including a major push into India.[155] While creatives were slow to sign on to Talenthouse's vision, participation accelerated by 2012, with key partnerships and contests driving millions of artists to the Talenthouse platform and growing their core Creative Initiative business up to 80% year over year.[156] Initial seed funding of about 10 million dollars was followed by series B and C funding that secured over 25 million dollars to expand their

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[152] Inc. Close-Up Media, "Universal Music Group (Umg) and Talenthouse Team up to Introduce Social Crowdsourcing Campaigns," news release, 2011.
[153] Ibid. Talenthouse, "Talenthouse Essentials: A Quick Guide to Get You Started".
[154] "Talenthouse Essentials: A Quick Guide to Get You Started".
[155] Close-Up Media, "Universal Music Group (Umg) and Talenthouse Team up to Introduce Social Crowdsourcing Campaigns."; Centaur Communications Ltd., "Site Inspection: Talenthouse," *New Media Age* (2009). The Press Trust of India, "Talenthouse Expects India to Be Its 2nd Largest Market in 3yrs," *The Press Trust of India*, 2011 Nov 20 2011. Clemmie Moodie and Danielle Lawler, "Everybody Say Cheese! Naomi Campbell [...]," *The Daily Mirror*, 2010 Apr 01 2010.
[156] Sainul K. Abudheen, "Reliance Entertainment's Crowdsourcing Platform Talenthouse Raises Funding Led by German Media Firm Starwatch," *Techcircle.in*, 2014 May 16 2014. Athena Information Solutions, "Compared to Last Year Talenthouse Grew 80 Per Cent in Term of Registered Artistes," news release, 2013 Aug 28, 2013.

platform into more and more markets and develop their "social media solution for brands and marketers," the Sponsored Engagement Engine (SEE), which was launched in early 2012.[157]

In the promotion surrounding the unveiling of their social engagement marketing engine Talenthouse touted the platform as a service that "provides marketers with customized campaigns built around the concept of Content Based Marketing through SEE, a new advertising model focused on attaching brands to relevant content that consumers eagerly engage with and share with their personal network across the social web." Brands become immersed in the peer-to-peer conversations that have taken an increasingly larger share of consumers' attention."[158] The engine worked by aggregating "signals across various gateways to social networks and platforms, while (an) automatic scaling engine enable(d) real-time voting and content delivery independent of time, location and device type."[159]

The release of Talenthouse's marketing platform was accompanied by a series of sponsored blog posts and branded news articles espousing the virtues of Talenthouse, arguing that SEE allowed "brands and marketers to access the authentic engagement between (Talenthouse's) community of valued artists and creatives and their fans."[160] For CEO Roman Scharf, Talenthouse turns "content and influence into engagement – essentially

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[157] NASDAQ OMX, "Talenthouse Rolls out Its Sponsored Engagement Engine (See)," news release, 2012 May 02, 2012. PR Newswire, "Talenthouse Rolls out Its Sponsored Engagement Engine (See): New Solution Creates Social Media Engagements That Outperform Conventional Social Media Advertising," news release, May 12, 2012, http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/talenthouse-rolls-out-its-sponsored-engagement-engine-see-149796435.html.
[158] OMX, "Talenthouse Rolls out Its Sponsored Engagement Engine (See)."
[159] Ibid.
[160] Will McGrouther, "Talenthouse Helps Creatives, Brands Succeed on Facebook," Mediabistro Inc., accessed July 1,2014, http://allfacebook.com/talenthouse_b90341.

establishing a new currency for advertisers and creatives to trade."[161] The aim of Talenthouse was to engage what it called the "creative class" of 600+ million creatives and their peers on social media.[162] The engine worked to bypass traditional forms of web-based advertising by developing a new advertising medium for brands where the work of creatives would be partnered with them through social media campaigns, having creatives act as champions for those companies in service of promoting their own contest entries.

For Talenthouse co-founder, Maya Bogle, their Sponsored Engagement Engine represented an evolution of the "unsatisfactory" creative crowdsourcing model that only rewarded one contestant so that "participating artists c[a]me away with nothing apart from the winner."[163] The SEE represented a progressive evolution of the crowdsourcing model where creative initiatives were more than "fan based contests" instead it was a forum for the promotion by partner brands of creatives who submit work.[164] According to Bogle, Talenthouse promotes and protects contestants by "creating multiple income streams for artists and a new advertising model based around sharing of content."[165] Talenthouse achieves promotion for its partners by having creatives create word of mouth for brands through sharing their submissions on social media, bypassing traditional web advertising,

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[161] Newswire, "Talenthouse Rolls out Its Sponsored Engagement Engine (See): New Solution Creates Social Media Engagements That Outperform Conventional Social Media Advertising."
[162] OMX, "Talenthouse Rolls out Its Sponsored Engagement Engine (See)."
[163] Joyce Manalo, "Talenthouse Revolutionizes the Creative Economy with Fifteen Cents," Joyce Manalo, accessed July 1,2014, http://workingclassflaneur.com/talenthouse-new-version-052213/.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid. With that Bogle was referencing an initiative that looked to pay creatives a nominal amount for shares and likes developed on social media in relation to their branded creativity.

instead relying on "the most powerful form of advertising which is 'word of mouth' marketing by the people themselves."[166]

Despite the full-court press PR campaign around the launch of the new Talenthouse marketing platform, accompanied by lofty rhetoric of Scharf and Bogle, the launch of SEE does not represent a significant development in the evolution of crowdsourced competition websites. Rather, the campaign around the launch provided new insight into how competition platforms aimed to monetize creative competition while also laying bare the twisted logic of venture capitalists and their entrepreneurial enablers who saw marketing opportunities and brand synergies in competition platforms rather than the establishment of structural exploitation that gave their platform and associated brands all the power to exploit vast pools of creative labour in the service of selling more movie tickets or iTunes downloads.[167]

While Talenthouse attempted to position SEE as a powerful new way of engaging social media audiences through creative competitions, its basic function of providing a neutral platform for contests was no different than the many other competition website alternatives competing in the market.[168] Despite attempting to play to concerns over creative exploitation by generally offering promises of nominal compensation, life changing exposure, and retention of copyright to any creative work, Talenthouse often played to its marketing partners first, under whose terms contestants could expect only nominal

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[166] Ibid.
[167] Claire Beale, "Unilever Is Turning to a Crowd of Bounty Hunters," *The Independent*, 2009 Nov 02 2009.
[168] Inc. Close-Up Media, "Indaba Music Debuts Social Contest Suite Amplifying Music Marketing," news release, 2012. Indaba Music debuted a similar marketing engine in 2012.

rewards, relatively little exposure, and generally the demand that all rights to any created works be signed away as a precondition for entering.[169]

The amount charged by Talenthouse to host a competition shows the gulf in power that exists between creatives and these brands despite the rhetoric of creative exposure and support. While brands will pay up to $150,000 for Talenthouse to host a creative competition, the contest rewards are often only a couple thousand dollars or a chance to perform (work for free), along with vague promises of increased exposure.[170] The amount paid by brands betrays the rhetoric of Scharf and Bogle, revealing that these contests are nothing more than alternative marketing strategies deployed by firms in an attempt to latch onto the marketable social media communication of creatives and their audiences that are so desired by companies in the contemporary marketplace. These brands are not trading in a traditional creative market where produced works are circulated on their value as art, rather they are trading off the production and circulation of works by young artists hoping that their brand of branded creativity matters. For creatives engaging with web platforms and social media in the hopes of finding creative success, the introduction of SEE has shown how they are merely the fuel that propels these brands through their creativity. Their creativity only matters if it ignites some form of social network-mediated communication that helps a brand find its way into the Twitter and Facebook feeds of a young and influential group of enthusiastic media producers and consumers.

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[169] Cristina Dominguez Fraile, "A Study on Copyright Challenges in the Crowdsourcing Era," (Harvard, 2013). Fraile has shown that Talenthouse often requires contest entrants to sign away their work.
[170] Brands would pay Talenthouse anywhere from $100,000 - $150,000 USD to participate in a creative invite initiative. India, "Talenthouse Expects India to Be Its 2nd Largest Market in 3yrs."

Why then are there record numbers of creatives entering these contemporary contests on competition platforms and how are artists encouraged to do so despite their implication in brand strategies? In order to understand the creative's perspective I will examine the myth of the amateur breaking big due to competition propelled by origin stories that associate major artists with success on contest platforms. I will then provide a case study of a recent Talenthouse competition to reveal how brands, creatives, and their crowds are implicated in these exploitative exchanges.

The Myth of the Amateur and Justification for Participation

In examining the development of crowdsourcing platforms in the mid-2000s, Darin C. Brabham revealed that discourses surrounding participation on crowdsourcing websites perpetuated the "myth of the amateur crowd."[171] Brabham traced the early history of the media's fascination with crowdsourcing and its potential to show that those working to create for these new sites were labelled as amateurs since the work they performed was assumed to be outside their regular jobs.[172] As with Stephen B. Groce's investigations into performer notions of entertainer and artists, Brabham invokes critical discourse analysis to interrogate notions of amateurism that surround crowdsourced creativity.[173] Through his analysis Brabham reveals that despite wide perceptions in media and among creatives that amateurs largely engage crowdsourcing platforms to gain exposure and experience,

[171] Brabham, "The Myth of Amateur Crowds: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Crowdsourcing Coverage."
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid. Norman Fairclough, Jane Mulderrig, and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (2011).

professionals or those with professional qualifications and experience make up better than 50% of those engaged on established platforms.[174]

With survey data confirming that many of these competitions are entered and won by experienced creatives, Brabham moved to interrogate discourses of amateurism that flow through creative labour. He argues that "there is power in professionalization, and so long as individuals are seen as outside of the boundaries of a profession, they will be seen as not having access to that power."[175] The precarious nature of contemporary creative practice has rhetorically and practically positioned many professionals as amateurs. As reminted amateurs, these creatives are lining up to compete on competition platforms as another means of gaining income and exposure to propel their professional careers. In doing so they are blurring the professional/amateur distinction or what Brabham describes as a pro-am, "a reflection of today's economy, especially for workers in creative industries."[176] The distinction between professional and amateur blurs and is blurred by the discourses of support that propel contested labour. While Brabham believes all creatives accept their "position within a capitalist enterprise" by participating on crowdsourcing platforms, notions of support, supported by the myth of amateurism on contemporary contest platforms, mask the economic realities of these contests and allow for the continued myth that crowdsourcing platforms are a primary site for finding the next celebrity artist.[177]

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[174] Brabham, "The Myth of Amateur Crowds: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Crowdsourcing Coverage," 399, 400.
[175] Ibid., 402.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid., 406.

In the promotion surrounding creative contests on crowdsourced competition platforms Anton Zaslavski (stage name Zedd), a Grammy award winning electronic dance music producer and DJ, is often cited as a significant example of the benefit and opportunities afforded to creators who participate. In 2010 Zaslavski entered and won two remix contests hosted by Beatport on their Beatportal site in partnership with Strictly Rhythm and Skint Records.[178] The exposure gained by these contest wins along with the popularity of his remix releases on the participating labels purportedly led to a record deal with major EDM artist Skrillex, which soon evolved into a production deal with Interscope Records, remixing for major pop acts, including Lady Gaga and The Black Eyed Peas.[179] It is assumed that if it weren't for the opportunities afforded to Zedd through these early web-based remix competitions his 'unique' talent might not have been found.[180] Zedd instead might have languished in local German music networks, failing to hitch a ride on the rising wave of popularity of progressive and electro-influenced EDM that was his passion and expertise.

What is often left out of Zaslavski's narrative is his history as a classically trained musician and band member that conflicts with the narrative that competition platforms gave a unique hidden talent a chance to make it big.[181] Zedd was born into a family of musicians and grew up surrounded by formal and informal music training. In the early

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[178] Beatport, "Catching up with Beatport's Remix Competition Winners," Beatport, accessed July 2,2014, http://news.beatport.com/blog/2012/01/18/beatportal-remix-competition-winners/. Beatportal was a precursor to Beatport News and was hosted separately than the music portal until September 2012. Matthew Adell, "Goodbye Beatportal. Hello Beatport News.," Beatport, accessed July 2,2014, http://news.beatport.com/blog/2012/09/04/goodbye-beatportal-hello-beatport-news/.
[179] Fuse News, "How Did Skrillex Change Zedd's Life?," Fuse Networks, accessed June 30,2014, http://www.fuse.tv/videos/2013/03/fuse-news-zedd-interview-ultra-2013.
[180] Ibid.
[181] The Worst Guy, "Zedd Exclusive Interview," The Worst Guy, accessed July 5,2014, http://theworstguy.com/2010/11/04/zedd-exclusive-interview/.

2000s he became part of the German post-hardcore/metal band Dioramic, which was eventually signed to Lifeforce Records and who released an album in 2010, the same year Zedd won the remix contests. As a trained musician in a touring rock band, was Zedd an amateur EDM producer or a professional artist who tapped into crowdsourcing to gain further exposure or dabble in alternative music making practices?

A narrative that ignores Zedd's personal and professional history as a musician necessarily creates an alternative narrative, wherein Zaslavski, a young and eager EDM producer, remixed his way to fame through the availability of competition platforms that lent exposure to aspiring artists. As a signed musician Zedd certainly had access to other channels for releasing his productions. Further he would have had connections that would permit him to bypass these platforms if he wished. A closer inspection of the Zaslavski narrative shows these competition entries were part of his experimentation with EDM that happened to succeed based on the quality of Zedd's productions and the timing of his connections with other rising artists, namely his association with Skrillex that had very little to do with his contest wins. While the contest origin story remains an enticing way of signaling Zedd's entry into EDM, even if it was only part of a longer career profession for the musician, it serves as an example of the mythical narrative that drives many young contestants to compete. Both platform owners and creative networks elevate these narratives as examples of the virtues of creative competitions.[182] If only their creativity could be recognized through contest wins they would be able to achieve the same creative

[182] Beatport, "Catching up with Beatport's Remix Competition Winners".

success and fame as Zaslavski. These narratives generally discard the inconvenient truths that question the viability of many of these platforms' claims.

If the winners of most contests are professionalized in some way, then these competition platforms are operating under a different reality than they or the wider body of creative contestants might want to believe. Rather than providing a service for exposing amateur artists, they are complicit in the uploading of professional creative labour onto their platforms, all in the service of brand partnerships. The move to online platforms by professionals is an admission of the significant impact these crowdsourced websites have had on traditional forms of professional creative practice. For Brabham, the discourse of amateurism "makes us feel more empowered, more in control of the products and media we consume. But these so-called amateurs are really just outsourced professionals, and the products and media content we are sold are not much different, certainly no more democratically created, and never beyond the grip of capitalist logic."[183]

How then are the aspiring professional creatives, asked to masquerade as amateurs, impacted? How are they so implicated in these creative competitions that they are eager to give away their networked value in the service of competitive websites and brands for a small chance to break it big like their favorite celebrity artist? While amateurs are given every chance to participate, their success is limited by the reality of their amateur status. As unequal participants in the social media exchanges so desired by brand partners, their creativity is only productive as long as it is being used in the service of marketing objectives. The actual music remix or video production matters little; therefore the actual

[183] Brabham, "The Myth of Amateur Crowds: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Crowdsourcing Coverage," 406.

winners often matter very little. As long as the brand is able to show its social media audiences that it provided creative opportunities and a fun experience for the winners of a particular contest then it has achieved its objective. The notion that any of these contests are there to primarily expose and promote hidden talent is the largest and most pervasive myth of all. As Brabham argues, "in the end, companies never lose with crowdsourcing."[184] Talenthouse and its partners are handed thousands of hours of creative labour, along with countless votes and likes for only a vague promise of potential success. In order to investigate role of amateur creatives on competition platforms and the persistent myths that drive their desire to compete, I will turn to a case study of a Talenthouse competition that took place in 2013, involving Dr. Pepper, Pitbull, and Talenthouse's Sponsored Engagement Engine.

Dr. Pepper & Pitbull Present: A Sponsored Engagement Engine Case Study

On April 22, 2013 Talenthouse.com opened up their latest in a long line of remix contests hosted on their crowdsourcing platform in partnership with Dr. Pepper, a carbonated soft drink manufacturer, and Cuban-American rapper Armando "Pitbull" Perez. The creation of the contest by Talenthouse was part of a larger marketing campaign by Dr. Pepper, involving Pitbull, promoting its core brands to 18 to 24 year olds.[185] The contest page exclaimed that "in true 'always one of a kind' Dr. Pepper spirit, you are invited to put your own spin on the latest Pitbull megahit "Don't Stop the Party" that showcases your

[184] Ibid.
[185] Adweek, "Mosaic Awards: Winning Campaigns Lopez Negrete; Deutsch; Alma Ddb; Briabe Mobile," Adweek, accessed July 4,2014, http://www.adweek.com/sa-article/mosaic-awards-winning-campaigns-143849.

unique individual flavor."[186] The contest page included an embedded video in which Pitbull, seated beside a can of Dr. Pepper while wearing a matching burgundy coloured tie, encouraged DJs and producers to enter the contest to find "the next always one of a kind DJ."[187] Thomas Connor, in examining the career of Pitbull has argued that "in a diversified, decentralized music business, Pitbull found the route to riches not through album sales or concert tickets but through branding."[188] Further, "Pitbull doesn't just pose next to a product for a magazine ad, though. He brings the commercial messages directly into his music." By encouraging creatives to remix his music, Pitbull was asking aspiring DJs and producers to produce a deeper connection between their creativity and their social networks and his brand partners. Talenthouse was the platform to enable those connections through its Sponsored Engagement Engine. Contestants were instructed to download remix stems and upload their version onto the Talenthouse Platform, where submissions would be voted on and ranked to determine finalists and an eventual winner. The winner's 'career opportunity' was an all-expenses paid trip to Miami to open for Pitbull at a private Dr. Pepper concert in promotion of their "always one of a kind" campaign.[189]

Over six weeks the music stems of "Don't Stop the Party," itself a remix or heavily sampled version of TJR's "Funky Vodka", were downloaded hundreds of times as aspiring DJs and producers set to work on their versions of the remix. Once completed, the remixes were uploaded onto the Dr. Pepper-hosted contest page as entries. 85 remixes were

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[186] "Remix "Don't Stop the Party" for Dr Pepper & Pitbull," Talenthouse, accessed July 2,2014, https://www.talenthouse.com/i/drpepper-mimix.
[187] Talenthouse, "Dr Pepper Pitbull Intro," (2013).
[188] Thomas Conner, "Brand Name Rap: Pitbull Endorses Products Not in Ads, but in His Lyrics," *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 25 2012.
[189] Michelle Russell, "Us: Dr Pepper Snapple Debuts 'Always One of a Kind' Campaign," *just - drinks global news*, 2012 Jan 09 2012.

submitted by the deadline where they were voted on over a seven day period ending on June 14th. During the submission and voting period all participants and their networks of friends, colleagues, and social media followers were encouraged to participate in promoting and voting for submissions through Talenthouse's platform along with sharing, liking, and retweeting contest submissions around social media which included Dr. Pepper's "Always one of a kind" tag in their communications. In order to encourage larger participation the contest allowed for multiple 'winners,' based on voting and other judging criteria, though only one submission would win the chance to open for Pitbull. Curiously, the winner was not selected based on the number of votes received or on the quality of their remix, but rather according to the content and quality of their performance as DJs, sampled through a 5 minute performance video that the 10 finalists were required to submit.

It was perhaps less curious then, when on June 21, 2013 the winner of the contest was revealed to be Fast Company: a young and all male DJ producer duo based in Los Angeles, California.[190] Fast Company, comprised of George Legner and Nick Proctor, was formed in early 2011 after their form pop rock band Sound of Surrender disbanded along with many other young pop rocks acts that collapsed in the wake of EDM's charge in the early 2010s.[191] Describing themselves as "a new and exciting rock-electro duo," Fast

[190] Dominique Terry, "Fast Company Steals the Spotlight for Our Pitbull and Dr. Pepper Remix Contest," Talenthouse accessed June 15,2014, http://blog.talenthouse.com/2013/07/15/fast-company-steals-the-spotlight-for-our-pitbull-and-dr-pepper-remix-contest/.
[191] Boyd, "Decline of Great Us Rock'n'roll Is the Elephant in the Room." Michael Quinn, "Pop Beats Rock in Album Sales," *The Stage*, 2012 Jan 26 2012. Sandra Sperounes, "Rock Radio Also Feeling Decline in Popularity," *Edmonton Journal*, 2011 Feb 10 2011.

Company quickly established a social media presence after forming.[192] The duo set up Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Soundcloud, and Myspace pages, along with a traditional website that linked to all other social media platforms. On all these sites the duo was presented through glossy professional photography, showing the producers as stylishly disinterested youths wearing a blend of rock leather jackets and hipster mustaches.

The duo began their path to fame by remixing contemporary pop hits and releasing them for free on Soundcloud while promoting them on other social media websites. Their first free release, in June 2011, was a dubstep remix of Katy Parry's "E.T.," followed by house remixes of Eminem and Stranger Danger over the next year, along with DJ sets and original productions they put up for free download. These early releases were followed by their first foray into remix competitions in early 2013 when they entered a contest on Indaba music to remix Cazzette's single, "Weapon."[193] The single was part of a promotion for the group and Spotify, who had released Cazzette's debut album exclusively to their streaming service. The winner of the contest would receive $1000, a visit with the group, and the release of their remix on the music streaming platform. As with most contests, prizes were not confined to just the winner as 10 of the top 20 remixes in popular voting would receive a 1 year premium subscription to Spotify. Despite garnering a significant vote total (fourth overall) Fast Company did not receive any prize for entering.

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[192] Fast Company, "Fast Company Music," Facebook, accessed July 19,2014, https://www.facebook.com/FASTCOMPANYMUSIC/info. All social media sites that show a join date were setup in February 2011.

[193] Indaba Music, "Cazzette Weapon Remix Contest," Indaba Media, LLC, accessed July 19,2014, https://beta.indabamusic.com/opportunities/cazzette-weapon-remix-contest/details.

Curiously, Fast Company's social media presence was garnering a great deal of attention despite their relatively slight release schedule and muted interaction on their pages. To date their Facebook page has over ten thousand likes and their Twitter page has over twelve thousand followers. Despite their relatively large number of followers, Fast Company translated their relatively large social media followings into traffic on their professional pages. As an example, though the duo managed to accrue almost 500 votes for the Cazzette contest, they only managed one like on their own Facebook page about the contest along with eight messages, all spam. A deeper look into their follower histories reveals that the group engages in social media "like" purchasing, a relatively common practice among creatives on social media in the last many years.[194] DJs and producers will purchase likes from third party companies, who create ghost accounts to follow purchasers and thereby increase their perceived presence on social media.[195] These types of purchases come largely in response to the expectation of EDM label owners, promoters, and clubs that any successful producer come with a large fan following that can be converted into singles downloads and concert ticket sales.[196] For a group like Fast Company, buying likes and votes in contests is a strategy for accelerating their reach on these platforms and ideally gaining the attention of labels or more established producers through the social currency provided through vote buying. If support cannot be found among their peers, creatives

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[194] I established that Fast Company engaged in vote buying through an analysis of their Twitter follower history. An analysis of their like history shows a clear pattern of increasing followers that would not show on an average user's page. Further their social media are filled with likes by users with tags that betray their function as like bots.

[195] M2 Presswire, "Mediabuzzed.Com Gives Viral Videos and Social Media Marketing a Boost with Real Followers; Mediabuzzed.Com Now Allows Marketers to Kick Start Their Marketing Campaigns by Buying Social Media Followers and Fans," news release, 2013 Mar 26, 2013. Martha Mendoza, "Selling Social Media Clicks Becomes Big Business," *The Charleston Gazette*, 2014 Jan 06 2014.

[196] Mixmag, "Are Top Djs Buying Facebook Fans?," Development Hell Ltd., accessed July 19,2014, http://www.mixmag.net/words/news/are-top-djs-buying-facebook-fans.

often will look to other sources of support that may be found from a third party in exchange for hard currency. While the issue of vote purchasing is a small one in the context of these creative contests, it further reinforces the hoops young DJs and producers will jump through in an attempt to find attention for their productions as part of their drive toward notoriety and hopefully fame.

Despite the failure to win a prize through the Cazzette contest on Indaba, the duo quickly entered The Pitbull/Dr. Pepper remix contest on Talenthouse.com in the summer of 2013 with a progressive remix of the original track. Despite uploading their remix three days before the competition close and receiving very little attention on their Facebook page and Twitter feed, the duo managed to receive enough votes to make the final round of voting where they submitted a video of how they might perform if opening for Pitbull. On July 10th Fast Company received the news that they were winners of the contest, which was followed by a congratulatory tweet from both Pitbull's and Dr. Pepper's official Twitter account.[197] After signing away their rights to the track and agreeing to many stipulations, Fast Company was invited to open for Pitbull at the Dr. Pepper private concert in Miami, Florida on July 17th, 2013. In preparation for a significant milestone in their budding EDM careers, the duo purchased a top of the line Apple laptop – a way of signifying their assentation to the ranks of professional DJs as the Apple logo has become the most sought after accessory among DVS and Midi controller DJs – before flying to Miami to perform.

Despite being promised an opening spot for Pitbull the duo were relegated to performing from the sound booth at the back of the large concert venue, which sat opposite

[197] Terry, "Fast Company Steals the Spotlight for Our Pitbull and Dr. Pepper Remix Contest".

the main stage. Photos and video from the event clearly show the majority of the crowd facing away from the two men as they performed their "once in a lifetime" opening set for Pitbull and Dr. Pepper. The group was able to briefly meet with Pitbull, who encouraged them to "keep moving forward."[198] After the evening performance the duo flew back to L.A. ready to use the contest as a stepping stone to take their EDM careers to the next level.

In an interview done with Talenthouse sometime after the event Fast Company the artists spoke about their experience and its impact on their careers.[199] In response to a question about their path to entering the contest Nick replied, "As soon as I noticed the Pitbull Creative Invite, I knew immediately we needed to submit a track. I believe that separated Talenthouse from every other website that hosts contest opportunities." When questioned why they wanted to submit a track George responded, "I've been under the impression that winning remix competitions is the most efficient way to make a name for yourself in the industry."[200] For the duo the chance to align themselves with a superstar MC was the greatest benefit to submitting to the Talenthouse contest. If they could win with Pitbull they would be on the path to creative success. For Fast Company the marketing line of Dr. Pepper played right into their vision of the group and their aspirations as producers. Nick, "After reading the criteria that Dr. Pepper and Talenthouse were seeking, a "one of a kind" DJ, it instantly clicked we were what they were looking for. George and I have developed an original sound by infusing rock and EDM. We were certain that we could develop and deliver a "one of a kind" sound that would transpire through our

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[198] "Fast Company Keeps the Party Going in Miami with Pitbull," Talenthouse, accessed June 15,2014, http://blog.talenthouse.com/2013/09/16/fast-company-keeps-the-party-going-in-miami-with-pitbull/.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.

submission."[201] Near the end of the interview the duo spoke of a touring opportunity, with the male dance group Thunder from Down Under as a direct result from their chance to perform live for Pitbull. With the aid of Talenthouse and Dr. Pepper, Fast Company claimed to be was well on their way to a career in EDM.

For Talenthouse and its brand partner Dr. Pepper the remix competition was a success. Through the Sponsored Engagement Engine, Dr. Pepper was able to reach almost 3 million individuals across the web with a social media reach of over 31,000.[202] For Talenthouse the success of the campaign was defined by the number new supporters brought to the platform along with shares and comments left on their contest pages. Unfortunately for Fast Company, nothing came of the touring opportunity and as of July, 2014 the group has played only one local gig in L.A. at a pub with some of their friends. They continue to release pop remixes freely on their social media pages, recently remixing Celine Dion, Tiesto, and Dada Life. Their social media pages continue to increase in likes through their modest payments to like generators across the globe. Little mention is made of the remix competition they won as they quickly moved on to other remix contests on other platforms, including Wavo.me and play.beatport.com in the hopes of continuing the success they found on Talenthouse. [203] Having formed over three years ago, with many remix releases, a long promised L.P., and the contest win, along with a strong social media

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[201] Ibid.

[202] "Fast Company Steals the Spotlight for Our Pitbull and Dr. Pepper Remix Contest". It is unclear what exactly they means by "social media reach." It is likely related to individual impressions that they are able to track through Facebook and Twitter analytics. Impressions do not always lead to engagement with Talenthouse or its brand partners. The percentage of true engagement is often quite rare.

[203] When a winner is announced on Talenthouse they are generally no longer allowed to win another contest. Julia Heinrich has interview multiple winners and claims many have bypassed this requirement. Heinrich, "The Added Value to Music Culture through Collaborative Online Platforms."

presence that has solicited support for every release and every contests, the duo seems destined to remain a small player in EDM networks, as their “one of a kind” remix failed to create the spark they hoped for and that Talenthouse and its partners Pitbull and Dr. Pepper promised.

The experience of Fast Company on Talenthouse.com is exemplary of the contemporary reality of a creative worker trying to find success in an era of social media fueled creative competitions driven by discourses of hope and support. Despite their success in the contest Fast Company find themselves no further ahead, yet have been sold the idea that their celebrity is a contest away through reimagined histories of their favorite EDM stars. In trying to achieve success they enlist their networks of friends, followers, or even bots, driving them to the platforms they compete on as well as to the brands and established celebrities that are all too happy to use their networked communication to sell another music download or a box of soda at the local supermarket. All the while Talenthouse provides a forum for creative exploitation through its Sponsored Engagement Engine that squeezes creativity and creative communication out of a precarious labour force in the service of its brand partners, while couching its service in the language of opportunity and support.

Expanding the case of the Dr. Pepper-branded Talenthouse competition across all of the contest offerings on these contest websitess points to another powerful way in which creative workers are further enmeshed in a world of competition where their choice is not where they publish their creative works, rather whose labour they will provide for free and on which platform. As long as there is a stable supply of eager or desperate creatives to

provide their creative works for free on these sites, brands will increasingly flock to these platforms in the hopes of reaching key audiences through association with interesting and innovative individuals and their networks with little regard for how these contests impact not only the creative worker but how they exploit networked communication as well.

Conclusion

The often revolutionary and utopian rhetoric put forth by crowdsourcing platforms and their backers leaves little room for consideration of the mass of crowdsourced labour that fuels these platforms and their endless stream of product solutions or creative finds. What my examination of creative contest platfoms shows is that these crowdsourcing networks of platform owners, marketers, media, and content only function because of the production and promotion of creativity on these websites through networks of local creatives. These hubs of creativity have turned to crowdsourced competition as both an attempt to break into a larger market, but also as a way of promoting their creativity toward their local audiences in an attempt to gain more recognition among their peers. Crowdsourced competitions do not just happen because Talenthouse or Indaba found a way to profit off mediating artists and marketers, rather local creative networks turned to the platforms to enable and justify their own drive for creative competition.

There is little hope these contests will abate in the near future. The early success of these platforms has driven more and more brands to these competitions as an efficient and cost-effective way to drive exposure and likes to their brands off the backs of creatives and their peers. As Howe and Brabham has suggested, crowdsourcing not only transmits

problems to the crowd but it also produces something tangible at the end.[204] If contest websites are only tangibly producing networked communication during the competition period then discarding creatives and their work at the end, there needs to be a reorientation in how these platforms are described and how they are regulated. In my conclusion chapter I will argue for a reconfiguration of how these platforms are described and regulated to slow down the drive to compete and with it slow down the push to squeeze every last drop out of an oversupplied creative labour pool that is ready and willing to contest.

[204] Howe Title of Weblog. Brabham, "Crowdsourcing as a Model for Problem Solving an Introduction and Cases."

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The Precariat

In examining the rise of competitive practices in creative economies through the lens of DJs and the contest platforms they labour on, I have sought to reveal the web of relations that produces the precarious reality of contemporary creative workers. It is an examination that seeks to be part of a larger discussion of the reconfiguration of labour in contemporary creative economies driven by evolutions in technologies and fueled by shifts in discourse that seek to rationalize and valorize competitive practice as the best way for artists to unlock their hidden talents and become another productive member of Me Inc.[205]

For DJs and producers these contests and competition platforms have had a significant impact on how they practice their craft. These developments have reoriented certain labour practices within networks of competition, where DJs and their audiences are asked to engage with these competition platforms and their partners for a chance to sign away their work or play at a club or festival for the promise of exposure if they happen to be 'lucky' or 'talented' enough to win a contest.[206] Often winning these contests is only part of a process of further enmeshing creative workers and their networks in the social media-fueled ecosystems that these websites have setup.

In *The Precariat*, Guy Standing notes that, through the encouragment of competitive practices, businesses were deliberatly transferring risk to the worker under "ficticious

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[205] Alison Hearn, "Meat, Mask, Burden Probing the Contours of the Branded Self," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8, no. 2 (2008).
[206] Howe, "The Rise of Crowdsourcing." Howe coined the term crowdsourcing in his Wired article. Brabham, *Crowdsourcing*. Dr. Brahham has written extensively on the evolution of crowdsourcing and its implications.

decommodification."[207] The transfer of risk "means an advantage for employers and increased risk and insecurity for wage earners."[208] In doing so these companies were making the lives of workers more precarious. By following the actors and stripping away the mysticism that surrounds creatives and their competitive practice, it is clear that businesses in creative economies are transferring many of the risks on to their workers. In promoting, assembling, and performing competition after competion, DJs, along with artists in many creative fields were left to do most of the work with very little compensation. Despite their exploitation, artists seem to generally revel in the opportunity to create for the opportunity for exposure and a chance at fame. There is a turning inwards of rhetoric and practice where creatives continually compete with each other over what precious little work is available instead of contesting the overriding labour practices maintained by local venues and online platforms that have gutted traditional creative employment opportunities. Furtermore creatives are often encouraged to bring their networks to the table in a cyclical generation of competitive practices. Having rationalized competition as a largely positive phenomenon, contemporary creative networks are ready and available to serve contest after contest as required, as competition is the fuel that sustains it.

There is no sign that these competitions will enter into decline in the near future. There is a virtually endless stream of young and influential talent that will continue to enter various contests in the hopes of breaking into full-time DJ work. Venues and marketers will continue to mobilize and mediate these networks then drop them once they stop providing enough value to their businesses. Major competition networks across the

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[207] Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, 41.
[208] Ibid., 43.

globe will continue to legitimize competitive practice through a filter of sponsorships that will continue to encourage certain practices over others in the interest of their branding. The creative worker will continue to struggle from contest to contest expending large physical and mental energies producing and promoting enough networked value to gain a foothold in a small part of the creative economy.

In order to begin to push back against these practices the current mode of competition needs to be problematized so that actors in these networks can be recruited and mobilized to change how labour is configured between artist and creative economies. It is important that the responsibility for these changes rest on broader, more powerful networks of government and private institutions that operate and encourage creative and nighttime economies rather than the workers themselves. The hope is that through simply identifying that exploitation practices are being encouraged by these businesses, interested parties will begin a dialogues among networks about their roles in improving these labour practices for all involved.

Legal Status of the Crowd

While local competitions, outlined in my second chapter, are significant contributers to issues of competitive labour practice, the expansion of crowdsourced competition platforms, detailed in chapter 4, have expanded and accelerated the practice at a dangerous pace. These businesses have developed and expanded under an ethos that the crowd is the answer that brands are looking for in a marketing industry struggling to gain attention, while justifying their mission at the expense of the creative networks that fuel their operations. These developments have expanded issues of labour and exploitation into new

areas that have vastly outpaced regulators. While little has been specifically written about creative competition websites, both conventional crowdsourcing platforms and television reality shows have begun dealing with issues of labour as their rapid expansion into more spaces of employment has led to many questions about how these practices are reconfiguring traditional notions of work. Many of these debates equally pertain to crowdsourced competitions, provinding insight and possible solutions to the labour issues generated by contemporary contest platforms.

Alex Felstiner has broadly examined the legal status of the crowd through American labour law arguing that "the already-maturing market for crowd labor remains almost entirely unregulated," and that "judicial authorities have yet to apply existing employment and labour laws, and regulatory authorities have taken no action to adapt those laws to crowd labour."[209] For Felstiner and others there is a "legal uncertainty" around web-based labour practices that has endured as regulators are slow to react to new forms of employment and exploitation on the web.[210] The "gap ridden and outaded" American legal machine has been so slow to react that Felstiner aruges that it "is the appropriate moment for legal intervention, and perhaps for a deeper dialogue about our priorities in this sphere."[211] For Felsteiner and for myself, Jonathan Zittrain provides an important outlook for discussing labour on crowdsourced platforms. Zittrain notes, "though we cannot predict exactly the issues that will arise, if we can forge a coherent philosophy of what we want and

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[209] Alek Felstiner, "Working the Crowd: Employment and Labor Law in the Crowdsourcing Industry," *Berkeley J. Emp. & Lab. L.* 32 (2011): 145.
[210] Ibid., 168. Joan TA Gabel and Nancy R Mansfield, "The Information Revolution and Its Impact on the Employment Relationship: An Analysis of the Cyberspace Workplace," *American Business Law Journal* 40, no. 2 (2002): 303. Felstiner draws the legal uncertainty quote from Gabel and Mansfield.
[211] Felstiner, "Working the Crowd: Employment and Labor Law in the Crowdsourcing Industry," 196.

what we cannot accept in these areas, we will find these networks easier to regulate as they come about."[212]

Unfortunately almost all the attention and debate that has been paid to crowdsourced labour issues has revolved around Amazon's Mechanical Turk and similar services that present troubling cases of crowd labour, wherein menial tasks are outsourced to hundreds of thousands of users for relatively small rewards.[213] The threat these services present to traditional sources of employment have invited deep criticism from scholars and some lawmakers.[214] Creative contests have largely been overlooked as scholars and commentators seem to agree that the labour performed on these platforms is by willing participants who at least gain some exposure.

While contesting creatives have largely been ignored in crowdsourcing literature, a growing focus on the labour of reality televsion contestants provides another avenue for finding a solution. In 2009 Equity, a trade union in the United Kingdom, passed a resoultion demanding that contestants on Simon Cowell's *X-Factor* be paid a fair wage to participate over the course of a competition. For the union reality televesion competitions were "based on exploitation and humiliation of vulnerable people," which had replaced professional television work with "cheap exploitation."[215] The union was emboldened by a ruling in

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[212] Jonathan Zittrain, "Ubiquitous Human Computing," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 366, no. 1881 (2008): 3813.
[213] Joel Ross et al., "Who Are the Crowdworkers?: Shifting Demographics in Mechanical Turk" (paper presented at the Human Factors in Computing Systems, 2010). Michael Buhrmester, Tracy Kwang, and Samuel D Gosling, "Amazon's Mechanical Turk a New Source of Inexpensive, yet High-Quality, Data?," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 1 (2011).
[214] Hal Hodson, "Crowdsourcing Grows up as Workers Unite," *New Scientist*2013.
[215] Telegraph, "X Factor Should Pay Contestants, Claims Equity," Telegraph Media Group Limited, accessed July 21,2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/x-factor/6055834/X-Factor-should-pay-contestants-claims-Equity.html.

France that required producers of the reality show *Temptation Island* to compensate the show's participants for their work on the production.[216] Unfortunately the critque of reality TV labour is mostly concerned with "the work of being watched," which can only go so far in helping us examine competitive practice.[217] While reality contestants are in many ways labouring in the same fashion as other crowdsourced creatives, it is the performative nature of their work on television and the long hours involved in show production that makes their precarious work visible and subject to so much debate. Furthermore, traditional creative markets, such as film and television have established labour codes and active unions that have pushed back against the rising tide of labour inequity as more and more programming has moved to cheaper reality-based models.[218]

Recently the expansion of the "sharing economy" has encouraged dialogue around the brazen actions of many startups who work to find efficiencies or bypass traditional markets in attempts to revolutionize 'outdated' business practices.[219] Uber, a company and an app devoted to breaking down the heavily regulated and Taxi industry and profiting off of the vast availability of private cars circulating modern cities, has become the face of the changing realities of web-based businesses practices. With the creation of a small app distributed to cell phones, the company was able to challenge a pillar of the transportation economy overnight. While the discourses of revolution are forefront among the Ubers of

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[216] Ben Dowell to Organ Grinder Blog, June 4, 2009, http://www.theguardian.com/media/organgrinder/2009/jun/04/french-tempation-island-overtime.
[217] Mark Andrejevic, *Reality Tv: The Work of Being Watched* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004); "The Work of Being Watched: Interactive Media and the Exploitation of Self-Disclosure," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 2 (2002).
[218] Packet and Times, "Reality Tv Taking over U.S. Networks," *Packet and Times*, 2001 Aug 20 2001. Daily Mail, "Reality Shows Taking over Tv," *Daily Mail*, 2004 Nov 27 2004. Doreen Carvajal, "Reality Tv Shows Go to Labor Court Contestants Seek Pay Amid Allegations of Poor Working Conditions and Long Hours on Progams," *International Herald Tribune*, 2008 May 12 2008.
[219] Danielle Sacks, "The Sharing Economy," *Fast Company*, May 2011 2011.

the world, it is their brazen disregard for traditional regulatory bodies that is the primary site of conflict. As with reality television, sharing economy companies are starting to feel the push back of crowds of labourers and regulators that are increasingly threated by business practices on the web.[220]

It is time competition platforms or simply competitive advertising firms feel the same public pressure as companies operating in traditional crowdsourcing, reality television production, or the sharing economy. It is the hidden nature of competitive crowdsourced labour, despite the very public nature of the calls for support that accompany the practice, that makes it a distinct case of work that needs to be addressed on its own terms. Furthermore, the enmeshing of creative practice and socially networked communication with brand partnerships on competition platforms, including Talenthouse.com and play.beatport.com that I have explored in my case studies, provides a unique form of labour which presents new forms of exploitation and regulatory challenges.

Defining the Marketer

If creative contest platforms are not quite like traditional crowdsourcing, and nor are they quite like reality contests produced for television, then it is essential to examine what sets their form of labour apart. As I have developed in the previous chapters, these contest platforms are simply a conduit for associating brands with socially networked communication that shield intensive social media marketing campaigns behind the supportive communication of creative networks. In providing competitive venues for

[220] U.S. Newswire, "Los Angeles-Area Uber Drivers Organize Tuesday Demonstration at Company," *U.S. Newswire*, 2014 Jun 23 2014. Heather Somerville, "Sharing Economy Drawing Attention," *Sunday Gazette - Mail*, 2014 Jan 12 2014.

marketers to exploit social media communications these platforms are more advertising agencies than talent scouts. As marketing forces these companies are taking advantage of a largely unregulated marketing space, the contemporary social media connected web, to promote their brand partners on the backs of precarious creative labour. In injecting brands into creative communication these companies are breaking a number of principles and best practices that marketers are required to adhere to in traditional marketing space.[221] They are able to bypass these regulations by shrewdly masking their branded exploitations behind discourses of creative exposure and support.

Competition platforms show vast ignorance or brazen disregard for marketing regulations, which are themselves often largely ignored or poorly enforced. Their websites host misleading and false claims that are designed to engage creatives in their exploitative platforms. Their promises of exposure and support are not backed up by reality as the vast majority of creatives engaged in competition receive little benefit. Brand partnerships and their objectives are masked behind throw-away prizes and promises of celebrity to attract many artists as possible. By not disclosing their role as marketer first these platforms are extremely unethical. It is my hope that by paying increased attention to these sites that the majority of their practices will eventually require greater disclosure if not a complete reworking.

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[221] The American Advertising Federation's Institute for Advertising Ethics has published *Principles and Practices for Advertising Ethics*, which lists 8 best practices for the advertising industry. All 8 are contravened in some way by social media fueled competition platforms described in my work. Of particular concern are principles 3, "Advertisers should clearly distinguish advertising, public relations and corporate communications from news and editorial content and entertainment, both online and offline," and 4, "Advertisers should clearly disclose all material conditions, such as payment or receipt of a free product, affecting endorsements in social and traditional channels, as well as the identity of endorsers, all in the interest of full disclosure and transparency." American Advertising Federation, "Institute for Advertising Ethics," American Advertising Federation, accessed August 12,2014, http://www.aaf.org/default.asp?id=1236.

Unfortunately any change to competitive labour practice in creative economies will take some time as the reconfiguration of competition platforms would only go so far to changing the outlook of contemporary creative networks. While most creatives have no formal role in designing these exploitative practices, it is their language of support that enables and perpetuates competition on social media. For any change to take place many battle lines need to be drawn. Notions of support have to be confronted head on and diffused while organizations or regulators have to find their feet in a world increasingly inundated with innovative, disruptive, and potentially exploitative platforms that are reconfiguring contemporary labour faster than they can keep up.

For DJs and producers there is solace in the performative aspect of their craft. Despite the expansion of web-based practices DJs and producers are in greater demand than ever before. Even though their creative practices increasingly include web platforms, a great deal of what makes a EDM network tick is still in the material reality of local spaces and peer-to-peer communication. As the rapid expansion of EDM practices cools, my hope is that increased attention will be paid to the material and historical connections that make creative practice what it is, as well as the problematic discourses that activate and enable exploitation in dance music economies.

Nothing in EDM practice deserves charity; rather it deserves compensation. As entertainers first, DJs and producers should be paid fair wages for all areas of their work and it is the responsibility of local clubs and promoters to compensate them fairly. It is the responsibility of the investors and creators of social media and competition networks to provide appropriate opportunities and compensation in recognition of the immense

amount of labour input by creatives and their audiences across the globe. Unless the language and practices of all involved begin to shift these notions seem further than the chances of a remix contestant becoming the next superstar DJ.

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