Scott Saunders (Grad Dip. Music)

“Towards an Aesthetic of Groove”

Master of Philosophy (Music) University of Newcastle

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Scott SAUNDERS, Master of Philosophy “Towards an Aesthetic of Groove”

Statement of Originality

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Abstract

The ideas expressed in the word “Groove” (also “Swing” or “Feel”) are commonly associated with the phenomenon of music that induces rhythmic bodily responses, usually expressed through dance. In musicology groove refers to the subtleties of rhythmic performance that are seemingly impossible to notate, instinctive, ineffable. The idea of groove has been recognised informally by musical practitioners and listeners, particularly in the idiom of jazz, during the 20th century and into the present. These same rhythmic phenomena occur in the long and ongoing African musical cultures that informed jazz and other contemporary music forms. In the 21st century groove remains a potent affective musical phenomenon that is highly prized within contemporary popular music culture by musicians, producers and audiences alike, as is demonstrated by the enormous popularity of this music and its wide influence throughout popular culture via hip hop, R & B, EDM, etc.

Despite the widespread influence of groove and a general recognition of its existence and significance, there appears to be no clear and concise musical description of the phenomenon. The aim of this work is to survey the key areas of research and related concepts in the relatively recent field of groove music, and to contribute criteria for groove that are tested against classic examples of the form. The criteria will also be tested through the creative work of original groove compositions, performances and productions by the author.